**ANNUAL REPORT: NATIONALS IN MISSION APPOINTMENT**

**Name of Project: General Grant 46675: COVID-19 Response**

**World Church Relations**

**Aims and Objectives:**

**Aim: Building resilience of communities to cope to COVID-19 shocks**

**Objective**

* To alleviate the plight of affected The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe (MCZ) communities facing food security challenges during COVID-19 lockdown period
* To raise awareness on COVID-19 in The Methodist Church Community
* To distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to church congregates in a bid to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 disease
* To offer psychosocial support to affected households

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| 1. **What progress has been made towards achieving the aims and objectives as given in the original application?** |
| In the month of June, The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe leadership in conjunction with its development and relief arm, MeDRA, supported communities in Bulawayo, Gweru, Harare East and Hwange districts to be able to cope with the shocks caused by COVID-19. This was done through raising awareness on COVID-19, distribution of food hampers to curb food insecurity, distribution of PPEs to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the communities as well as offering psychosocial support, removing stigma and discrimination and bringing hope to the target communities.  The humanitarian situation of Zimbabwe remains acute and dire and this has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Zimbabweans are struggling with the deepening economic crisis as inflation continues to increase monthly, access to basic food commodities remains a challenge to the poor and vulnerable. This has been worsened by the lockdown regulations where movement of people has been restricted thus access to markets for informal trade or to do casual labour is limited. Thus, the distributed food cushioned 300 households for a period of one to two months depending on the household size. The food basket comprised of 20 kg of mealie-meal, 2 kg of sugar beans, 3 kg chunks, 4 litres cooking oil, 4kg rice and 2 kg sugar per household valued at $35. The table below shows the numbers reached per district per circuit with food humpers   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Church District** | **Circuit** | **Number of beneficiaries** | | Bulawayo | Ndolwane | 50 | | Gweru | Silobela | 80 | | Harare East | Chitungwiza | 80 | | Hwange | Tsholotsho | 50 | | All Districts | Retired Ministers and Widows of Ministers | 40 | |  | **Total** | **300** |   In addition, the provision of food items helped in reducing the burden and risk especially on women to look for food to fend the families.  In addition, support was given to MCZ owned Matthew Rusike Children’s home which houses XXXX orphan and vulnerable children. The home survives on gardening and poultry production projects as well as donations from well-wishers. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, access to markets to sell garden and poultry produce has been restricted such that income flow of the home was negatively affected. Furthermore, the donations from well-wishers did not flock in as usual. This left the home vulnerable thus the intervention helped through donations of Maize Meal, Flour, Sugar beans, Kapenta, Soya Chunks, Peanut butter, Powder milk, drinks, maputi, rice, sugar, Washing soap, Tooth paste, Toilet paper and Toilet cleaner. The supply is meant to cushion the home 3 months.  In a bid to capacitate communities on COVID-19 knowledge, during the public address at food distribution points, awareness raising on COVID-19 was conducted - its symptoms and how it spreads. There was also distribution of 2 500 flyers and posters to the orphaned and vulnerable children. In public places, posters were stuck on walls and trees for people to read and gain knowledge. The raising of awareness managed to demystify some of the myth and misconceptions in the communities regarding COVID-19. During the process handwashing and social distancing practices were encouraged as the way of preventing the spread of COVID-19.  Personal Protective Equipment in the form of re-usable and disposable masks, hand sanitisers, liquid soap and gloves were distributed to both MCZ & MeDRA staff responsible for the response as well as communities so as to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19. Communities have limited access to these materials thus the distribution to the 300 households as well as the churches in the areas was welcomed by the beneficiaries.  The mental health and psychosocial well-being of the people has been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a change in the normal life of communities where the new norm of social distancing, no hand shaking, wearing of masks, isolation or quarantine, no visits to friends and family and banning of community gatherings leading to people not going to fellowship in churches has brought a difference in people’s lives. Some are failing to adapt to this new normal way of life thus the theologians offered psychosocial support to communities to encourage and give them hope. This has enhanced capacities of communities to cope with the shocks due to COVID-19. Spiritual messages and dialogues have been used by both the MCZ leadership as well as the ministers at grassroots levels to different households as well as health personnel to cope with and adjust to the critical situation. |
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| 1. **What have been the highlights of the work during the year?** |
| * The intervention covered 4 districts of The Methodist Church with 4 circuits being targeted. * 300 food insecure households received basic commodities that covered cereal, cooking oil and relish. The food basket covered the required nutritional component for a balanced diet. This addressed food insecurity challenges raised in communities because of COVID-19 lockdown regulations which affected livelihoods for many people in the country. The targeted households are the most vulnerable persons such as the disabled, elderly, orphaned and children as they could not fend for themselves. * Matthew Rusike Children’s Home received groceries to cater for the needs of the XXXX orphan and vulnerable children housed at the home. * Public address and 2 500 posters and flyers were used to raise awareness in the selected communities targeting more than 1 000 people. Messaging on COVID-19 symptoms, transmission and prevention were shared. This addressed misconceptions and myths on COVD-19 as well as harmful socio-cultural practices in the communities. The messaging was in line with the WHO and CDC guidelines. * PPEs were distributed to the target communities for the use in prevention of the spread of COVID-19. Reusable and disposable masks, hand sanitisers, liquid soap and gloves were distributed to staff and the target communities. Liquid soap and sanitisers will help in the promotion of hand washing practice. * The Church Ministers provided psychosocial support to the target communities with focus on the elderly and other people with underlying conditions who are living in so much fear of the pandemic. This was done through individual, family and community dialogues giving people hope on how to cope with the pandemic and its effects. Children were targeted as well with information so that they understand the prolonged periods of school closure and movement restrictions which may lead to emotional unrest and anxieties. |

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| 1. **What are the major challenges in this work and how are they being addressed?** |
| * The food basket given to beneficiaries was meant to last for one to two months (depending on household size) as projected that the pandemic was short lived. However, the lockdown period in Zimbabwe has been declared indefinite by the President of Zimbabwe and this has greatly affected livelihoods in communities making them more food insecure. This means there is need to provide more food to these and other communities which were left out during the distributions to provide relief to them. * The support did not manage to cover all the marginalised and vulnerable communities in the selected circuits and it only covered 50% of the church districts. |

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| 1. **Please tell us about your NMA work either:**   **a. through someone’s actual experience – the story of someone benefiting from the work, or**  **b. through your description of a particular situation or event which is a part of the NMA work**  It would be helpful to have a story and any photographs to share with Methodists in Britain, which you will allow us to publish. |
| **Hope Restored for Agnes**  Agnes Ndhlovu aged sixty-eight years, is a member of the Chitsvedemo Society of The Methodist Church in Harare East district. Agnes looks after her two grandchildren (aged 8 and 12) whose mother in in South Africa where she went to look for work. Agnes has been surviving on remittances from her daughter and gardening activities, however since the beginning of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Agnes could not receive anything from her daughter and could not go to the market to sell her garden produce. This has left her in a dire situation and has been surviving with the help from friends and neighbours especially on mealie meal.  Her situation forced her to change the number of meals to be consumed a day. She said she was now cooking porridge for her grandchildren and feed them around midday and the would have their last meal (which proper) of the day around 5pm. Things have not been easy for Agnes as she only waits for help from other people. She tried to be a vegetable vendor, but this was short lived as her access to market was not possible. She said, “I would pray all the time asking God to help me”.  Indeed, her prayers were answered as she received 20 kg of mealie-meal, 2 kg of sugar beans, 3 kg chunks, 4 litres cooking oil, 4kg rice and 2 kg sugar from the church. Agnes said that this basket is going to help her for this next 3 months as she is not going to overspend her grocery. She is very grateful for the support from the PB and said she is going to pray even more for the people who gave the church money to do such a wonderful thing. |

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| ***5. If this is the last year of your NMA grant, how will the work be continued next year?*** |
| * There is need to provide food distributions monthly to affected communities until the pandemic is over as its availability will continue to pose food insecurity risk to these communities. * There is need to extend our support to 4 other MCZ districts which failed to receive food hampers in the month of June as a result of limited supplies. |