



Mission Lines

“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people”

14th Jun 2020

An occasional newsletter of mission news and activities

No.49

Galatians 6:10

MISSIONS UNDER LOCKDOWN

We have all been struggling in various ways during this challenging time when the coronavirus epidemic has been affecting us in so many different ways. Even those of us not directly affected by the disease have had our daily lives greatly changed because of the lockdown measures introduced. Since the virus has spread around the whole world, people everywhere have been impacted, including areas where the medical facilities are far less developed than ours and where the vast proportion of the population is dependent on daily labour for providing for themselves and their families.

Mission and aid organisations have faced great challenges, especially as they have sought to continue their ministries under the various lockdown situations they have been working under. Some countries have called their overseas workers home, so many found themselves suddenly having to leave their work and isolate themselves in their home countries. Others have been prevented from travelling, so have had to put off due home leave and home assignments and live under lockdown in the countries where they are working. Some, especially those working in health services, are extra busy because of having to prepare for the spread of the virus in their area and perhaps actually dealing with cases. Some, although continuing to live in their adopted countries, are unable to carry out their normal roles because of lockdown restrictions.

Local pastors and other Christian workers are also unable to carry out their usual roles and some, dependent on financial support from their local congregations who themselves are struggling financially, are finding it hard to provide for their families.

Many organisations are also facing funding challenges as they have to weigh up whether to reduce the amount spent on regular projects in order to fund programmes to alleviate the needs incurred by the pandemic.

As COVID cases are decreasing in the UK, in some countries, particularly in Africa and South America, the peak is still expected to come. The health services in many of these countries will struggle to cope if there are large numbers of cases, so many are praying against this happening. Let us remember to pray for our brothers and sisters facing challenges even greater than our own.

Here are some examples of how those we support are coping with the present situation and suggestions of how we can pray for them at this time.

From PETER AND LOUISE LYNCH IN BANGLADESH

Peter and Louise were due to be on home assignment here in UK this month and were to have visited BRBC in July, but instead they are in lockdown in Bangladesh. In the absence of places to walk, they venture up on to the roof of their block of flats most days for exercise and fresh air! They go out occasionally for shopping but are asked for financial help far more frequently than usual. As they go, they pray for guidance as to how to react and who to help. They thank God for initiatives by Government, NGOs, churches etc. giving help to people in crisis, but many are suffering from food poverty because of not being able to work as usual.

Some areas of Bangladesh were hit by Cyclone Amphan recently. Evacuation meant that few lives were lost but many lost their homes and livelihoods. Pray for the churches in the affected area as people seek to rebuild their lives and as they look to God to give comfort and meet their needs.

The Lynches ask us to pray that the infection numbers currently rising steeply will begin to fall and that those facing poverty will be helped. They thank God for the privilege and blessing of being able to stand alongside their brothers and sisters at this time. They are grateful for our prayers and support.

The full prayer letter with pictures can be accessed from the Mission pages on our website.

From THE GUERA TRANSLATION PROJECT IN CHAD

Because of the corona virus epidemic, the arrival of the Guerguiko New Testaments was delayed, meaning that the planned launch had to be postponed. However, at the end of February, the New Testaments did finally arrive in Chad but have not reached the community. The team had rescheduled the celebrations for April but these also had to be cancelled. They praise God, however, that a small pre-celebration did take place on the date of the original launch in February (see picture below) and audio recordings of Matthew's Gospel were given to churches. The team is continuing to translate Genesis to give some background to the NT and is encouraged by increased church growth.



As in so many communities across the world, churches in the Guera area have had to close their doors. So oral storytelling and listening groups have become a lifeline for many. Due to small

numbers, these groups are able to meet safely and provide a space for Scripture to be shared. The teams are praying that the impact of the epidemic will soon ease so that the many cancelled activities can be resumed.

From CAMBODIA HOPE ORGANISATION

It is hard for us to imagine the challenges of lockdown in a country like Cambodia. Surprisingly, Cambodia seems to have been spared masses of people being infected but there has been a pretty severe lockdown and borders have been closed. Internally they are starting to open up more but CHO's Destiny Cafe is still closed. The CHO team is trying to function as normally as possible and everyone is busy distributing food to the poor families that are out of work. Particularly hard hit is a number of blind families and the families that are really poor that are affected by Covid-19.

Please pray for continuing good health and safety for the CHO team, especially Chomno, Ratana, Retreay, Lita, Kanya and Sovann who have all featured in videos to BRBC over the years.



Food distribution

From THE LEPROSY MISSION

Our main item for prayer: - We are currently asking our field teams to cut budgets by 20% due to funding issues. Budget requests are flying in for PPE and emergency relief from every country we work in, and it's a juggle to decide whether we fund these or the agreed projects, which will be cut further if funds are re-allocated to emergency relief. We've put a third of our UK staff on furlough for May, June and July to help with this need.

In India, Lockdown has hit leprosy colonies very hard. The elderly disabled residents are not allowed to go out and beg and so have lost their only source of income. Their family members are all daily labourers and cannot go out to work. Although there is no food shortage, they have no money to buy it. The Indian Government promised food rations but have only given enough for 2-3 days in the last 12 months! People have been selling anything of value, like bicycles, just so they can buy food.

Our hospitals in India raise around £5 million themselves through general patients who pay for services. This covers a large part of overheads and also means we can offer patients with leprosy free treatment. We're trying to cut budgets in a sensible way because we don't want to lose trained and experienced medical staff – they are so hard to find in India. The first thing that is gone is new hospital equipment, as that can wait a year.

The Indian Government has told us to convert wards for Covid isolation, but of course have not funded this, or provided PPE. It's worrying as leprosy wards are close by and there is a strong risk of the virus travelling from one ward to another by staff. Patients with leprosy are highly susceptible because of weakened immune systems.

In Nepal we have diagnosed our first cases at Anandaban Hospital. Fever clinics have been set up as first point protection before patients are admitted. The government has asked for wards to be set up for COVID-isolation and the worry is that leprosy wards may be too close to the isolation wards.

Continue to pray for our other friends involved in mission work overseas, especially at this challenging time:-

Cally Magalhaes – The Eagle Project, Brazil – Pray for safety and good health for Cally as she continues to help the families of released prisoners with food parcels etc., especially as the number of COVID 19 cases is increasing in Brazil. Also pray for Ben spending the summer in his Bournemouth university dorm and for Joe planning to travel to UK later this month to attend 6th form college in the New Forest.

Ray and Kitty Sherrod – Now in UK having left their field of service due to the corona virus pandemic. They are in regular touch with their partner organisation members, who are continuing the projects they had to leave and praise God for good progress. They would value prayer for guidance concerning their future service.

Claire Bedford in Chad – Continue to pray for Claire kept extremely busy at the Guinebor II Hospital. She is thankful that the hottest season is over and that COVID 19 case numbers have kept low in Chad so far. Pray that this may continue.

The Bench Translation Team in Ethiopia – Ethiopia is also in at least partial lockdown, so travel is not possible and churches are not allowed to open. Pray for the team trying to complete their final checking procedures under these conditions and for other translation teams continuing to work without the help they would normally get. The number of COVID 19 cases is relatively small so far but the peak is still expected – perhaps in July.

Prabhakar Salvi – Pray for the Korku people in India that Prabhakar and his family work amongst, who are struggling to get food to their families. Unemployment and insecurities are also major challenges. Pray for the family as they seek funds to help in the situation.

If you have a news item for inclusion in the next edition of Mission Lines, please send it to mary.breeze44@gmail.com.