

July to September 2020
APF Prayer and Newsletter



African
Pastors
Fellowship

Impetus.



Lockdown, locust and landslide

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

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where we left off



From the CEO

The interruptions are our work.

Henri Nouwen wrote of a now-famous conversation which helped him think about interruptions as something other than a bother. He writes, "While visiting the University of Notre Dame, I met an older experienced professor who had spent most of his life there. While we strolled over the beautiful campus, he said with a certain melancholy in his voice, 'You know... my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work.'"

The coronavirus pandemic has been a major interruption to the work that APF had expected to be doing in 2020. Scaling-up the eVitabu app, training conferences, tree-planting, bike and Bible distributions and more... It has all been paused as various forms of lockdown, quarantine and curfew affect everyday life in Africa.

Future planning and visits have been mothballed so, in addition to the anxiety and loss surrounding Covid-19, it has been a painful bother.

But in the space created by lockdown, APF has adapted. We've held regular Zoom conference calls connecting partners from across Africa for reflection, Bible study and prayer. Technology has been harnessed to bring UK supporters together too. Using social media, we set up a Covid-19 Relief Fund. Within two weeks of opening, your generous donations raised over £10,000 which we quickly passed to African partners who have set up local community-based responses to the triple threat of lockdown, locusts and landslides which have hit the region in recent months.

This edition of Impetus contains theological reflection on these calamities as understood by our partners in Africa and tells just a few of the stories of how the Covid-19 Relief Fund has been used to enable effective ministry in lockdown. APF's plans have unquestionably been interrupted but the work continues: maybe we too have discovered that the interruptions are our work.

Thank you for your continued support.

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to be 'Dave Stedman'.

Revd Dave Stedman, CEO

Around Africa

A huge thank you to APF supporters who helped raise an incredible £15,000 to support our African partners lead lifesaving responses to the Covid-19 crisis. We've already provided thousands of pounds to church leaders so their communities can access clean water and soap for hand washing, buy basic food stores for the lockdown and get accurate information about coronavirus. With dedicated partners like ours, just a little can go a long way to help hard-working but vulnerable people stay home and save lives in Africa.

Thanks to your generous donations, Pastor Simon Laboso from Central Rift Baptist Convention, Kenya, has been providing food relief to vulnerable families around Kericho. "The majority living within my area depend on daily wages from manual work" he said. "Currently they are not able to fend for their families because of closure of businesses, restricted movements and curfew imposed by the government. Provision of food is a big challenge for the government as it has minimal capacity and the need is huge. That is why as a church we endeavour to reach out. We are sharing the love of Christ."



"I send you my thanks for the support with food and sanitation materials to the Gakenke and Rulindo communities during the lockdown period," says Rev Charles Munyamahoro from Rwanda. "Normally, people in rural areas buy food after their daily work. Because they have not received wages to support their families in the lockdown it is a big challenge."



Around Africa

In Zambia, Pastor Mwape Charles used an APF Covid-19 Relief Grant to set up a hand washing project. Water buckets, soaps, face masks and sanitiser were bought and people were shown how to use it properly. "The local district health department was so impressed by what we were doing and that we demonstrated good hygiene practices that they said they trusted us to meet again in very small numbers to conduct cell group Bible studies. This has ignited active interdenominational home fellowships, unity and the caring of one another."



The World Health Organisation says hand washing in the community is critical to fighting the spread of Covid-19. Revd Sam Eibu, who oversees the Baptist churches in north-east Uganda, used APF funding to provide soap to rural churches and remind people to wash their hands properly. Just 40p buys a large locally made soap bar, enough for a large household. This means your generous giving to APF's Covid-19 fund helped Sam improve the hygiene for over 7,000 people.

In Burundi, leaders from the Baptist Union used an APF grant to provide protective kits including face masks and hand washing facilities and thermometers to vulnerable church members. Revd Jean Marie Bukeyeneza told us, "Besides the provision of the protective material, we are training the pastors to make them the frontline in the fight against this pandemic."



Thanks to your generous donations, jerrycans for community hand washing were provided by APF partner New Nation Church to former refugees living in Gurei informal settlement on the outskirts of Juba, South Sudan.



Victor Imanaturikumwe from northern Rwanda told us how his APF bicycle is helping in the lockdown:

"I hoped the bike grant we received from APF was used only for ministry, local movements and family income purposes. During this time of chaos because of Covid-19, I have seen another most important role of a bike. In our town there is scarcity of water. It takes us a long time going to find water. This is also another challenge to combat the rapid spread of Covid-19. We are expected to wash hands as one of the best practices to fight against contamination, but we do not have water. Some poor people in the community do not have soap. I am grateful to APF for this grant as I wonder how we would have got water in this time without it. There is no doubt that APF really understands the best ways to equip African pastors."



Prayer points

Please pray:

- For the many APF friends and partners around Africa, especially those enduring hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns and seeking to help their communities
- For Charles Mwape in Zambia, who has been connected to APF by email for several years and has joined the recent Zoom calls
- Giving thanks for the ministry of the links with Baptist Union, through Revd Silas Ntukamuzina and Revd Jean Marie Bukeyenaza





Joy and generosity in Uganda

Revd Francis Esomu is principal of Atirir Bible School in rural Teso Region, east Uganda. His theological reflection on the impact of the coronavirus lockdown highlights how joy and generosity can overcome disaster.

Here in Uganda we have been overwhelmed by the chaos and difficulties caused by the desert locusts that invaded most parts of Teso, Karamoja, Acholi and Lango Regions. The locust destroys crops and green vegetation once it lands in the area.

As if that is not enough, Covid-19 has spread all over the world with breath-taking speed. It is stealing lives, bankrupting businesses, plunging economies into chaos, shuttering churches, distancing people, hurting

people. It has taken our routines and has changed many of our most cherished patterns of life. It has presented a challenge unlike any we have seen in our lifetimes. These things create fear among the people here in Uganda. They are wondering where is God in this situation? What is he telling us from his word? As a pastor and leader here in Teso Region, I have told them that although Covid-19 is such a deadly and contagious disease that has claimed many lives, God is in control of everything that happens to his people. It is God's reminder to me

and everyone else that we do not control our lives and if anyone feels they are in control of everything they are denying that God is all knowing and powerful. We completely depend on God.

Jesus Christ knew that he was completely dependent on his Father as seen in Matthew 26:39: "Our Lord Jesus Christ cried and said, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.'"

In this time of uncertainty, two sides of the coin come into play. Sometimes we feel God should fix our afflictions as soon as possible. Then again, not as we will, but as God wills. Our Lord faced the same, but he realised the decision was not his. It belonged to his Father in heaven. Let God's will be done!

The present circumstance is an opportunity for God to manifest the life of Christ in us. We need not rely on ourselves but on God who brings life out of death. The more we realise our dependence on God, the more we are changed into the image of his Son, Jesus.

A similar account is recorded by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-2 about some challenges that a newly planted church in Philippi faced:

"And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity."

The Macedonian believers, despite their extreme poverty, found they were able to



Revd Francis Esomu

give out of the joy they found in the grace of God. Amidst affliction, their joy in the grace of the Lord turned their poverty into a wealth of generosity.

As we see many in our community in huge need, giving is the only thing we can do in this time of uncertainty, locusts and lockdown.

Prayer points

Please pray:

- Giving thanks that although the lockdown restrictions have exacerbated poverty in Uganda, to date there have been no Covid-19 fatalities and relatively few confirmed cases
- Atirir Bible School offers Certificate level theological education to rural pastors from Baptist and other denominations. We pray for that Atirir Bible School becomes a regional centre for leadership development
- For Francis as he combines many responsibilities and travels to other regions, including Kamuli and Karamoja, to train pastors and leaders



Faith in action in Rwanda

"Heavy rains that poured in the night of May 6 2020 caused a number of disasters. It led to the death of 72 people, over 8,000 families have been displaced, damage of infrastructure and roads, 3,000 houses, five bridges and several farms were swept away by the floods, and properties have been destroyed across the country."

Rwandan Ministry of Emergency Management.



In Rwanda, heavy rain and landslides have made life even more challenging for rural communities already struggling through one of Africa's stricter Covid-19 lockdowns. Revd Mutagoma Japhet from the small rural Eglise Evangélique de la Bonne Volonté au Rwanda (EEBVR) network of churches shares his experience of helping communities affected by both lockdown and landslide.

The Covid-19 pandemic lockdown has been a real challenge here in Rwanda. People have been suffering from hunger, the failure of their businesses and the loss of their jobs. Already we were seeing increasing malnutrition especially in younger children. This disastrous torrent has only worsened the situation.

The Bible says, "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). This verse reminds us that God remains faithful even in tough periods.



Food distribution by EEBVR church members

This is our experience. With funding from APF, we donated significant grants that helped our communities fight against Covid-19. We provide soap and hygiene stations in four different communities. Using the bicycles we received from APF in 2018, we transported clean water from long distances to people living with disabilities during the lockdown.

Following the flooding, we led displaced people to safety, sheltering them in churches and schools. We provided basic items like cooking pans, blankets, food and clothing. Overall, we supported 73 displaced families in two camps in Musanze District with 200 kg of maize, and also provided fruit and toys for 63 children. But the effects of the landslides have made worse the devastating impacts of the lockdown in one of the poorest parts of Rwanda where people live hand-to-mouth and face extremes of hunger and poverty.

After receiving food for her children, one parent, who had lost her home to flooding, said she now understood that you cannot separate your faith from your deeds. One comes out from the other like the crops from the soil.

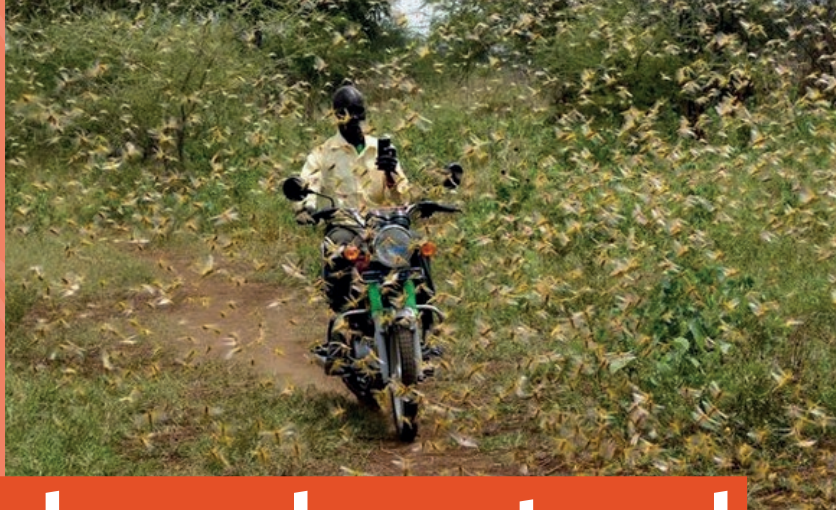
Prayer points

Please pray:

- For marginalised communities in DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda that have seen crops, property and goods destroyed by torrential rain, floods and landslips
- Give thanks for the local responses being initiated by APF partners that have received Covid-19 Relief Fund grants, especially Pastor Japhet Mutagoma, Revd Charles Munyamahoro and Revd Emmanuel Gatera, all in Rwanda
- As the lockdown begins to ease in Rwanda, pray for life to normalise with churches being able to gather safely, training conferences resuming before long and communities to remember the help they received from Christian neighbours
- For Pastor Victor, the new legal representative of Eglise Evangélique de la Bonne Volonté au Rwanda, as he combines teaching, ministry and academic study



EEBVR leader Victor Imaturikumwe's photos of a damaged house and primary school in Musanze District



Lockdown, locust and landslide in Kenya



Western Kenya has faced a triple-hit in recent months. Besides the significant impacts of the lockdown on jobs, incomes and livelihoods, the area has been badly affected by locust swarms and landslides. Revd Shadrack Koma from the AIC North Rift Convention in Western Kenya shares his thoughts on the situation.

In such time of suffering and adversity it is futile to imagine there is no God. Even in the darkest times God is present with us. There is no time when God is absent. According to Job 36, he is in control of the entire universe. He knows the weather patterns and what is happening in the world. Nothing happens without him knowing. God sometimes allows such events like the lockdown, locusts and the landslides to take place to demonstrate his sovereignty but amidst such events, God remains the creator and the sustainer of the universe. God is everywhere, even in the lockdown, locusts and landslides. In this time, I see that God is teaching

humanity about humility. He is preparing us for a greater blessing to come but for now, we have to endure this. God is teaching the church that there is value in suffering. Through suffering the church is strengthened. It is a wakeup call that adorns the church with the garment of glory (Romans 8:18). Suffering prepares the church for mission. It is important to note that God does allow suffering, pain and even death if they best serve his purposes but the suffering is for a short time. The pain that has been caused by the lockdown, locusts and landslides is for a short time compared to God's eternity.

This time of lockdown, locust and landslides can be our greatest motivation for spiritual growth or a deadly means of discouragement. The difference depends on our understanding of God's purpose for allowing it to happen. We must remember that God is with us through these events. He is teaching humanity about humility. What God teaching the church now will help us serve him more diligently in the world as the threat of Covid-19 passes.



Revd Shadrack Koma

What are desert locusts and how are they affecting East Africa?

Locusts belong to a family of grasshoppers called the Acrididae. The desert locust is one of a dozen species of short-horned grasshoppers that can alter their behaviour to become sociable, form swarms and can travel over large distances. Desert locusts are considered the most destructive of all locust species and are known for their rapid breeding, and for their huge appetites.

Plagues can occur if a widespread infestation of locusts lasts for one or more years. There were six recorded plagues through the 1900s, one of them lasted 13 years! During plagues, desert locusts can spread over vast areas. They can travel into as many as 60 countries covering 20% of the earth's land surface.

As the coronavirus crisis spreads to the region, communities already battling hunger and a health emergency have faced several invasions of desert locusts. Already this year, several huge swarms of destructive desert locusts have ripped through East Africa threatening local food supplies and livelihoods. With countries under lockdown and flights halted, people are struggling to get supplies to combat the insects affecting their food and income.

According to the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group for East Africa, 19 million people are already facing acute food shortage in the region.





We will pick up where we left off...



One of APF's projects that has been paused due to coronavirus lockdown restrictions on gatherings is the Growing Greener agriculture project run by New Life Christian Church in Malawi. Revd Lloyd Chizenga reports on how the church network was responding.

What is happening in Malawi with Covid-19? As a church we are currently on a sensitisation tour, teaching the communities on how people can get the virus and how to avoid getting the virus. There is a lot of misinformation about, especially in the remote areas, and the government is being supported by NGOs [Non-Governmental Organisations] and churches like ours to keep people informed. We are busy bringing awareness messages to rural communities about Covid-19.

Apparently, about 80 people have been found positive in Malawi. Twenty-four have recovered and three patients have died. The government tried to impose a national lockdown, but it did not work well because most of the people are poor. We live hand-to-mouth and there were no plans to help people financially so they could stay at home without starving. As you may be aware, around 85% of the population lives in the rural areas so they must continue farming, buying and selling food.

Besides the impact of Covid-19 on our livelihoods, it has also affected us morally, physically and spiritually. We have a sense that some of our cultural tendencies have to be stopped. This includes having to follow social distancing guidelines and keeping at least a meter apart from others. We have been told we must avoid hand shaking and instead hand wash frequently with soap or sanitiser. There is also a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people. All these are new things in the Malawian setting. We are used to meeting in our hundreds even in rural communities. Our government has been less strict than many others in Africa but they are now saying we should wear a mask.

In terms of the 'Growing Greener' sustainable agriculture project we have been running with support from APF and Operation Agri, Covid-19 has had an impact. Since we can only meet with 50 people and not more than that, we have had to pause meetings and training sessions with project beneficiaries. Our community groups normally have around 120 people in them so training must be reduced.



Revd Lloyd Chizenga

We will pick up where we left off as soon as we are able. One thing we can do is to divide the community groups into more but smaller groups to follow the guidance. In the long term, Covid-19 has not affected the operations of the project so much, it has just slowed it down this year.

One of the tasks I have been doing is to provide hand washing buckets, soap, sanitiser, and face masks to over 35 communities in the Chikwawa area. This is so important to stop Covid-19 spreading through our communities. We have been supported by APF donors in the UK to do this but we need more assistance so we can purchase more.

Prayer points

Please pray:

- Giving thanks for the long-standing partnership APF has with Revd Lloyd Chizenga and his team
- Giving thanks for Lloyd's faith and optimism about picking up where we left off with Growing Greener
- That some training has been able to continue albeit with reduced numbers
- For any negative unintended consequences of social distancing on cultural habits to be minimal but that soap, water and facemasks being provided by Lloyd have maximum impact, maintaining public health and protection from coronavirus in Chikwawa region

The view from Tanzania



Unlike most African countries, the Tanzanian government did not announce a strict lockdown. Churches, mosques, and other religious buildings have remained open for worshippers, although schools, sports and other gatherings deemed unnecessary were closed until June. From Karagwe, a remote rural town in Kagera Region in the far north-west corner of Tanzania, Pastor Heavenlight Luoga shares his reflections on what God has been reminding him of during the crisis.

This pandemic teaches us how God is in control of this wonderful and fragile world. During the crisis, there are both dangers and opportunities. Dangers because thousands and thousands of people have been infected and died. Also, there is the related economic crisis with people losing their jobs.

Opportunities have come because many people are turning to God. We have seen, all over the East African countries, people crying and praying to God because of Covid-19. It is striking the world and all of us realise we are most certainly not in control, 'we' meaning humanity as a whole. The fragility of life is emphasised, the limitations of knowledge become plain and human capacity is challenged. People here in Karagwe were in fear concerning the limitations of local health infrastructure. Our highly social lifestyle and overcrowded homes all created a huge fear of the virus. Many expected

to see uncountable dead bodies on the streets. Thank God this has not yet come about in Tanzania. Our government recently announced that the situation here is not too bad. The number of people affected in hospitals is coming down. Our government prepared 1,000 beds at Saba Saba Exhibition Ground, but today all of them have been removed.

We see wealthy countries investing millions of dollars for security purposes, on health insurance and social safety nets, but still many people in those countries are dying from coronavirus. It is a reminder to us that God is in control of the world and he can do whatever he wants to do, without any resistance. In response, we start looking up. As Deuteronomy 32:39 says:

"Look now; I myself am he!

There is no other god but me!

I am the one who kills and gives life;

I am the one who wounds and heals;

no one can be rescued from my powerful hand!"



Revd Heavenlight Luoga

In the UK



Revd John Martin

As of the AGM in May, we bid farewell to Revd John Martin who has served APF as a Trustee for a decade. John was Chair of Trustees during the recruitment of our current staff team, and oversaw the transition period surrounding major changes in personnel and operations. John's calm and reasonable manner, together with his deep concern for the church in Africa, will be missed at board meetings. John will continue to support APF in prayer and other ways in retirement.

Michelle Anderson

Michelle joined APF as Finance Coordinator in September 2015. She is leaving us to take on a full-time primary school senior leadership team role. Michelle has been responsible for introducing new financial systems as well as efficiently managing financial records, preparing monthly monitoring reports, setting up international payments and liaising with African partners. Her methodical and thorough approach will be greatly missed, and we wish her great success in her new duties at school.



Use an APF video in your online service.

One of our aims for early 2020 was to recruit 200 sponsors for eVitabu, our ground-breaking church leader training and resource-hub app. We had hoped that this would largely be achieved through church visits.

But even though this cannot happen now, you can still support APF in your online church services. Why not use one of our videos from our YouTube channel or Facebook page as part of your online service provision?

We're also very happy to take part in Zoom calls organised by your church or group or

work with our African partners to create new content for your services. Just let us know what you're after and we'll do our best to make it happen.



The vision of APF is to enable African Christian leaders, of all denominations, to minister effectively in thriving local churches that serve flourishing communities.

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Giving to APF

If you would like to donate to APF, please visit www.africanpastors.org/donate where you can make a one-off gift or set up a regular donation. Alternatively, post a cheque to our address or use one of the services below:



Please consider donating £2 to cover print and postage costs. Thank you.

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