

ACT NOW ON COVID-19



UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

The power of people uniting

RESOURCES FOR CHURCHES

(please take and adapt to your needs)

Text for Newsletters

ACT NOW AGAINST COVID-19 and join the power of people uniting.

Half a billion people are at risk of being tipped back into poverty due to the impact of COVID-19, destroying decades of work freeing people from hunger and need.

In communities across Asia, Africa and the Pacific, access to clean water, soap, medical resources and food is limited. From Zimbabwe to India and Papua New Guinea, Uniting Church partner agencies are urgently responding to hunger and helping stop the spread of disease. They're working alongside people with disabilities to make sure they're included in the response and protecting women and children from the increased risk of violence during lockdowns. Importantly, they're sharing theological messages about disaster, suffering, hope, sovereignty and zero tolerance of gender-based violence. Many staff of our partner churches are impacted personally by lack of clean water, electricity or food, and risk their own health in caring for their communities.

We were made for times like this

The Uniting Church in Australia is supporting the critical work of our global brothers and sisters through UnitingWorld's COVID-19 Appeal, where right now donations can go up to six times as far to save lives.

As a valued partner of the Australian Government, UnitingWorld can access funding each year to implement poverty alleviation programs. Every donation you make to this urgent appeal will be combined with funding from the Australian Government to reach more people. We have committed to contribute at least \$1 for every \$5 we can access in government funding, which means right now your gift can go up to six times as far to save lives!

Please donate before June 30 at www.unitingworld.org.au/actnow or call 1800 998 122. All donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

PRAYER POINTS

(Received from our partners 15 May 2020)

INDIA

- for those who have lost their jobs
- for labourers who are struggling for food
- for Amritsar Diocesan Team who are working hard in this pandemic to serve their communities at high personal risk

ZIMBABWE

- for our inadequate health system
- for millions of people with no food
- for many in the informal sector affected by lockdown
- for the frontline workers in the middle of the battle and others providing critical services
- for our funding partners like UnitingWorld who are supporting us in any possible way
- for people forced to spend lockdown with abusive partners
- for the Methodist Development Relief Agency (MeDRA)

INDONESIA

- for daily workers, famers and family who cannot sell crops because of lockdown
- for health workers on the frontline still struggling to give their best to patients when they are in difficult situations themselves
- without tourism many cafes, restaurants and hotels are closed. No income today means no food for the family tomorrow
- for people who don't feel safe at home and are experiencing domestic violence during the lockdown



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MEET THE PEOPLE YOU'RE SUPPORTING

ANIKA – NORTH INDIA

A mother of three, Anika has been locked down in her home in an urban settlement in Amritsar for the last month. She has no form of income and little food for the family other than what the church provides.

“We are hungry,” Anika says. “I used to work as a maid in a house, but they won’t have me anymore. We were eating rice, but no spices, no vegetables. We can’t leave our homes, but even if we could, we have no money for food.”



Anika, like 370 million other informal workers in India, is paid just enough each day to live from one meal to the next. Now, government lockdown laws mean she isn’t able to work as a domestic servant in a local home. She has no income, and while the government has promised to respond, right now she is completely alone.

Amritsar’s streets, which are usually heaving with colour and people, are eerily still. Street sweepers, rickshaw drivers, garbage collectors, small stall holders and domestic servants: they’re all trapped within whatever shelter they call home, anxiously awaiting news of any lifting of restrictions.

“We worry hunger will kill us before COVID-19,” a street vendor said last week. He was not exaggerating.



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**Australian
Aid** 

PUTU & WAYAN – BALI

Pak Wayan works as the village secretary for his community in a remote area of Bali, Indonesia. If his face looks familiar, that's because he invited us into his home 18 months ago to share with us how life has changed dramatically for his family since our local partner, MBM, began working with his community. With training from MBM, the family have been breeding goats and contributing the manure to a local coffee plantation. They've seen a significant increase in their income to help support their children at school.



Right now, Wayan is helping share information about COVID 19 with local people, trying to help them comprehend the seriousness of the situation and encouraging families to stay in their homes. His children have now stopped attending school, but weekly lesson plans are sent from the school to the family's phone, which is now on a much-stretched data package!

"I am one of the people who has not lost their job yet, and I still go to the village office to make sure that people who come to the area (especially anyone working on a cruise ship or in tourism) is checked and quarantined. I have a mask to wear at work but they are very expensive and so I don't have any for my family," Wayan told us.

"My family's daily income is decreasing because it's hard to sell the goats. We grow our food for meals and there are only enough vegetables for one month – I'm still thinking about how to fulfil the meals for my family after this. I am afraid for the economic situation here- most people have lost their jobs and their income has decreased, so there is not enough food. I'm afraid of anarchy and demonstrations if the situation doesn't improve. This situation will not really affect the rich people – we will get the most impact from it."



JUNIOR – ZIMBABWE

Junior is the National Director of our partner, the Methodist Development and Relief Agency (MeDRA) in Zimbabwe. She co-ordinates the team responding to the COVID-19 emergency, and writes:

“Zimbabwe has more than 60% people in the informal sector who live from hand to mouth and now they are locked down. What do they eat? They are starving indoors. There are many cases of gender-based violence. The situation is bad! Following 2 years of drought, many are starving. According to WFP, there are 7.7 million people with no food and now many are locked down so the number increases. Where mealie meal is being sold, there are long queues and social distancing can never be considered.



Many do not understand the merits of lockdown as they are more worried about bread and butter issues. They need food for their families. There is very limited information in rural areas about the virus. They haven't changed their ways of living much as they are still shaking hands and visiting each other locally. In rural areas there is not much enforcement and they do not really understand the severity of the disease since there are no cases in the district. There is need for awareness raising and demystifying of myths and misconceptions. They have limited access to radios and televisions.

Groups that we have been working with for years on income generating projects are not spared. They have nowhere to sell their products. There is no transport to the market, and they have been affected negatively. Livelihoods have been affected for most Zimbabweans. There is encouragement to wash hands with water and soap, but people have no soap. Soap is expensive and for water, both rural and urban communities use communal owned boreholes where they meet in large numbers and hold the hand pump as they pump water. We are living by God's grace.”



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REV GNANARAJAH – SRI LANKA

On the streets of Colombo, hunger is growing. With the population told not to leave their homes, many who rely on a daily wage jobs like street sweeping, traffic control and small street-side businesses are desperately worried about their ability to feed themselves and their families.



Rev Gnanarajah, Director of our Partner Deaf Link, is coordinating meals and distributing resource packs to people who can't leave their homes. He says he's seeing more vulnerable people on the streets, sleeping in bus stands and without food, and the team have been out on the streets handing out food packs. His team are particularly committed to caring for people with disabilities, a group already desperately disadvantaged and experiencing high rates of poverty. Making sure these groups have access to health information and are part of the COVID-19 emergency response is a priority for Gnana. He says his team is so grateful for our prayers, and they are praying for us too.

INITI & TAPAITA – PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Inina is part of a small community in Milne Bay where UnitingWorld has been providing clean water and training for 'Rait Mamas' – advocates who teach hand washing, careful food preparation and hygiene. Inina's older sister is part of the WASH Club (Water and Sanitation) at her school, where the children recently sold toothbrushes, soap and sponges to raise money and awareness for healthy habits in their community. Inina's local clinic has no access to reliable electricity, and no masks or testing facilities. The safety of Inina and her extended family depends on keeping COVID-19 from transitioning to the community, and the Rait Mamas are in full swing urging people to wash their hands and practise social distancing.



Inina and the Rait Mamas (pictured here) are supported by our partner the United Church of Papua New Guinea.

