



Colourful handmade masks from Chad

Newsletter September 2020



EDITORIAL

Dear Readers

Thanks to your donations, corona-related emergency aid campaigns in South Asia and Bosnia as well as the production of masks in Ethiopia and Chad could be realised. We report on this in detail in this issue.

In the South, the virus is spreading more slowly for various reasons, but probably for a longer time. In Africa, for example, there is little trans-continental traffic and many areas are sparsely populated. On the other hand, although the population is young, some of them are poorly fed and therefore vulnerable. In conurbations, people live densely packed and cannot protect themselves. Many have lost their jobs and cannot feed their families, so governments take the risk of lifting the lockdown, which in turn leads to more contagion.

You are still very welcome to donate to the account indicated on the final page (*purpose of donation: Corona crisis*).

Many thanks!



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Day labourers in South Asia and Covid-19

In South Asia, as in other parts of the southern world, the majority of the population lead a hand-to-mouth existence. According to official figures, more than half of the people live below the poverty line (1 dollar income per day).

Many day labourers and workers are strongly affected by the curfew due to the Covid-19 disease. For them and their families, work absences are devastating, especially because there are no insurances, nor support from the government. Due to the crisis and the economic situation, food prices rose by 30 percent. Many foodstuffs have become unaffordable for poor people. Hunger is becoming more and more a reality.

Among the people, there is, in parts, resignation but also resentment about the economic consequences of the curfew. At the same time, there is anxiety and insecurity regarding Covid-19, because, the risk of infection is difficult to assess and there is no functioning health system.

Refugees

In such a country, people help and support each other within their own family or clan. For the population, the uprooting after a flight is a much bigger problem than it seems to us in our country. This explains the great misery among the refugees from the neighbouring provinces, who have fled from fighting between radical groups and the government. Their situation was already precarious with regard to health and hygiene before – and now there is also hunger!

Thanks to your donation

In May, PartnerAid Switzerland was able, in cooperation with contacts on site, to start a relief action for the neediest of these families. Thereby, among others, the most important basic food-

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Delivery of food





Great gratitude, although it is not visible

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stuffs were distributed. The grateful recipients were families of unemployed day labourers and widows.

"When we reviewed the recipient lists, it touched us to see how many women and children received this uncomplicated help. We are very grateful that this action has made a concrete difference in their lives", says a local staff member.

Challenges

Aid actions, in which we want to help holistically as far as possible, require

good knowledge of the local situation and a lot of tact. Otherwise, it can lead very quickly to jealousy and arguments, which eventually worsen the situation of the recipients because they can't afford to lose the support of their clan.

Exactly this happened at the delivery of food to a mother of five kids whose husband had died in a work accident. When the father-in-law was informed about the relief action, he became very jealous of the help and attention, which the woman and her children re-

ceived. Our collaborator had to arbitrate between the parties, and finally the widow was allowed to accept the help.

"My son cannot walk. I work as a day labourer. Sometimes there is work, sometimes not. Right now, with the situation of quarantine, there's hardly any work and it's hard to get regular meals, let alone to cover the needs of my son. I thank Allah that you helped us and brought us food."

"We are eight in our family. And besides our food we must pay the rent. I ask Allah to bless those people who have thought of us in these difficult times."

Great misery in Chad

In the global health ranking "Global Health Index", Chad is ranked 185th of 195 countries listed. Its health system can be optimistically described as weak and unstable. The government does not have great resources. When the first case of Covid-19 in Chad came to light, our partner organization Service au Sahel (SAS) realized that two very important things were missing: 1. all basic equipment for the medical staff; 2. correct information about the virus in the local language.

"We want to do something"

SAS is based in the small city of Hadjer Hadid, which is surrounded by large refugee camps with displaced people from the neighbouring Darfur/Sudan. Since both the refugees and the local population had no resources available, SAS decided to do something. SAS collaborators noticed that the doctors in the clinics of the refugee camps as well as in the villages often wear face masks, but use them for days or even weeks due to the shortages. And so, instead of protecting them, they become a risk. In cooperation with the IRC, SAS decided to sew 800 washable face masks from fabric and to distribute them in the surrounding refugee

camps and hospitals. In addition, short videos with information about the disease and the correct use of a face mask were produced in the local language. The videos were loaded on memory cards and are thus accessible for everyone via smartphone.

The recipients

The village clinics had only very limited information and no means at their disposal to fight the new disease. Usually, a doctor, some midwives and assistants work in these clinics. SAS visited every village clinic in the surrounding area. In the process, masks, a memory card with the video and printed posters, which explain the pre-



Production of fabric masks

ventive measures for Covid-19, were distributed. The doctors in the village hospitals were very surprised about the help and very grateful. A doctor said that although there are face masks, the price had increased by 250 percent and one mask is now more expensive than a family meal.

State of emergency in Bosnia

On 17 March, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina declared the whole country be in a state of emergency: schools, kindergartens, shops, churches, mosques, restaurants, cafés, cinemas, museums and other cultural and sports facilities were closed, public gatherings prohibited. The general curfew was from 8pm to 5am. People older than 65 years were only allowed to go outside on selected days and then only for four hours. Also, for persons under 18 years there was a strict curfew.

And how do the common people feel about that?

“Especially in the beginning, many people respected the regulations and recommendations. We encountered just a few anxious people who were mostly optimistic. Basically, the solidarity and mutual help were great. Once more, we became aware that this people is crisis-tested and remains calm in difficult situations”, says our collaborator on site.

On the other hand, large hoarding purchases happened, so that there was no flour for several weeks in the shops. “The local people are not primarily worried by the virus, but by the serious economic impact of the ordered measures. This spring, many lost their jobs and there is no social insurance to support them. The socially disadvantaged are suffering and need assistance.”

Our help thanks to your help

The village of Han Bila and some scattered hamlets are situated in a side valley about 20 minutes from Travnik. The indigenous PartnerAid staff have good relations in the region. Together with a local organization, which has been active for years in the valley, 20 suffering households have been selected carefully. Our collaborators brought them food packages with flour, oil, yeast, sugar, fruit juice, rice, pasta, biscuits, jam, coffee and tea.

More than you can carry

“The distribution of the food parcels was both a joy and a challenge at the same time. We encountered conditions, which we find difficult to imagine in our country. I’m thinking of a couple with ten children: there was no more food in the house and the children were hungry. The father was ashamed that he couldn’t support his family



Assembling the parcels



Transport to Han Bila

anymore. There was despair and lack of perspective”, says our collaborator. “With your donation, we were able to help. The people here are very grateful for this blessing and happy about it. It helps them to move on and to look forward with the experience that they are not alone! A better future is possible because there are others who commit themselves for places where faith had been lost.”

Further assistance

In about a month’s time, the PartnerAid staff members will visit the households again in order to get a current picture on the situation. The aim is to assist in a sustainable way. For this reason, it is planned that the families and people in need are visited several times for a longer period of time and are assisted again with food and medicines if necessary.



“Is it really made in Ethiopia?”

In March 2020, when the Covid-19 virus reached Ethiopia, the situation of our partner company Desert Rose Consultancy changed strongly. In the past, PartnerAid Switzerland worked primarily with the company to develop an affordable, locally manufactured water filter and to develop its production.

Necessity is the mother of invention

In this situation, the team of Desert Rose began to consider what it could contribute in the fight of the Covid 19 virus. It procured itself information about the production of face shields and began testing with success. It benefited of the fact that it had acquired a new laser-cut machine recently. And before long the first order arrived.

However, because most local hospitals do not have the financial means, Desert Rose looked for other finan-

cial sources such as private donors or a crowdfunding website. With these funds, the company has already been able to produce 1000 face shields and could deliver them to various hospitals.

Affordable and convenient

During the manufacturing process, own adjustments were made. It was extremely important to the project leaders that the end product is made of easily accessible local material and that it is affordable as well as comfort-

able. They are therefore in close contact with the doctors so that adjustments can be made at any time.

They are very happy to support the medical staff in Ethiopia and, at the same time, to be able to keep up the production so that their employees, some of whom are hearing-impaired, can be paid a salary.

During a visit to the African Union, a delegate was astonished by the product: “I can hardly believe that such a thing is feasible in Ethiopia! Is it really made in Ethiopia?”

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Specify purpose of donation



Necessity is the mother of invention



Production of the face shields