

Serving Vulnerable Populations Together During the COVID-19 Pandemic

A global pandemic is sweeping across our world. Fear and uncertainty permeate our communities. There are countless unknowns. But one thing is unquestionably clear: The most vulnerable are at greater risk today than they were yesterday. And they need our help.

Together, we can help meet the urgent needs of vulnerable people stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. With more than 75 years of crisis-relief experience and a broad network of trained staff and volunteers in the U.S. and around the globe, World Relief is well positioned and prepared to deliver what is needed, where and when it is needed most.

In addition to our efforts across the United States, we are at work in nine nations around the world, concentrating currently on three key areas of intervention:

- Healthcare and hygiene;
- Communication with vulnerable communities; and
- Emergency funding.

Below is an overview of our efforts through May 21, 2020, in each of these focus areas and in each of the international locations where World Relief's campaign to help defeat COVID-19 is underway. We will update this document regularly throughout the pandemic.

COVID-19 Initiatives by Focus Area

Healthcare and Hygiene: Along with the thousands of churches and 95,000+ volunteers in our network, World Relief is providing instruction and training specific to the pandemic. Educational programming is:

- Focusing on how to recognize symptoms of COVID-19 and prevent its spread;
- Emphasizing WASH-related content, especially handwashing protocols; and
- Equipping health workers with information to prevent exposure to COVID-19 while caring for patients and purchasing Personal Protective Equipment for those on the front lines.

Communication to vulnerable communities: The objective is to identify, modify, and even develop communication channels and content to sustain vital services and respond to urgent needs. As part of this undertaking, we are:

- Transforming how we reach vulnerable people around the world with the essential services by shifting delivery to video, text, and other technologies;
- Sharing messaging with church leaders and others that is based on key scriptures and a Sermon Guide, pertinent to the pandemic, and focused on caring for communities and families; and
- Translating and disseminating health information to refugee and immigrant clients in the United States and transitioning to online delivery of education and employment services.

Establishing emergency funds: The goal is to secure additional resources for communities that are likely to suffer the most from COVID-19. Contributions will be used to create:

- A health fund that provides support to communities that lack adequate health equipment and hospital facilities; and
- A nutrition fund that provides additional nutritional aid to remote areas suffering food shortages, widespread hunger, and malnutrition in the wake of this crisis (where we have a sustained presence).

COVID-19 Initiatives by Nation

World Relief’s international campaign to combat COVID-19 is focused on countries where we have well-established networks of churches, volunteers, and staff: Burundi, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Sudan. These countries have a total population of more than 285 million people. Of course, we are also fighting COVID in communities throughout the United States, a nation of more than 332 million.

Available data indicate COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in most of these nations, and we believe relatively scant testing is resulting in an undercount of confirmed cases and deaths¹. Tragically, the proliferation of the disease will add to the severe challenges many already face, such as extreme poverty, food scarcity, and ruthless violence.

Burundi

Population²: 11.9 million; Confirmed Cases³: 42

In this Central-East African nation, World Relief has delivered COVID-19 prevention materials to churches, Savings for Life groups and committees, and CNC meetings. Training centered on disease prevention messaging is being provided, as well. For example, hand washing demonstrations and COVID-19 messaging has been shared during church mobilization training in the Church Network in Nyabihanga Commune while observing social distancing practices. In Giheta, church leaders have held COVID-19 instructional meetings, using prevention materials distributed by our staff and volunteers.

Cambodia

Population: 16.9 million; Confirmed Cases: 123

Our team in this Southeast Asian country has conducted home visits with COVID-19 prevention lessons in nearly all of the villages we routinely serve, and we are expanding our outreach efforts into communities not previously engaged.

¹ Confirmed case numbers increased relatively little in Cambodia and Malawi in recent days. Meanwhile, numbers have surged in Burundi, Congo, Haiti, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Sudan during the past week.

² Population figures come from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. They are estimates for July 2020.

³ The Coronavirus Resource Center at Johns Hopkins University & Medicine is tracking COVID-19 data.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Population: 101.8 million; Confirmed Cases: 1,835

Among other endeavors, we are repurposing handwashing stations created to fight the recent Ebola outbreak in this Central African country. This is critically important given the role preventative hygiene plays in fending off COVID-19 and the significant shortage of such resources available and accessible to many Congolese. We are also leveraging our messaging networks in North Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika Provinces to teach households critical methods they can use to help prevent COVID-19. One method we've employed to raise awareness is by playing informative songs on loudspeakers installed on roving vehicles. We reached an estimated 4,291 individuals with this technique. Another 3,201 people received prevention messaging through outreach to local churches in our Kako, Kiwanja, and Muganga church networks.

Haiti

Population: 11.1 million; Confirmed Cases: 663

In this Caribbean country, World Relief is working with our Savings for Life groups on equipping communities with handwashing stations for meetings. We are also responding to feedback from our local church networks, citing needs for more soap and sanitizer, masks, immediate food assistance, and seeds for the upcoming planting season.

Kenya

Population: 53.5 million; Confirmed Cases: 1,029

Our field staff here in this Eastern African country is offering a range of activities focused on COVID-19. We are also working hand-in-hand with the Kenyan Ministry of Health to get protective gear to staff, volunteers, and stakeholders working directly with us during various efforts to raise awareness and understanding about the disease.

Malawi

Population: 21.2 million; Confirmed Cases: 71

World Relief is working closely with our church networks in this Southern African nation. In the Chitipa District in the far Northern Region of Malawi, for example, personnel in many of our 13 church networks have received COVID-19 orientation lessons. Church leaders, in turn, have shared that information with their church members. Meanwhile, in the Mzimba District, we have provided COVID-19 materials to more than 230 churches in Mbelwa and Mzikubola. And in our Mndola and Chagunda Church networks, roughly two dozen churches have received messages, posters, and leaflets from us to share.

Rwanda

Population: 12.7 million; Confirmed Cases: 314

We were able to reopen office in this Central African nation after the government lifted a lockdown. Our team has been able to meet with church pastors, local leaders, and beneficiaries of our work to discuss partnership activities focused on COVID-19. In the Ngoma church networks, hundreds of farmers were given beetroot, carrot, and snap bean seeds for planting. This activity was conducted in three different sites to prevent a large gathering in a single location. In our Nyamasheke and Karongi church networks, World Relief and local churches provided food and hygiene items to more than 400 people.

South Sudan

Population: 10.6 million; Confirmed Cases: 481

World Relief in the world's newest nation, located in East-Central Africa, has reached more than 780 households with COVID-19 prevention information and met with 457 people directly to share instruction regarding nutrition during the pandemic. Our team also has constructed handwashing stations in compliance with recommended measures and created roped off lines to promote social distancing. With an eye to the not-to-distant future, we have distributed agricultural seeds to more than 4,000 households contribute to the cultivation and consumption of nutritious food.

Sudan

Population: 45.6 million; Confirmed Cases: 3,138

We are purchasing food in bulk for distribution to 500 refugee households, and supporting approximately 500 refugees in the capital of Khartoum to mitigate the economic and social impact of COVID-19 in this East-Central African country. We also obtained support to fund both the creation of a COVID-19 awareness program and the expansion of our WASH (water, sanitation & hygiene) program, which will serve roughly 1.3 million people in Central Darfur and 247,826 people in West Darfur.

THE WAY FORWARD

Though our world may be changing every day, our mission at World Relief remains unchanged. For 75 years, we've been responding to the most pressing humanitarian problems in the United States and around the globe. In fact, it's precisely for moments like this that World Relief exists — to bring hope, healing and restoration to those who are suffering and to equip our churches and communities to do the same.

As we focus on caring for those hardest hit by this pandemic, we need you to join us. Now, more than ever before, the work we do together is crucial. By collaborating together and caring for each other, we will prevail in this fight.