

Mindful of Gweimen

By Mary Sytsma, US Board President

The Gweimen Center Newsletter

MATCHING GIFT CAMPAIGN

Until the end of June, all gifts to Gweimen will be matched, dollar for dollar up to \$5,000.

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Gweimen Centre
PO Box 1517,
Wheaton, IL 60187

Supporters of the Gweimen Center in the US are concerned for the suffering of the widows and orphans. In spite of what is going on around us right now, we are also mindful of their suffering. Beatrice says the number who come for food every day is increasing. Food is hard to get and the prices are rising. When even the wealthiest are struggling to get supplies, the weakest and most vulnerable suffer more. The market is only open now two days a week, with limited food to buy, if you have the money. Beatrice has to travel to Abuja to buy food, passing through 14 aggressive government checkpoints to get there.

In an exchange of emails the other day about what the children could do to help themselves stay healthy, we talked about the importance of handwashing and social distancing. It is always a good idea to wash hands, but she reminded me, what if the water isn't clean and there is no soap? In some of the situations where our children live, social distancing isn't possible. My first reaction was to mobilize those who love Gweimen to donate soap and send off a big box, full of good things, but Beatrice says there is no mail going in or out of Kaduna State. They are locked down. The government is not helping either. We feel helpless.

What can we do?

Be mindful of their suffering, like God is. Be concerned about them. Think about them. Let it break our hearts a little. Pray for them. Donate money so they can buy food and soap. We can send donations to help them through this. Please.



Dr. Kadangs distributing food items to the children. It is heart breaking to have to send children and adults away empty handed.

Recent News from the Gweimen Center

By Dr. Beatrice Kadangs, Executive Director

We are trying to stay safe and healthy at Gweimen. The Kaduna state government ordered a total lockdown of schools, businesses, and government offices since the middle of March –with the exception of essential services. We have closed the Centre in line with the government lockdown orders. However, we know that many, if not all, of our kids are dependent on the daily meal they received from Gweimen. Therefore, we decided to start community distribution of raw food items to provide some relief to the families.

On April 22, we did our food distribution for the fifth week, averaging about 75 kids/week. Week after week, we see many other kids coming hoping to get some food as well, but we do not have the capacity to stretch that far – and it is heartbreaking to see those hungry children go back home with nothing.



Children lining up at the Gweimen mobile food pantry.

Food vendors are also running out of supplies as their supply chains have also been severely limited, and the prices of food items have risen. For example, in February, we bought a 25kg bag of milk for 33,000 naira; that same bag is 45,000 naira now, and we can't even find milk in Kwoi. The story is the same for all food items, except fresh tomatoes. We have only dried corn/millet in our store. We urgently need rice, beans, pasta, cooking oil, seasoning cubes, milk and sugar for next week's distribution.

Even if we have the money, getting to the food market in Abuja to purchase these items is a problem due to the lockdown orders and strict restrictions on travel. Traveling on the roads also raises serious security concerns as there is a noticeable rise in armed robbery due to hunger in big cities, like Abuja.

We are not able to get soap making items either as only food items are allowed to be sold in the market. We made production last month but we are all out of soap. We are helping with detergent and having the widows dilute the soap with water, but we will soon run out of these supplies as well - prices of such items have tripled. It's a precarious situation!

On a brighter note, the number of our goats has increased with the birth of another kid. It's unbelievably funny the way we were rejoicing over the birth of the baby goat. I think seeing the new life brought a glimmer of hope in the midst of pain and uncertainty.



It's indeed a terrible time we are going through, but Christ's resurrection has brought victory over whatever dark domain that's there in the world. We are praying for God to shorten this period for His glory. We just need to keep faith with Him. God is good!

Prayer Needs

1. For God to shorten the Covid-19 period
2. For provision of food to reach many more families
3. For protection of our families from Covid-19
4. For protection for Beatrice as she travels to get supplies.

The enclosed bookmark is our thank you to you for your past support for the widows and orphans of Gweimen. Currently, our donations are slightly lower than in the past, but the needs are greater.

Nigeria and Covid-19

By Rachel Vanderhill, PhD, US Board Member

The current problems and challenges caused by the global pandemic are magnified in Nigeria. The outbreak has stretched health care capacity and abilities in countries with well-resourced, advanced health care systems, such as the United States and

Italy. African countries, like Nigeria, are dramatically less prepared to handle a major health crisis. For example, there is on average 1 doctor for every 300 people in Europe. In sub-Saharan Africa there is 1 doctor for every 5000 people (The Economist, March 26, 2020). In addition, it is almost impossible to practice social distancing and vigorous handwashing in crowded slums in cities like Lagos, Nigeria, where less than 20% of the population has piped water (The Economist, March 26, 2020). The Nigerian Union of Allied Health Professionals, recently warned that “the deficit of health professionals and medical facilities would not be able



Gweimen staff in PPE ready to distribute food

Christmas Visit, December 2019:

By Pastor Austin of Crossroads Church

“Dr. Kadangs is the right missionary to support” was the sentiment of our team after visiting Gweimen and being a part of the work for sixteen days. Our team from Crossroads had front row seats to the impact Gweimen is having in that community. We visited the Gweimen Centre in December, for two main reasons. One, we wanted to be there for the annual Christmas Party for the orphans and widows. Two, we also hoped to complete the construction of the skills-training building. It was fun for us to unload the giant suitcases of gifts for the orphans. The Centre also gave each widow material for a new dress. What a privilege to participate in this work. After the Christmas Party, we helped local laborers with the last stages of the skills training building. This space will be used to train widows in the skills necessary to maintain a home and to generate an income. They can learn commercial baking or sewing, things that can help them to become financially self-sufficient. The skills center has running water and a six burner stove and oven. This will allow Gweimen to train more widows and serve the community in a greater way. At this writing, the Skills Training Center is 99% finished. The Engineer and his workers were caught up in the total lockdown imposed in Abuja and have not been able to come out to Kwoi. But the furniture has all been bought, and we just need to assemble them in place when the building is officially handed over to us by the Engineer. Our goal is to have it all ready by the time the school resumes.

to handle whatever upsurge that may arise due to the high incidences of community transmission” (Orjinmo, BBC News, May 4, 2020). As of May 4, 2020 Nigeria had 2,558 recorded cases of the coronavirus and 87 deaths, with cases continuing to grow daily (Orjinmo, BBC News, May 4, 2020). Given the widespread shortage of testing, the true number of cases is likely much higher. The

economic consequences of the global pandemic are also dire in Nigeria, where the government lacks the resources to provide substantial public spending to help the economy or aid people in need. Because the Nigerian economy is partially dependent on oil revenue, the precipitous decline in global oil prices has increased the economic hardship in

Nigeria. The millions of Nigerians who live on less than \$2/day are being forced to choose between possibly contracting a deadly virus and feeding their families. As Beatrice Kadangs’ report in this newsletter illustrates, the consequences of the global pandemic are potentially devastating for Gweimen widows, orphans, and children.



Picture of the nearly completed Skills Center, ready for occupancy after the Covid-19 shutdown is lifted.