

COVID-19 & THE EXTREME POOR

WHY THE POOR MAY BE HIT THE HARDEST



SPRING 2020

BRIGHT  HOPE®

I was supposed to be in Africa today, in Turkana, Kenya. A very remote and difficult place. **But all my plans changed about three weeks ago as the COVID-19 virus spread across China and Europe** and shut down international flights.

I am glad not to be traveling overseas at this very moment, not so much to avoid the virus, but to be with my wife and kids, checking on my parents and friends, helping neighbors and keeping in touch with Bright Hope Allies and church partners via phone and the internet.

But then my mind wonders, **“What if I was in the middle of nowhere and this pandemic hit?”** **What then? How would it be?**

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation rightly point out that:

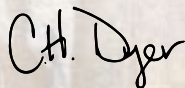
- **“Pandemics disproportionately affect people living in the world’s poorest places.”**
- **“Pandemics can also quickly overload the health systems” in places of extreme poverty because they have more limited capacity there.**

It is easy for us in the midst of a crisis to only think of ourselves, our families, etc. **But take a moment and imagine you are living in a place of extreme poverty. Living in a difficult place where running water is hard to find, where health care is all but absent, where food scarcity is an everyday occurrence.**

This short booklet is meant to take you to a place not so nice and comfortable. A place where a pandemic could easily rage and kill far more than what Westernized countries are experiencing.

I pray God will speak to you, and that you will raise your hand to help through prayers for the poor and sharing resources with them so they can get the help they desperately need.

God bless,



C.H. Dyer
President & CEO, Bright Hope

P.S. - Food security, Health and sanitation. Social distancing. The vast disparity between the rich and the poor as it relates to the spread of the coronavirus pandemic is overwhelming. Christians must pray for the world’s most vulnerable, those living in the grips of extreme poverty. The risk of tragic devastation is great if the virus were to spread throughout their under-resourced communities. Read on to find out why and what you can do to help.

FOOD SECURITY

NIGERIA

The COVID-19 virus has some Americans stuffing their pantries and freezers with enough food to last for months. We also probably have enough money in our savings accounts to cover expenses for a little while. In Nigeria, however, and other poor countries, that is impossible!

Nigeria, along with other African nations, has instituted a 2-week lock down in order to slow the transmission of the coronavirus. With people confined to their homes, the many vendors who survive day-by-day selling food and other services in markets and on street corners will have no way to make money. With no income, they won't be able to buy enough food to feed their families during the lock down.

COVID-19 is scary, yet the fear of starvation is terrifying!

Cecilia Achonwa owns what used to be a bustling restaurant near Lagos. Now that the coronavirus has invaded Nigeria and leaders have issued shelter in place orders, she has no customers and no income and no way to support her family.

Others residents fear the worst. Abiodun Gaji lamented, "People are hungry... millions of people depend on daily sales. If they don't make sales, they don't eat."¹

KENYA

Hunger is already a familiar foe for many slum residents, but flattening-the-curve measures like closing schools are unfortunately causing more children to go hungry.

Many schools, in slum communities, offer feeding programs and there are millions children who rely on them for nourishment twice a day. However, in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Kenyan schools have closed, meaning children have been cut off from their primary source of food, and the burden falls back on their parents, who already live on the brink of disaster.



SEE THE DIFFERENCE...

FACT: WE'VE BEEN TOLD TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT DAILY

Lysol spray and disinfecting wipes are literally a "foreign concept." Even if they were available, there's no money for them.

**"ASK THE LORD TO PROTECT US DURING THIS OUTBREAK
BECAUSE THE COUNTRY IS NOT READY TO COUNTERACT COVID-19."**

--- PRAYER REQUEST FROM HAITI ---

1. <https://www.erieneusnow.com/story/41956887/we-dont-work-we-dont-eat-informal-workers-face-stark-choices-as-africas-largest-megacity-shuts-down>

MEDICAL AND SANITATION

HAITI

The Haitian health care system is in a constant state of strain. Even without a crisis like the quickly-spreading coronavirus, Haiti's health care system struggles to provide affordable care for its citizens.

If COVID-19 starts spreading in Haiti, those who live in rural areas (more than 50% of the population) won't be able to get to a hospital or clinic. And for those who do find transportation, there are not enough coronavirus test kits or beds and ventilators for people in need of critical care. **For the nearly 11 million Haitians, there are only about 30 ICU beds!**²

People with severe coronavirus and pneumonia need oxygen! In the US, thanks to oxygen generators, oxygen is pumped through ventilators. Haitian hospitals, on the other hand, have no ventilators for patients. They also don't have IV solution, space to separate patients from each other, protective gear for doctors and nurses, or enough health care workers in the first place! There is a huge shortage of healthcare workers, roughly **seven for every 1000** people compared to America, where there are **25 healthcare workers per 1,000 people**.

KENYA

Another added challenge to health and COVID-19 prevention is access to water and good sanitation.

Dark trickling, filth-filled water runs freely in the dirt streets of the slum. Sanitation is clearly an issue. **In general, households do not have indoor plumbing or electricity.** Some people simply go to the bathroom in a plastic bag and fling it anywhere.

Only "36% of households in [slums] have access to in-house or in-compound piped drinking water," compared to 84% in "formal settlements," according to a study by a New York professor.

Residents of urban slums like Mathare, in Nairobi, don't have indoor plumbing. They take buckets and plastic containers to a public water source, perhaps pay for the water, and then haul their heavy loads back home. It may or may not be clean. They may have to add a chlorine treatment or boil it before drinking it. **They have to do this every day.**

--- THERE IS NO SAFE PLACE FOR THESE VULNERABLE PEOPLE TO ESCAPE. ---

SEE THE DIFFERENCE...

**FACT: WE'VE BEEN TOLD TO WASH
OUR HANDS FREQUENTLY**

Water is a scarce commodity already, and they have to go out in public to buy it and haul it back to their home every day in heavy jugs and buckets.



2. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/03/24/820968801/the-dread-of-responsibility-paul-farmer-on-the-pandemic-and-poor-countries>

SOCIAL DISTANCING

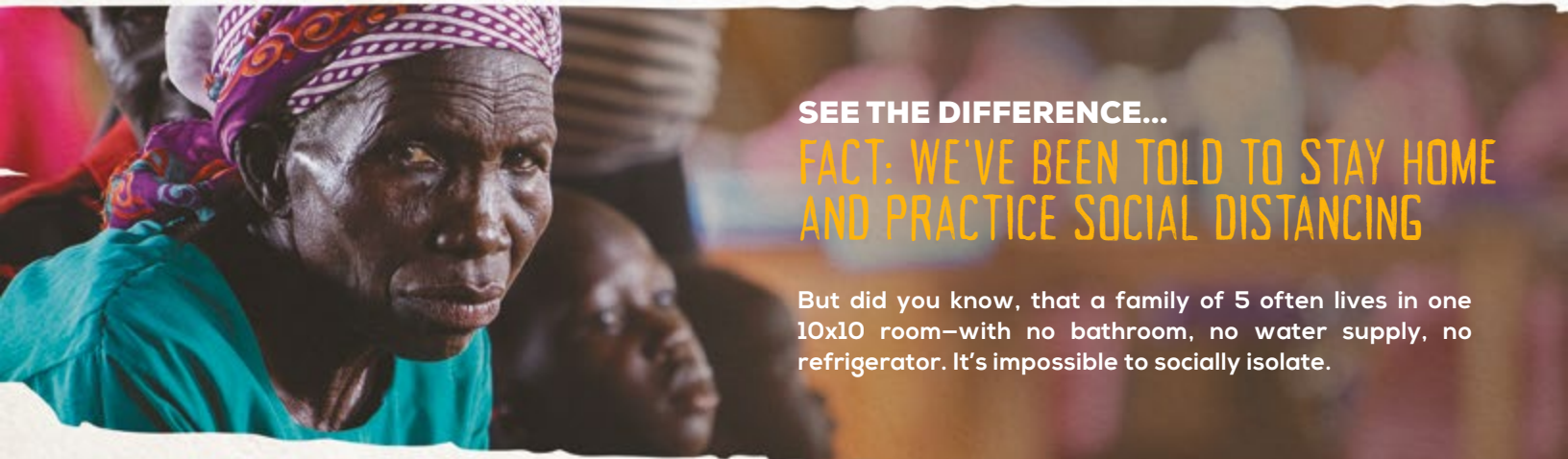
AFRICA

As COVID-19 has crept into almost every country across the globe, much of the same prevention advice can be heard regardless of what country you call home—whether it’s the United States, Bolivia, or Uganda. Stay home, practice social distancing, and wash your hands frequently with soap and water, right?

However, depending on where you live, some of these vitally important precautions are impossible. To understand this better, it’s helpful to get a glimpse of what life is like in some impoverished communities in developing nations.

Approximately 2.5 million Kenyans live in densely populated slums of Nairobi, Kenya. In one slum, Mathare Valley, about 600,000 people live in area of land only about 1.2 by .2 miles wide. **Just knowing that much, the problem of social distancing becomes clear.** Entire families, six or seven people, live in one room—6x8, 10x10 or 12x12. Their neighbors are crowded together a foot or two apart.³

For the thousands of people who live in remote villages, socially isolating is not realistic. Most live hand-to-mouth, meaning the work they do each day pays for the provisions they need for that day. It’s an impossible decision to choose between staying at home to avoid contracting and spreading the virus or going out to earn money for your family’s daily food. Staying at home and surviving do not coexist.



SEE THE DIFFERENCE...

FACT: WE'VE BEEN TOLD TO STAY HOME AND PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

But did you know, that a family of 5 often lives in one 10x10 room—with no bathroom, no water supply, no refrigerator. It’s impossible to socially isolate.

“PRAY FOR ALL LEADERS CURRENTLY WORKING ON THIS SITUATION AND FOR THE RESPONDERS ON THE FRONTLINES, SUCH AS MEDICAL PERSONNEL.”

--- PRAYER REQUEST FROM UGANDA ---

3. <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/water-sanitation-and-hygiene>

WHEN PANDEMIC STRIKES THE POOR

A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

BE FEARLESS: Fear can prevent God from being able to work through us during a crisis. While we want to be wise, we don't want to allow fear to hold us back from any opportunity to minister to those in need throughout our neighborhood, country or even across the world.

Lydia is the wife of a man on staff at Bright Hope and is a nurse. Her job has required that she care for patients infected with COVID-19. She described how one patient was distraught because his family was not allowed to visit him due to the quarantine. He was scared, sick and alone. While other workers looked on, afraid to approach him, dressed in protective gear Lydia boldly walked up to him and held his hand. The patient started crying, sobbing as she compassionately spoke words of comfort and grace to him. While other caretakers paused at the man's door, she showed no fear and responded as God prompted her.

There are a lot of lonely and frightened people in our communities these days, and God may prompt you to action. But we also pray God will prompt many Christ followers to remember those living in extreme poverty.

BE PRAYING: Only God's miraculous hand will slow and keep this virus from spreading violently across the most impoverished communities of the world. At Bright Hope we share urgent prayer requests from the field [via text message](#) twice a month and update our [online prayer wall](#) with current prayer requests that make it simple for you to pray specifically for the poor.

BE GIVING: At this time, there is an opportunity to change a life and bring Hope to those caught in this pandemic and living in very poor communities. You can make a profound difference.

Few people are lonelier (*...even the closest friend of the poor deserts him. Proverbs 19:4*) or more vulnerable than the extreme poor. With their lack of savings and food security, an inability to social distance, inadequate health care systems and a helplessness to practice basic handwashing and hygiene practices, they are indeed the most vulnerable in this horrific pandemic.

SEE THE DIFFERENCE...

FACT: WE'VE BEEN TOLD TO GET MEDICAL CARE IN CASES OF SERIOUS ILLNESS

Health care is minimal and often painfully inadequate in the best of times, let alone during a pandemic. There's a serious lack of equipment, supplies, pharmaceuticals and medical personnel to handle an influx of patients. Besides, people have no money to pay medical bills, the free hospital is far away, and they have no means of transportation. Even before a pandemic, slum residents have died on their way to the free hospital.



MOVING FORWARD

"If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, no evil will conquer you; no plague will come near your home. For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go."

--- PSALM 91:9-11---

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Your generous gift of \$25, \$50, \$75 or any other amount to Bright Hope's [disaster relief fund](#) helps us reach impoverished families with important instruction about virus prevention, installation of handwashing stations and distribution of hygiene kits to impoverished communities.

Current Bright Hope COVID-19 responses projects:

- Handwashing stations in impoverished communities
- Hygiene and sanitation training: We train pastors and church leaders about virus prevention and good hygiene practices, so they can teach their people about the virus and prevention measures
- Food security for children in Kenya's Mathare Valley slum and elsewhere
- Clean water initiatives
- Economic development loans

Please consider becoming a Bright Hope member by joining [Impact](#) with your gift of \$15/month or [Radiant](#) with a gift of \$39/month.

No matter the size or regularity of your giving, all gifts help some of the most vulnerable people around the world break the chains of extreme poverty and defeat the COVID-19 virus.

Give your gift online at www.BrightHope.org/covid or send by mail to: Bright Hope 2060 Stonington Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

THANK YOU!

