



PREAMBLE

Dear reader, I hope that this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe. We at CHIMAMM thought it worthy sharing our individual experiences of the pandemic with the rest of the world. We hope that you will find something insightful or encouraging.

Life has taken another turn with in no time. When we first heard of COVID-19 late 2019, we didn't not anticipate its effect on global economy, politics and social aspects. In Uganda alone, the Minister for trade reported a decline in Uganda's earnings from \$ 711.9M in January – \$ 593.79M by 30th March 2020. Politically, several countries have suspended their legislative activities while socially, a twist in the life style is incredibly unbelievable. Public gatherings have been suspended. In Africa, for example, we have witnessed burials consisting of only handful of people, this has never been the norm. People attach value to sending off of their loved ones or a community member. COVID- 19 has broken that culture.

Even though it has been difficult for us to even carry out activities more so medical support activities but we know that the need is enormous and even though, we have not reported a single death of COVID-19 as a nation but hundreds of people have died from other conditions. As the government works towards lifting the lockdown in phases, CHIMAMM team is coming up with ways to resume our hospital ministry while observing measures put in place by our leaders. The team experienced new things during the lockdown that are shared in the articles herein.

I hope that you enjoy reading these stories. Please feel free to share with us your own experiences on our social media pages Facebook: Caring Hands International Ministries and Medical Missions and Twitter: @chimamm_org.

Susan Nalugo

COVID-19 VIRUS

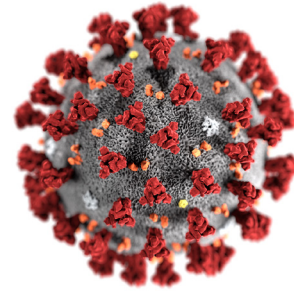


Image of SARS CoV-2 virus

- Be **SAFE** from Coronavirus Infection.
- Be **SMART** and inform yourself about it.
- Be **KIND** and support one another.

MY LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCE

I am telling you this virus is very dangerous, Susan. Once it arrives here, you need to stop going to Mulago, wear N95, stay at home etc. You need to make sure that your grandmother stays home and wears a mask; people with underlying health conditions and the elderly are at high risk of catching the virus...." shared by one of the visiting doctors from the US.

As the conversation continued, I could see how challenging management of this disease would be if we had an outbreak but something unimaginable was asking my grandmother to stay home and later on ask her to wear a mask. How on earth was I to communicate to people in the village tasking them to educate my grandmother about the new disease? Thinking about the requirements for managing COVID-19 patients in our low resource limited was even harder to imagine. If powerful countries were finding it difficult to manage their patients and the number of people dying was increasing by the minute, what would happen to us; Africa?

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THRIVING THROUGH TOUGH TIMES

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Before long, in his State of the nation address, the President shut down several institutions and announced COVID -19 preventive measures. The speed at which things were unfolding was very rapid. It was becoming more common for the President to address the nation. As COVID-19 news from the Western world clogged both main stream and social media, the President's State addresses became more frequent. I missed his address in which a partial lockdown included private cars. I could not believe it when I woke up to the news. It felt like a bad dream. Even though I always store some food but I wasn't sure of how long it was going to last or how long the lockdown was going to take. This was a heavy slap in the face of a predominantly agricultural State and where majority of the city dwellers need daily income to meet basic needs. There was a lot to process and the behavior of security operatives to implement the President's directives was an added stress. Their translation of enforcement was a mismatch to the president's speeches. I remember that in one of his addresses, he referred to security operatives as "PIGS" for beating up people caught by the curfew time.



A Uganda security operative running after a vendor to stop trading from the street during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Fast forward, we are into a lockdown and life has totally changed within just a week. I listened, read and shared every piece of News on COVID-19 that came in on my social media pages. "Never seen something like this" was almost said by everyone.

Many things were unclear to many people thus leading to fear as a response. Thankfully, I did not surrender to fear but faith as I quickly sought my Refuge; God. Every day was unique so I embraced the change. I prayed every day to God (I still do) to intervene in the situation not only for us but for the rest of the world.

Besides prayer, I have done a few other things during the lockdown. I walk to places (stores) to buy groceries. It's challenging to walk with a mask on, but quite safe. Together with the fellowship that meets in my home (during normal life), we have spread some love in the community the best way we can. I am perfecting my baking skills; I am also doing other things to ensure that my brain remains active. I hear people saying that they cannot wait for all of this to end so that life can go back to normal but I think we better prepare ourselves for the "new normal". How can it be normal after the economy has been hit so hard, if several people have already lost their jobs?

On a sad note, I learned that, while much effort goes towards fighting COVID-19, mortality rate from other ailments has unbelievably gone so high. According to Dr. Okwaro Obuku (former President of the Uganda Medical Association), a total of 890 deaths has been registered in the 35 days of the lockdown. Please refer to the breakdown below.

- 418 Malaria
- 265 pneumonia
- 207 Anemia
- 405 Non Communicable diseases
- 105 Mothers

As I conclude, I encourage us to continue keeping safe, observe the directives given to us and to stay hopeful.

Susan Nalugo

THE QUARANTINE EXPERIENCE FOR COVID-19

Like many of the countries across the world. The Covid-19 pandemic which started in Wuhan, China in late November 2019 took us by storm. From the time the first case was announced in Uganda, everything changed.

I had personally travelled to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to wind up my PhD studies focusing on how to best determine kidney function among sub-Saharan Africans. Having gone through the huddles of acquiring a British visa from Uganda which I have to get every six months, I was surely ready to have a good time winding up my studies, the final lap. Little did I know that this would be interrupted. As fate would have it, I was staying with an elderly pleasant couple in Islington Town. The newspapers began reporting a few cases of patients with COVID-19 and the fact that older people were more predisposed to getting this disease. I actually used to take two trains to school and I had quite serious contact with a couple of hundreds of people every day. This did not go down well with my hosts who rightly outlined the risk I was pausing to them. This forced me to take an urgent plane to return home.

By the time I got home on the 17th of March 2020, a mandatory quarantine was instituted. My wife who had come to pick me from the airport was actually not allowed to see me because we were whisked away to a secluded hotel in Entebbe where we were supposed to spend 14 days of quarantine. Unlike most quarantines, we actually had to pay 55\$ USD every day for accommodation and meals which was quite a trying time. I have never been to prison, so staying in a single room for more than 20 days took a very big toll on me. However, I thank God that after the long wait, my results of the COVID-19 test came back negative and I was finally allowed to go home. The challenge was that at that time no cars were allowed to travel without travel stickers from the government and I had none having been in quarantine for a long time.

I am grateful to my brother, Fred who came to pick me up and finally got me home only to join the lockdown. I am grateful to God for his continued protection.

I am now actively helping patients as a nephrologist and hope to continue doing this for a long time. Our main job is to stay alive and wait on God for everything in our lives.

Dr. Robert Kalyesubula

MY LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCE



Pastor Boniface Ayo Okello

During the lockdown, I got more time to pray and also study the word of God. I reached out to many people through phone calls and text messages. as much as possible in order to encourage them spiritually and also find out how they were. This is the first time I have used a lot of money to buy mobile phone airtime to pass on any message of God to several people. Fortunately, 95% of the responses about the messages I sent, were positive because they were appropriate for the situations; especially these three: The **first one** said that he had spent two days without sleeping, but on the third night he was seated on the bed at around 10:20pm and I sent him a message saying, "**Jesus still smiles at you**", After reading the message, he slept up to 8:30am. The **second one** said that her daughter was in labour for

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MY LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCE

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two days expecting her first born. She was in great fear and that's when I sent her a message saying, **"Be strong and courageous God is with you, He will help you and you will make it"**. She showed her the message and ten minutes later, she gave birth. The **third one** said that she had many challenges she was facing. She knelt down and asked God to speak to her. Then on getting up, she picked her Bible, that's when she also received a message saying, **"God still remembers you, He has not forgotten about you"**. The following day she got a solution for the challenges she was facing.

God has refreshed my vision of reaching out to needy people with the Gospel to demonstrate the love of God (John 3:16-17; Acts 10:38) which involves; building houses for the elderly, supporting the needy especially the elderly with basic necessities, equipping schools dropouts (especially the girl child) with basic skills that can help them generate income and teaching the body of Christ (discipleship). This lockdown is like the life cycle of a butterfly, we are at the pupa stage. During the pupa stage, the caterpillar has an expectation of coming out beautiful and flying. The question is what is everyone's expectation after the lockdown? God will never bless you above the level of your expectation.

On the other hand, it was not easy getting used to the life of waking up in the morning and staying at home the whole day, though afterwards I got used to it. This lifestyle caused me weight gain and I resorted to physical exercises so as to cut it down. Furthermore, barber shops were closed and I couldn't trim my hair.

Let's have an expectation like a caterpillar, that after the lockdown something great is going to take place and we will fly high and higher.

God bless you all.

Pastor Boniface Ayo Okello.

BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENTS FOR SURVIVAL

For over 60days, most Ugandans have been under a lockdown; a measure that has proved effective in the fight against a deadly pandemic COVID-19. The experience has been scary and very uncomfortable to all of us as a country. Behavioral adjustments including social distancing and frequent washing of hands have become the new normal in our day today life. The nightmare is that basic needs of life seem to have become luxurious ones. Who in this world could have imagined soap, water and keeping a distance from each other would save us? For a very long time (as far as my childhood), the campaign was on washing hands before and after eating as well after use of a washroom, but some people did not abide by it as many claimed the act to be unnecessary.

Today, frequent washing of hands is one of the measures to control the spread of the virus and people are voluntarily doing it. I am sure that I have washed my hands more times in these 60 days than I have ever in a year. This is unbelievable, but it's an experience that I share with many of my friends. People no longer shake hands nor hug because they are afraid of contracting COVID-19. This is unimaginable in a country with strong social beliefs.

In Uganda and in many other countries across the globe, the spirit of socializing had taken over family interactions. With the quarantine in place, many of us were given chance to appreciate the duties and responsibilities of people we always leave at home especially the wives and house helpers. I have learnt to cook, but on several occasions with unsuccessful attempts on baking cakes. A 24hour home experience is not fun because movements are limited around the house and the garden all day and week; this is far from what I have ever imagined. However, this has made me appreciate the choice I made of establishing a home away from town on a big piece of land. At my home, I can say that the lockdown was not really felt hard despite a few adjustments. God has blessed us with food and good health. We interact from a distance with our neighbors and our children play in

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BEHAVIORAL ADJUSTMENTS FOR SURVIVAL

From Page 4

their wide compounds on a daily basis. We have limited contact of the two families as we are not allowing any visits to each other's home.

I thank the loving God for the gift of life and good health granted to my family, friends and colleagues because none of us has contracted the virus nor developed any other serious medical condition. I do pray God keeps us protected and still loved in this hard time.

Dr. Mundaka JB
Doctor

THE UNFORESEEN TUNNEL



Ms Nabwami Esther

Warmly and happily celebrating the new year 2020 in which many anticipated great achievements in their lives, planned to work harder than ever before, whereas some had implemented their annual plans already. Then arose the COVID-19.

This COVID-19 pandemic was overlooked by both governments and citizens regarding it an epidemic in the country where

it was heard of first during the last quarter of 2019.

The terrible behaviour of invisibility/unrecognizable symptoms during the first week of its inception accelerated its transmission thus spreading in almost all countries in the world Uganda inclusive.

21st March, 2020 is when Uganda registered its first COVID-19 victim and immediately guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus took effect. Thus, the guidelines suffocated annual plans and ways of living of all Ugandans.

People were anxious not knowing exactly what would happen next. The lockdown guideline prohibiting movements of people was something that took us by surprise and we failed to report to work places. Putting people's work at a standstill completely changed our lives and initially the guideline was not regarded serious by many people, but it crippled us all. Some citizens who tried to go against the guidelines, were arrested by the police thus creating sorrow to the victims and their families. Many adjustments had to be adhered to painfully in order to abide by the lockdown guidelines. Many people reduced the number of meals per day which increased the chances of malnutrition especially among the infants. Some chronic patients are not in position to access hospitals on their due dates for review because public transport means were abolished; hence, worsening their health condition. Studies were put on hold which interrupted the national curriculum, scholars' plans, targets plus exposing many to risks of dropping out of school. The excessive time which is not utilized constructively by many citizens, increased crime rates, domestic violence rate and breaking up of families.

As the year started, the pandemic and its effects were not foreseen thus overturning the plans of many people.

Nabwami Esther

MY EXPERIENCE DURING THE LOCKDOWN



Ms Norah Kadde

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Almighty God for the gift of life, protection and support. This can't be possible without His grace.

It might sound like something small, but it's the biggest testimony so far I would say. When the lockdown was declared, I thought that the situation would get back to normal very soon, but as time went on, I realized things were getting worse everyday. The numbers of COVID-19 cases were increasing everyday and more health measures were being put in place the government of Uganda. I kept imagining what would happen in the near future. When I started watching news on international TV stations like BBC, Aljazeera, I realized it was necessary for us to stay at home in order to be safe because this was the global guideline. I couldn't believe the number of deaths I watched on different TV stations while I sat in the sitting room and the images of coffins which I first mistook for benches when they were paraded in some church of Italy. This pandemic will live to be remembered in our generation and history because it has affected the entire world.

I kept asking myself if this was a sign of the third world war or what God had for us to be in this situation. I believe the developed countries did everything possible to control the spread of the pandemic though it was difficult.

As days went by, public transport in Uganda was discontinued leading to hindering of my movement from home to the sickle cell clinic in Mulago National Referral hospital. I kept home for one week despite the phone calls I used to receive from my patients requesting me to go to hospital and attend to them. However, I kept advising them to visit their nearby hospitals. I thank God that not many of them were seriously sick. Though, I became stronger each day, panic kept engulfing me wondering when the country's lockdown would end.

I always recall one hot afternoon when I walked to the market and back home carrying food on my head. I took several hours to get home. This reminded me of the past days in the village when one would return from the garden carrying heavy stuff on the head and very tired.

One day I received numerous phone calls from a patient who was not feeling well after was treated from a clinic. This prompted me to walk from home to Mulago national referral hospital. At first my trek seemed to be fun, but later I experienced some fatigue despite the fact I was feeling happy that my long journey led to saving life.

There's a lot we need to learn in this lockdown about our lives. Our homes turned into churches. It is said no one knows the time, He will come like a thief and take you. So we always need to be prepared.

Finally, I salute all dear doctors, nurses and teams who stand at the frontline and extended the hand of healing to our brothers and sisters who test positive for COVID-19.

May God be merciful and heal our land

For God and my country

Norah Kadde
Nurse

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Mr. Ntege Peter Reagan

COVID-19 broke out at the end of 2019 in Wuhan, a city of China, and spread rapidly to all countries around the world at the beginning of 2020. The signs and symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of flue and if not managed quickly by health workers, it can tantamount to severe illnesses and death.

I heard about this pandemic over news and I never took it serious because it sounded like a joke to me. However, when Uganda registered its first COVID-19 case, I started witnessing the social changes the pandemic caused and they affected me too. Prior to the emergence of that first COVID-19 positive case, the President of Uganda had addressed the nation a few days back and sensitized the public about the virus and measures of handling it. Furthermore, he declared guidelines that nationals would follow during the lockdown. Then it was after his address that the public panicked and started observing whoever seemed to have COVID-19 signs and symptoms.

Currently, we are facing hard times I have never witnessed in my life. The presidential guidelines of the lockdown involved closing of all educational institutions, public offices, businesses, public and private transport. Movement from one place to another around the country became a nightmare especially to the sick who wanted to access treatment in medical facilities.

The government permitted some employees continuity of their work: journalists, bankers, some government bodies; however, they moved under strict guidelines after acquisition of temporary permits.

When the countrywide lockdown had just started, police officers always moved on streets enforcing citizens to follow the guidelines of the lockdown. Sometimes they used excessive force on vendors to vacate the streets.

Besides all these, Ugandans have posed numerous questions, for example if the pandemic signified the end of the world and the government has always addressed the country that the measures are meant to control COVID 19 from spreading across the country. Others were asking if God is punishing the world for the evils people have done. However, we took God out of our work places, schools, restaurants, clubs, and sports arenas; now they are all shutdown. But God is right where we put Him, out of everything. Meanwhile, there is light at the end of the tunnel and God is still there waiting to be invited back into our lives.

I thank the Government of Uganda and the Ministry of Health for the lockdown guidelines which were not meant to hurt us instead keep us safe from COVID-19.

My special thanks go to all the doctors, nurses and social workers who risked their lives to save our brothers and sisters who had contracted COVID-19. Furthermore, I thank all Ugandans for the spirit of togetherness you demonstrated towards following the presidential guidelines in fighting the pandemic.

Remember that we are making it through in this lockdown because God cares for our well-being and I call upon all of us to keep praying because there is power in prayer. I strongly believe that it's by God's will and grace upon us that we are progressing well and without Him, we are completely nothing. God's mercy and love endures forever.

Thanks be to God
For God and My Country

Ntege Peter Reagan

COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Mr. Mawanda John

It is quite surprising how our lives and everything that defines us can be changed instantly; all this was due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic has been talked about by some people as one of the biggest catastrophes since world War II. Several people have died at a high rate and also economies and economic systems stumbled.

The President of Uganda announced the initial lockdown guideline that led to closure of schools and churches on 18th March, 2020. It is upon this that we decided to stock some food at home which we have been feeding on plus some supplements from the market.

The Presidential declaration of a lockdown was due to the rapid spreading of the virus in the world and especially in some neighbouring countries of Uganda.

Nonetheless, my movements have been restricted due to the lockdown brought about by COVID-19. I can no longer visit distant relatives and I have to walk to places that I want to go to because public transport was restricted.

I thank God for the situation in Uganda because there are few cases of COVID-19 and most of them recovered from the pandemic. No death has been registered.

We continue to pray and trust God that the current situation of few positive COVID-19 cases does not escalate.

Glory be to God

Mawanda John

A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The shelter in place has been a learning experience. As this was a novel disease, it set off a spree of panic all around the world which was followed by fear. More psychological trauma set in as every news channel was broadcasting information about COVID-19 and how Africa was going to be devastated by the pandemic. We started buying necessities so as to stock for the eventual shelter. Prices of necessary commodities rose despite the government's warnings to traders not to hike prices.

When it all seemed lost, salvation was seen from the various friends who shared messages of hope. I was reminded of God's promises of salvation despite of all that was occurring around us. Through supporting others, I was also able to take care of myself. Although, things haven't returned to normal, am hopeful all will be fine in the end of the lockdown.

Nakandi Rebecca

BIBLE VERSES FOR THE COVID LOCKDOWN

Isaiah 41:10

Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.