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**Dear all**

On several occasions people have asked me about the situation in Africa. The assumption is that since we do not hear news from Africa, it is because the situation is not as bad as in other parts of the world. I wish that was true. But people in the western world are so preoccupied dealing with their own situations that they cannot cope with all the other problems. We pay little or no attention to the parts of the world that are not immediately adjacent to us either geographically or financially. It is a natural

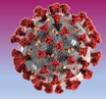
reaction. And while we are not paying attention, things are deteriorating in many parts of Africa. When all the usual support is on hold, when organisations are no longer delivering their usual responses, either because they are financially hampered or because they closed their activities, it will have major consequences for the development all over the continent. Poverty rates are increasing, and countries are facing acute famine. Some people warn that the pandemic will cause a serious setback in the development in Africa unless we respond now. UN and World Food Programme have issued warnings about the situation in the developing world.



<https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063232>.



<https://insight.wfp.org/covid-19-will-almost-double-people-in-acute-hunger-by-end-of-2020-59df0c4a8072>



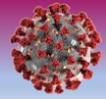
We cannot sit as silent observers to a crisis which is unfolding. If we do not respond and remain silent, then the continent will not be the same when we turn on the cameras again. A late response will require more effort than a timely response.

In Relay Trust we have been busy adjusting to the new circumstances and finding ways to support the churches we are working with. We have not closed our activities but decided to do the opposite. While we are continuing our usual support, we are also focusing on our response to the current crisis. We are working in a three-fold way:



<https://reliefweb.int/report/sierra-leone/keeping-faith-role-faith-leaders-ebola-response>.

Each step involves many different things. Currently we are focusing our attention on awareness campaigns and bringing hope into the desperate situation. But as we are doing this, we need to be reminded of the long-term consequences and help people find new ways to survive. We are first and foremost a training ministry – and our goal is to equip church leaders, so they can be the good news – in word and deed, even when we seem to be surrounded by nothing else but bad news. The grass-root leaders in remote areas can play a significant role. We know this from previous outbreaks, such as



the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, where the involvement of faith leaders became a real gamechanger.

The world is not getting back to normal anytime soon. We must adjust ourselves to the new reality and prepare our strategy in a different way, so that we can offer a strong response to the crisis. We cannot just continue business as usual or expect things to bounce back to where they were before. We are facing a radical change, which calls for a radical response.

Because of the crisis we have decided to temporarily suspend our quarterly newsletters and instead issue a monthly update. During such times, it is important that everyone is fully updated on work and progress. Everything is changing extremely fast, and we need to scale up and speed up to catch up. In fact, we are building the bridge as we walk it.

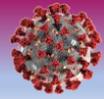
## A WhatsApp strategy



How do we reach an audience when we are unable to travel? This was one of the questions we asked ourselves, when the borders closed. In western countries where there is an almost unlimited access to high speed internet, the immediate answer was video-conference platforms like Zoom, Skype, Teams etc. Video-conference platforms can establish a sense of fellowship, where we can be together and apart at the same time. As an international organisation we have been using these platforms throughout our existence.



The platforms cannot create the same sense of intimacy as a real face-to-face meeting, but it gets pretty close. It is a good choice, when you have reliable internet access. This is not the case in many countries in the majority world, where internet is often unreliable, costly,



and slow. Having meetings through Zoom would be an annoying experience of constant disruptions. We knew that we would not be able to deliver our training through Zoom or any other video-conference platform. Furthermore, it would not be a scalable way to deliver training. If trainers are required to be present on a platform, then you only have a limited number of hours per week to deliver training, and you can only reach a limited number of people.

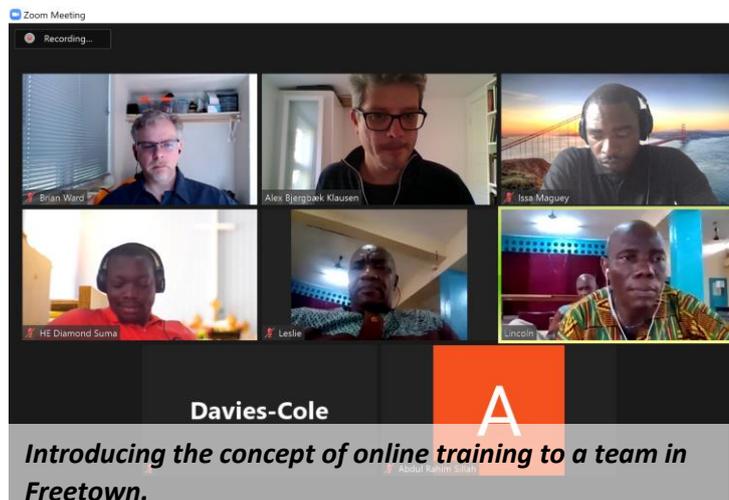


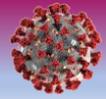
Ms. Djamina Maguey



So, what is the situation of our receivers? What platforms are they using? What do they have access to? The answer is WhatsApp. Most of our intended audience has a smartphone and is using WhatsApp as a tool for communication. So the question is, how we can take a platform like WhatsApp, which is intended for communication through chat, video and audio and convert this into our new eLearning / distance learning platform? WhatsApp can do this, provided we are developing a workable strategy. We have just employed Ms. Djamina Maguey as a temporary WhatsApp consultant. Djamina lives in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, and holds a bachelor’s degree in anthropology. She is in the process of completing her master’s

degree. She is an experienced user and has already worked with WhatsApp strategies in another organisation. She is helping us think through and develop our strategy, so that we can use WhatsApp for eLearning. We have already launched our first course on mobile production to help churches with a media strategy, recording of services and sharing messages of





hope during this pandemic. We are delivering short video sequences through a WhatsApp channel and have established a structured model around the training. It gives flexibility, but requires a lot of discipline from both trainers and students. Our training solutions are always group-based, which means we are expecting groups between 4 and 8 people who will constitute a small learning community. It is our experience, that distance learning works better when it is catered for smaller groups. There will always be an element of positive peer pressure, and the students are following up on each other. Even though we have launched our first group we are on a learning.

### Getting started

**1**

Select a group of 4 - 8 people who are interested in the training



*We have developed a 10- step guide on how to setup effective learning groups for WhatsApp.*

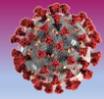


The new training initiative is actually an important step in the way we intend to develop future content for our Well devices. The Well is our product solution, which will help cater for successful community-based training in areas, where there is less or no access to internet. We

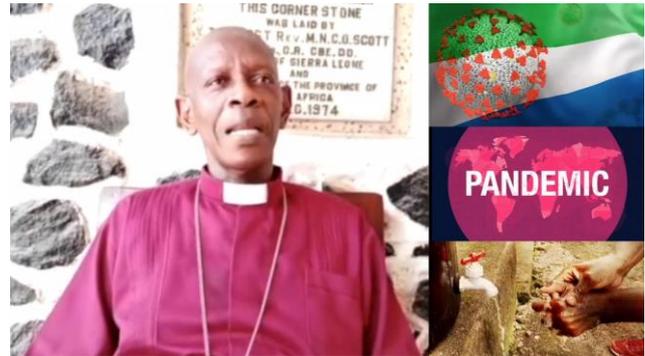
have done on-the-ground testing of these devices and are currently working on an upgraded hardware solution to be released later this year. The Well devices will form part of a larger package solution, which will help establish on-the-ground training centres in local churches or community halls.

## Awareness campaigns

WhatsApp is also a primary platform for sharing the awareness campaigns. We are fighting two wars during this Corona-pandemic, one is against the virus and the other is against fake news. There are lot of rumours, and many people do not have access to a reliable source of information. Wrong information can be extremely dangerous and cause panic reactions and

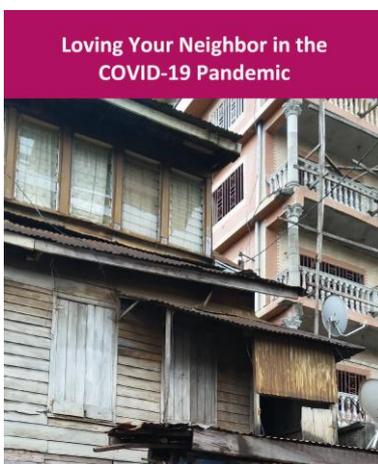


new chains of transmission. Therefore, it is so important to involve the church leaders as a reliable source of information. Relay Trust is working with the production of awareness videos, where church leaders are sharing their voice and cautioning the general population. The videos are made with



different church leaders, bishops, and in different languages. Our hope is to see the information spreading. We know how important religious leaders are, when it comes to combating a virus. What initially began as an information video for Sierra Leone has now spread to Guinea, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria, Cameroon, DR Congo, and Tanzania. We are expecting more African countries to get involved. We are also in the process of preparing short tutorials on handwashing, social distancing, facial masks etc. These will also be produced in multiple languages. What has really excited me, is to see a cross-border production in Africa during a time when we are unable to travel and meet. Watch the first information video by using this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/relaytrust.org/videos/578574069456827/>



Loving Your Neighbor in the  
COVID-19 Pandemic

Developed by:

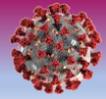


Edited and delivered by:



## Leadership training during the crisis

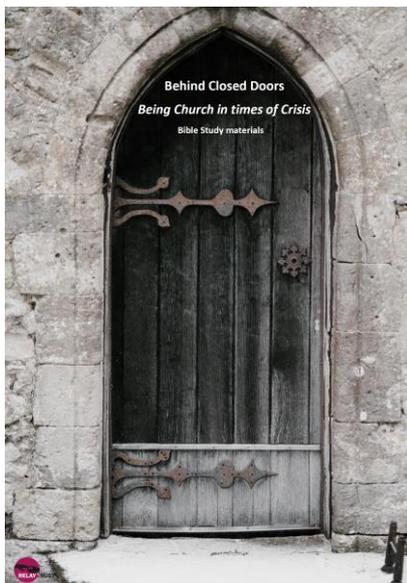
We are close to launching a training programme to help Christians respond to the current crisis. We are using and adapting materials, developed by Timothy Leadership Training, and we will role it out as an online course through WhatsApp. The study materials are designed in such a way that students can go through them alone. But we encourage them to form WhatsApp study groups. This is necessary in a



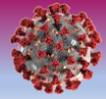
time like this. As an integrated part of the training, students are invited to develop action plans so that they can respond to the situation around them. This reflection – action – reflection model of training fits very well with our overall approach in Relay Trust. We are excited to have a fruitful collaboration with Timothy Leadership Training and are looking forward to beginning the online training in different languages. We will share more news about this training in our next update in June. Besides the Timothy Leadership Training we are also preparing training for church leaders on crisis management. This development is based on a course, developed for DR Congo during the Ebola outbreak. We are reshaping these materials together with Bishop Stephen from Melbourne and Overseas Council Australia, so that the course will address the current situation.

## Bringing hope through Bible study materials

Another project, which we are currently working on, is Bible study materials. We have already developed 3 sessions of a Bible study material called “Behind closed doors – being



church in times of crisis”. The idea is to work together with different teams across Africa to develop these Bible study resources. Relay Trust will be responsible for the editing and layout. We are not yet sure about how many sessions we will deliver. But hopefully we will be able to deliver up to 10 sessions with themes that are relating to the current situation. The Bible resources will be shared broadly and targeting all church members. Initially we are working with these resources in two languages: English and French. In our next update we will share more about this project.



## Farming God's Way to provide food security

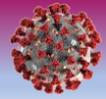
The Coronavirus outbreak is affecting people in many ways. We are not just looking into a health crisis, but for many this will become a poverty crisis when people are losing their jobs, and prices on ordinary groceries are increasing. It is difficult to find the right response to such a situation. We believe in training, which will enable people to act and become agents of change in their local communities. One of the training programmes we will introduce as a WhatsApp course is "Farming God's Way". We will use existing materials combined with our own productions to deliver training on how to practice farming in an environmentally friendly and more productive way. The good thing about Farming God's Way is the fact, that it does not require any machines or expensive tools. All it takes is strategy and planning. Using the principles will increase the yield many times. Since we are not able to deliver this training on ground, we will have to share it in another way. We are currently working on this – and hopefully the first training sessions are ready before the end of June.



## Are you interested in partnering with us?



As you can see from the above descriptions, we are fully occupied and could use more hands. If you are interested in volunteering with us as a private person or partnering with us as an organization, we will be excited to hear from you. All you need to do is write an



email to me: [abk@relaytrust.org](mailto:abk@relaytrust.org). You can decide how you would like to volunteer and the amount of time you are ready to sacrifice. We need support in all the areas mentioned in this monthly update. We want to welcome you as an active part of Relay Trust's operations.

Of course, we are also happy to receive donations. All donations should be sent through our partner organization in Denmark, which is responsible for our finances. Send your donation to:

**IBAN Number: DK7930000008000484**

**BIC / SWIFT: DABADKKK**

**Mark your transfer "Relay Trust"**

## Thank you!



*"What is a man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?" (Psalm 8:4)*

It is important to remind ourselves and each other that God has not forgotten or abandoned us. He continues to care for us, and He wants to give us the strength we need, so that we can also care for others. We are in God's hands, under His protection and guidance.

With these words of comfort, we want to thank you for your support and prayers.

God bless!

Alex Bjergbæk Klausen  
on behalf of the Relay Trust Team