

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Impact of COVID-19 in Developing Countries and Ways to Respond

Global Humanitarian Organization World Relief Hosts Press Call on COVID-19

BALTIMORE – On Wednesday, April 22, 2020, World Relief, a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to alleviate poverty and respond to disasters worldwide, hosted a live press call on how COVID-19 is impacting developing countries, particularly in Africa, and ways to respond. For over 75 years, World Relief has partnered with community leaders around the world to help with disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, health issues and mass displacement.

As the first cases of COVID-19 are now being reported in parts of Africa, the international community needs to continue to partner with and provide support to people on the ground there in response. The call covered World Relief’s work and the need for more international humanitarian assistance to help respond to COVID-19.

“This is one of the greatest global humanitarian challenges we’ve ever known. While we are currently working through our extensive, on-the-ground networks to respond to COVID-19, we have ongoing concerns about the potentially devastating impact this virus will have on developing countries that often don’t have the resources or capacity to respond fully,” said **Myal Greene, SVP of International Programs**. “We are asking that as Congress considers a fourth stimulus package, that it includes robust funding for international humanitarian assistance and continues to partner with organizations with extensive networks on the ground that can be critical in an effective public health response.”

Joanna Kretzer Chun, Director of the Program Resource Team, commented “Through our work, we’ve seen the impact that grassroots networks can have to spread critical messages and save lives. These networks will be critical in the months ahead to ensure that COVID-19 does not spread and that those who are sick are cared for appropriately.”

Gibson Nkanaunena, Malawi Country Director and Deputy Director for East & Southern Africa, provided information on the state of Malawi and how COVID-19 is impacting the country and other areas, such as Rwanda and Kenya. He commented: “Currently in Malawi there are a few cases of COVID-19 identified. However, there could be more, but there are not enough tests being done. So far World Relief has given forty churches handwashing buckets with soap as a startup kit, and we are planning to reach out to households with public health messages through church networks across all impacted districts. Currently, we have 30,000 volunteers across the districts that we work in who are ready to share the message with close to one million in a population of 17.44 million.”

“The health care systems in these countries are completely unprepared and incapable of mounting a reasonable clinical response of anything comparable to the U.S. response,” said **Charles Franzén, Humanitarian and Disaster Response Director**. “There will continue to be significant health challenges especially around the capacity of health clinics, and we anticipate an acute challenge around food security and food supplies as well. In addition, there are a lot of issues with trust and stigma, and so working with trusted leaders has been critical. All of our country's programs have begun responding to COVID-19, and we've seen the impact that grass roots have on spreading messages and bringing resources. We've also seen the importance of home-based care and are helping to provide teaching and resources as many people can't make it to clinics or hospitals. But we cannot emphasize the importance of testing enough as a key to control.”

To learn more about how World Relief is responding to COVID-19, visit: <https://worldrelief.org/covid-19>

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About World Relief

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world's greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement. For over 75 years, we've partnered with churches and community leaders in the U.S. and abroad to bring hope, healing and transformation to the most vulnerable.

Learn more at worldrelief.org.