

World Renew DRS Suspends Volunteer Activity until June 1, 2020

March 13, 2020 – World Renew Disaster Response Services is suspending all volunteer activities in response to the COVID19 outbreak, effective immediately, through June 1, 2020. This includes groups, 1-week and 3-week volunteers and long-term volunteers, as well as warehouse and office volunteers.

World Renew DRS staff and volunteer managers will review options with those volunteers who are currently on-site in North America. **In May, a situational review will be completed to determine whether or not volunteer activities and sites can safely be restarted on June 1, 2020.**

“This decision will have a significant impact,” said Bob Laarman, World Renew DRS director.

“Homeowners who are already hurting, and have sometimes been waiting for help for months or years after a disaster, now have to wait longer for their homes to be safe and secure again. DRS will work with local partner organizations to seek other ways to support recovery in their communities. **We have a responsibility not to expose vulnerable people, homeowners, volunteers, or staff, to the risk of disease.**”

The CRCNA and World Renew directors in the U.S. and Canada have also restricted staff travel, including international and domestic trips, unless there are extenuating circumstances. **If you are sick, practice social distancing and use self-isolation guidelines if you come into contact with coronavirus. You can find a guide for self-isolation here: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - How to self-isolate.](#)**

If you have underlying health conditions, wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, and contact your physician as needed to ensure your good health.

“World Renew works in 32 countries worldwide,” said Carol Bremer-Bennett, World Renew U.S. director. “We are doing all that we can to keep communities safe and take the precautions needed to ensure the health of those around us. We look forward to being able to resume travel internationally as well as place our DRS volunteers and groups on worksites as soon as we are safely able.”

“We care deeply about the communities we serve and we take this duty of care to heart,” Bremer-Bennett said. “We can find comfort in the words of Psalm 91: ‘The Lord is your refuge and dwelling, no harm will overtake you and no disaster will come near you. For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways’ (vs 9-11). Please join with us in prayer for those most impacted by this disease and for a timely cure.”

To stay up-to-date on the World Renew DRS travel ban and get more information about the COVID19 pandemic, please check worldrenew.net/corona in the US or worldrenew.ca/corona in Canada. World Renew volunteers with the Global Volunteer Program or International Disaster Response Team can also find updates and links on our websites.

If you need more information about your DRS volunteer placement, please call World Renew DRS at 800-848-5818 or email drs@worldrenew.net.

To find out more about COVID19 guidelines in the US, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/home/index.html>.

In Canada, go to <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>.

Outside of North America, go to <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>.

Carol Bremer-Bennett
World Renew Director U.S.

Bob Laarman
World Renew DRS Director

A Message from World Renew during COVID-19

The last few weeks have been challenging for families and communities everywhere. With the COVID-19 outbreak declared a “pandemic” by the World Health Organization, each of us is now dealing with some amount of disruption and risk in our daily lives. For some, this may involve more inconvenience than serious implications but for others, health and wellbeing are at stake.

As Christian believers, we have a refuge and strong tower in times of uncertainty. Our peace and courage doesn’t come from ourselves, but from God, who does not change no matter the circumstances. In challenging times like these, God is our source of courage and hope. By His example, He challenges us to continue to care not only for ourselves, but for others, especially those who are vulnerable and have limited resources.

“As a global organization with work in 32 countries, World Renew has an expansive reach that presents both multiple risks and opportunities” said Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo, World Renew Canada Director. “Given this level of responsibility and especially our relationships with local partners and communities in contexts of limited health services, it is critical that we take all the precautions necessary to prevent further spread of the pandemic, with particular attention to encouraging safety and protection for those most vulnerable. In that respect, we adhere to all recommended international, national, local, and denominational guidelines in the way we do our work.”

“We care deeply about the communities we serve with and we take this duty of care to heart, especially when there is increased suffering as a result of this pandemic,” Kaastra-Mutoigo said. “While there are many reasons to focus entirely on our own personal comfort and security during a pandemic, our faith in God calls us to extend generosity to others even when we are not comfortable. It is because of God’s grace that churches and individuals can exemplify the Macedonian churches in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 who “in the midst of severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity...giving even beyond their ability.” Please consider how you can extend God’s abundant grace through your prayers for those impacted by the disease and for a timely cure and through your continuing support for the work that seeks to alleviate suffering from poverty, injustice and disaster around the world.”

While practicing “social distancing” and “self-quarantine/isolation,” be creative in reaching out to others to stay connected and engage with your local church and community. Keep your neighbors in mind who may be struggling or suffering in these challenging times, practicing kindness and generosity.

We can pray for each other, for those in need, and for the courage to live out God’s love and generosity as we live in daily hope. For ongoing updates on the status of COVID-19 in countries where World Renew works, and for information on the ways you can continue to participate in

the World Renew community, we invite you to visit our site. In addition, we will continue to share updates and stories of connection in the coming weeks.



April 27, 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic has progressed, World Renew has adopted a multi-pronged approach to disease prevention, economic support, spiritual encouragement, and health support in Canada, the United States, and around the world.

Now, in addition to providing grants for struggling communities to the deacons of local churches as well international COVID-19 response programming in each of the countries where we work, World Renew has partnered with RCA Global Mission to launch an initiative to come alongside the Navajo nation. Currently, the Navajo population is the third highest demographic in America for infection rates of COVID-19. Amidst this crisis, many Navajo people live in homes without running water, making it incredibly difficult to maintain handwashing and slow the transmission of the disease.

World Renew Disaster Response Services is responding with safe water and food for those currently vulnerable to infection. DRS and RCA Global Mission are working with Rehoboth Christian Schools to deliver the vital water and food supplies these families need in order to stay home and stay safe. As the DRS response progresses, we will continue to share with the World Renew community of donors and volunteers opportunities for you to come alongside the Navajo people with your gifts, support, and prayers.

As always, we thank you for your courage and faith as God's People of Hope.

May 20, 2020

In early April, World Renew paused all disaster response deliveries to the Rohingya people until mid-May to slow transmission of coronavirus and protect the Rohingya population. On May 14, the UN confirmed the first two cases of COVID-19 in the Rohingya refugee camps near Cox's Bazar, triggering concern and response from humanitarian organizations around the world.

As part of those responses, World Renew re-commenced our work on May 11 as planned, bringing vital food supplies to families desperate for support. Our staff and partner colleagues continue to coordinate our efforts with the UN and local government structures as well as international NGOS to coordinate our response.

Moving forward, World Renew's Rohingya response must address not only our mounting concern for the course COVID-19 will take through the refugee settlements near Cox's Bazar--where over 1 million refugees live and physical distancing is virtually impossible--but also our monitoring of Cyclone Amphan, which has made landfall Wednesday and is set to tear across India and Bangladesh.

Prayer in this moment is paramount:

- Pray that the damage from the cyclone will be minimal
- Pray for mandated evacuation efforts. Indian officials have reported 300,000 people in coastal towns who are in immediate danger are being evacuated. Bangladesh is moving over 2 million people to emergency shelters.
- Pray for Indian emergency shelters, which typically contain 500,000 people but due to COVID-19 can only safely contain 200,000 people.
- While Bangladesh reports enough emergency shelters to safely hold all those fleeing and still observe physical distancing, prayer for the number of people fleeing to these shelters in mass is critical.
- Pray for response teams, who will be entering "red zones" of infection in order to rescue families stranded by flooding.

And of course, prayers for the families living in the refugee camp near Cox's Bazar which will experience very heavy rainfall and possible flooding as a result of Amphan. With hygiene conditions in the camp already deteriorating, the warm, damp weather and flooding will create an environment where the virus can thrive and our efforts to contain it will grow more and more difficult.

For those looking to support these vulnerable communities financially in addition to prayer, our team is currently preparing for a range of responses. Once Amphan hits land, we will notify you of our specific course of action and the ways you can join us in response.



For now, thank you for lifting all the people of East Asia up to the Lord for his protection and mercy.



Co-Directors' Update Sept. 2020 Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo

As World Renew prepares to enter our seventh month of COVID-adaptive programming, I am filled with overwhelming gratitude for the ways in which churches and individuals have given of their resources to strengthen hope for the vulnerable.

One of the most inspiring letters that I read this summer came to World Renew from our church partners in Lebanon and Syria, written by a volunteer serving with Syrian refugees. I would like to share some of the words from that letter; may they remind you of why we are all called to the mission of living justice, loving mercy, and serving Christ.

"Our friends, it is no secret to say that the entire world is going through very difficult circumstances, a long-lasting war on Syria and the economic collapse in it, the economic and political unrest in Lebanon, the crisis of [COVID-19]. The Church teaches us that in such circumstances pure love appears, and volunteers have shown their willingness to act despite the risks, of course with precautionary measures taken. It is our hope that your help and giving will continue during these most extreme conditions.

We trust you, and that we will complete the march together, despite the difficult circumstances, for the good and for humanity."

The march does indeed continue, carried on by communities participating in World Renew's [work](#) across the globe. We have remained active in each of the countries where we were working prior to COVID, and all of our programming has adapted to physical distancing requirements. In addition to our community development programming, World Renew continues to maintain an active presence in responding to disasters during this pandemic.

International Disaster Response

In the midst of the pandemic, the broader work of the International Disaster Response team has not slowed. The US \$2.4 million response continues to assist families recovering after the 2018 earthquake and tsunami on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Cash, voucher and in-kind emergency food assistance continues to reach displaced families in Colombia, Nigeria, South Sudan, Bangladesh, Yemen, and Syria, and our small responses addressing the needs caused by the COVID-19 are ongoing. Longer-term agricultural training is being carried out across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and the efforts of our teams in Nepal and the Philippines continue. Please pray for those affected by disasters and for the work of the IDR team and our partners.

In addition, due to the [August 4 explosion](#) in the port of Beirut, we are working with our partner in Lebanon to double our food assistance vouchers to now include Lebanese families, those affected by the blast and in crisis due to the failure of the Lebanese economy. These efforts are only possible because of the generous support of our donors. The Canadian Government match through the Humanitarian Coalition inspired incredible generosity at a time when many are struggling financially -- with over \$420,000 donated by Canadians (which qualified for government-matched support), and \$80,000 by donors in the United States. This support will allow us to support families through the difficult winter season.

In each area of programming, hope has been made strong for the vulnerable thanks to Christ's faithfulness shared through your prayers and gifts. Thank you for your ongoing care.

Disaster Response Services (North America)

We continue to find ways to serve communities in new ways despite the limitations of this time of COVID and are so grateful for the donations that have empowered us to create nimble response plans:

- Donations for Hurricane Laura, the strongest hurricane to hit the US coast in 164 years, are ongoing. [Our response](#) is focused on meeting the basic needs of storm survivors and assisting local recovery organizations in getting established in order to provide immediate assistance.
- Plans are underway to work with the Mennonites to provide experienced coordinators to work with day volunteers in the Gladwin, MI area in response to a flood.
- DRS has been asked to remotely train community health workers in Rio Grande Valley, Texas to do Unmet Needs Assessments in their communities.
- Two to three volunteers are traveling to North Carolina to build laundry trailers for a Methodist response to communities who lost this service.
- Planning is underway in Iowa to use day volunteers to respond to the straight wind damaged homes across many counties in the state.
- Work continues with Bridge Street Ministries to rehab their 100-year-old building so that they can better serve their neighbors.
- DRS is working on how to respond to a request to do Long Term Recovery Organization Start Up training remotely for a recently flooded community.
- New grants are in process for North Carolina, Georgia and Puerto Rico to pay for materials and local contractors so that people are restored to their homes in the absence of volunteers.

End of Year Initiatives

Finally, as we turn towards the close of 2020, World Renew is launching a number of initiatives, each adapted to respond to a specific area of need catalyzed by the pandemic.

- World Hunger 2020--In the aftermath of COVID-19 nearly 1 billion are suffering from food insecurity. You can join World Renew in responding to this critical need by giving at worldrenew.ca/worldhunger and by registering for our Facebook Live Event on November 1, World Hunger Sunday. On average, it takes World Renew \$200 to equip a farmer with the training, tools, and seeds to feed his or her family for a year. Join us to better understand communities experiencing high need and the part you can play in bringing food to every table.
- Tamar Campaign--Gender-based violence is the shadow pandemic that has cast its influence across many homes now undergoing additional financial hardship, lack of food, and pronounced isolation. This December, we partner with organizations across the CRCNA to educate and advocate for the many women and children facing gender-based violence. These 16 Days of Activism will raise awareness and funds for the vulnerable.
- Gift Catalogue--Each year, donors to World Renew celebrate the birth of our Saviour by purchasing from our gift catalogue to provide a vital source of hope for communities journeying out of poverty. This year, we include gifts that respond directly to the impact of COVID-19 on families and their communities. Explore the gift catalog for yourself at worldrenew.ca/gift-catalogue