



Mission Update

News from Renaissance Outreach Ministries

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Coronavirus impacts our countries

By Rev. Jan L. Baderstadt
President

As I write this special issue of *The Mission Update*, the coronavirus continues to spread around the world. The virus has created severe economic impact upon the world, moving rapidly from country to country. While not all countries are at this point affected by the virus, the quarantines have placed great hardships on people, especially in developing countries where lack of refrigeration as well as income is creating hunger and starvation.

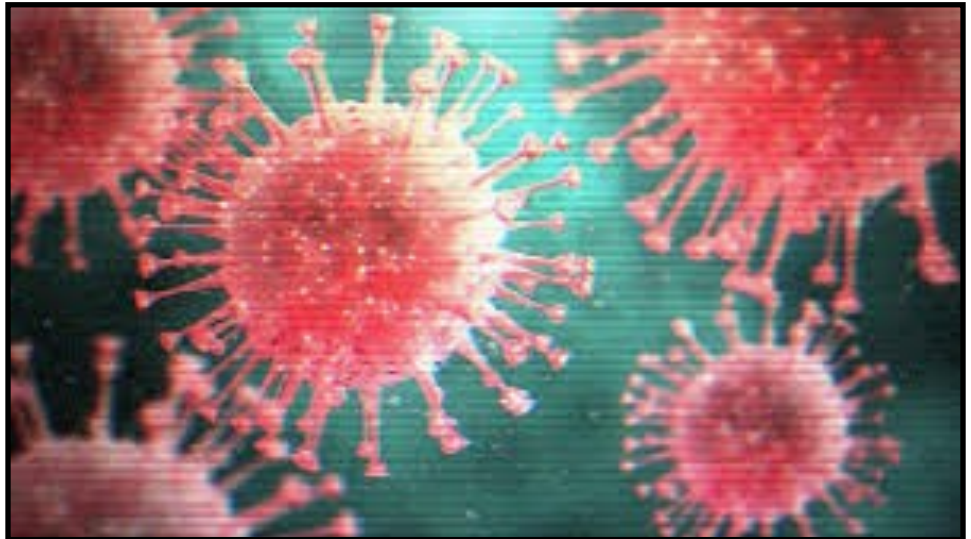
As Renaissance Outreach Ministries has connections all around the world, we're sharing the news from the ground as we learn about the situations elsewhere.

►**ITALY**—Deacon Nipu Halder of Bangladesh (he was my translator in Senerganti Mission) is currently in seminary in Milan, Italy. Nipu is studying to be a Catholic priest and has been one of the fortunate young men in Bangladesh to be selected to continue his education in Italy.

The famous city of Milan is located just south of Switzerland in the Italian Alps in what is known as the Lombardy region which has become the hardest hit part of Italy. The region had 435 confirmed deaths on March 21 which was nearly 60% of the country's deaths for that day.

Italy is shut down, according to Nipu. He said that they are taking classes by internet.

I asked him why Italy was so bad for the virus, he noted that there are a number of Italians working in China these days along with Chinese working in Italy. The Italy-China connection exacerbated the early rise in Italy as it was one of the first hit. Nipu says people are living there in fear.



►**NEPAL**—As of March 23, Nepal is shut down for a week, according to Rubi Gurung, our office manager in Kathmandu. Only one case has been reported in the country three weeks prior. The World Health Organization says Nepal is at high risk, so the country has shut down.

Churches, schools and universities have already shut down. According to reports we are receiving from Archbishop Barnabas Titung of the Church of the Himalayas, they have had to go to small gatherings in homes.

All businesses have been shut down which will create problems for many people to buy food. Almost all traffic has been stopped. The airport is no longer allowing visitors without prior visas, the land entries are closed, and there is no more trekking or mountain climbing for the time being.

Our friend Gopal Shrestha, who runs Trekking Mart, says that people are retreating to their ancestral village homes in the mountains. There they can find food.

Nepal has been recovering economically since the massive 2015 earth-

quake. The country will experience a major setback with the quarantines from the corona virus

►**UGANDA**—Uganda is shut down. In far western Uganda, according to our friend William Bwambale, everything is closed. The police have gone door to door shutting down all businesses. There are no places to buy food. The number of cases in Uganda varies from reports. William says only one case while another on-line source says 93 cases have been found. The airport in Entebbe no longer allows visitors entry into Uganda.

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News and stories about the work of Renaissance Outreach Ministries

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► **BANGLADESH**—Trying to limit personal contact in a place like Bangladesh is nearly impossible. This country has 175 million people in an area the size of Iowa.

There are less than 100 cases in Bangladesh. Most of the cases have been centered around the capital city of Dhaka, although two cases were found in Khulna which is near where Renaissance worked in the southwestern part of the country.

According to Nipu Halder in Italy who is from southwestern Bangladesh, the virus entered from expats working in Italy when they returned to Bangladesh. Like much of south Asia, these countries have very large populations and rely on their people getting jobs in foreign countries. Foreign employment is a major source of revenue for these countries in the form of remittance.

Michael Saimon of Seneganti Mission where we used to work has told us that schools are shut down across the country. We were not able to determine if churches and mosques were closed down. If mosques are still open, then there would still be close contact between the men in doing daily prayers. In churches, people sit very close together on the floor.

While shops may be closed in Dhaka, the markets in the villages are still open. These places do a lively trade daily as people come daily to buy food. Most of the people in the rural areas do not have any form of refrigeration. They work as day laborers, so there is not much of an opportunity to buy ahead in bulk. Tea Houses provide places for the men to gather, where they sit closely. When you have a large population like Bangladesh, personal space is unheard of. And the idea of keeping six feet of space between you and another person is not an option.

► **TANZANIA**—We have had limited reports out of Tanzania. What we have learned is that the president of the country has refused to issue an order closing churches. He has stated that people need to be praying and that prayer is the best defense against this pandemic. With so many coun-

tries closing houses of worship during this time, Tanzania is a country worth watching to see how faith combats this virus.

► **KENYA**—Located north of Tanzania and east of Uganda is the country of Kenya. We are in regular contact with Bishop Argwings Yoto who keeps us informed on developments in this progressive East African country.

Like Uganda, the schools and churches have been closed. All universities have also been shut down.

► **INDIA**—This nation of 1.3 billion people has reported 450 cases as of March 22nd. The major areas are shut down. In Tamil Nadu state in the southeastern part of the country, they have actually shut their borders to neighboring states.

According to Pastor Dicross, all churches are closed and everyone is ordered to stay home. Shopping malls in the cities are closed and all public transportation has been halted.

India relies on public transportation which is often very crowded.

India is a rapidly developing country. It does have limited contact with China as the two countries do not have close ties. The 1962 China-India war over disputed areas of the Himalayas is still a major issue between the two governments. There is also competition between the two countries over sea power in that region. This limited ties may be one reason why this country with such a huge population may have such a relatively small number of cases.

India also is a major producer of medicine and does not rely on Chinese medicine for their people.

► **RWANDA**—Rev. Nzayisenga Antoine writes and says that all schools and churches are closed. This small East African nation is south of Uganda. It has been one country with a growing economy in recent years. The country's leadership is taking precautions. There are few cases of corona virus in the country.

The economic upheaval that this pandemic is causing will significantly impact much of the world. It will be most acutely felt in places like Africa

and Asia where people already have very limited resources to draw on. In places like rural Uganda and Nepal where people live on their traditional farms, they will probably continue to have food. Where the greatest threats for riots will be in the cities where stores have been closed and people will be unable to buy food.



Recovering now from final ankle surgery

Pastor Jan's third and final surgery on his left ankle was completed on Friday, March 13 at University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor. The final surgery saw the installation of an artificial ankle. Made of titanium, it should be able to return him to walking, something he's been unable to do like before.

Recovery will be over six weeks where he is unable to put any weight on it. For now, he's staying home in Turner, Michigan.

Used tablets, laptops needed

Renaissance Outreach Ministries is looking for donations of used laptop computers and tablets. They would be used for the seminaries in either Nepal or Uganda.

If you have either item you'd like to donate, please contact Pastor Jan at be.kultraining@gmail.com or call (989) 254-1279.