



NEW HARVEST MISSIONS INTERNATIONAL

NEWSLETTER

SERVING THE WEST AFRICAN CHURCH DURING COVID-19



Dear Partners and Friends,

Eight months ago, my expectations and plans for 2020 looked a lot different than they turned out (I bet most of you can say the same thing). Though the year has not looked anything like I had imagined it, NHMI has still been able to accomplish some amazing work and I am so grateful for your support. Let me highlight a few of those accomplishments over the past few months from our serving the church in the unexpected times of COVID-19 in Togo West Africa.



During the coronavirus pandemic, the church in Muslim West Africa has been scattered, stressed, and struggling; pretty much shut down in many regions. The pandemic has raised serious challenges and negatively impacted our churches and leadership at various levels.

A handwritten signature in white ink, which appears to read "Nathaniel Adawonu". The signature is stylized and written over a horizontal line.

REV. NATHANIEL ADAWONU
PRESIDENT & CEO OF NHMI/ACDI



HOW HAS THE CHURCH BEEN AFFECTED BY COVID-19 IN OUR WEST AFRICAN CONTEXT?

Our church buildings and properties in Togo West Africa have been closed for 8 months. Church members, pastors, church planters and evangelists, especially those in rural settings, are suffering due to the inability to gather for prayer and worship.

Church activities in many regions are suspended. This has forced our Worship and Prayer into family homes, but members are still meeting in new ways and learning to overcome the challenges of social distancing.

The Church's financial situation is dire due to the financial hardships of our church membership who are experiencing severe loss of income. This

has resulted in no tithes, no gifts or offerings coming into the church.

Other challenges such as a lack of internet connectivity, electricity, online services, and smartphones created a disconnection between church leaders and their congregations. In rural areas, church members are unable to afford internet or mobile service because all money was needed for food.

Due to government restrictions, church planters and pastors have found it difficult to remain in contact with church members living in remote and rural areas. The only means of communication available is WhatsApp but that is limited to the few who can afford it.





Our response to COVID-19 crisis in Togo West Africa.

During this unexpected and exceptional time, NHMI believes the church is called to continue offering not only a vibrant witness of the Gospel, but to also continue participating in God's holistic mission by sharing messages of hope and solidarity, by providing diaconal services and putting in place adequate response to the COVID-19 emergency funds supporting the most vulnerable churches and their communities struggling with the effects of the pandemic in the areas where NHMI is serving.

For us, it is the Gospel "in both word and deed". That is why, for the past 8 months, over **\$35,000 was raised toward our emergency funds.**



Please keep in mind the context is one where people rely on their DAILY income, so any interruption of daily life and economy quickly becomes a life-threatening situation for whole families and communities.

The economic impact in many cities, towns, and villages as a result of COVID-19 is already changing the face of the church and the congregations. Many of the church members have earned their daily bread by selling food and other goods at the roadside.

As Pastor Solomon, NHMI director in Togo, and Rev. Sylvain, Northern Presbytery Chairman, explains, "although these incomes were small, they did provide just enough money to feed their families. However, these lockdowns have now cut them off from almost all resources to survive. Many who resisted the measures were arrested or simply beaten!"

Often in rural areas, church members are impacted more heavily by the loss of livelihood, which results in the church facing financial instability.

As their members struggle financially for basic necessities, we must rethink and prioritize our ministries.



These funds have had a huge impact on the poorest and neediest communities and provided stipends to all our church planters, pastors, and evangelists in both presbyteries for 3 months.

We reached over **800 households** and assisted over **5,500 church members**.

In addition, we have provided training and raised awareness about the virus. Practical things like how it spreads, how the risk can be mitigated, and recognizing the symptoms have been provided throughout the months of July and early August.

Through our Bridge of Hope Ministry we provided food assistance to **148 children**, along with their families and **120 teachers** in the Northern region. With the assistance we provided, the people can survive till the end of the month of August.

Our work is far from over due to the fact that very few churches are authorized to be opened. In fact, most of our churches and church members are already living in crippling poverty. The struggle is heightened due to their churches being closed. Pastors and church planters in rural communities are still waiting for authorization from the government to open their churches.





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Please Consider donating to NHMI COVID-19 emergency fund

As you can see, we are in desperate need to raise funds to support the work we are doing. **It is vital that we raise \$8000** toward the rural pastors' who rely solely on our support to feed their families. Even if it is just one meal a day while waiting for authorization from the government to open their churches, this will keep them and their families surviving. Our hope is to continue to **provide emergency food assistance to at least 300 at-risk and neediest households and churches.**

Let me close by thanking you, our family of supporters, for your remarkable compassion and generosity in giving toward these ongoing projects. We are so grateful to have you helping us to building bridges and sharing the good news of the gospel with people desperate for His hope.



Prayer

- We need God's grace and mercy for unexpected times like these.
- That we all find the wisdom, love, and strength to continue sharing the gospel of hope during this crisis.
- For the Lord to keep our Church planters, pastors and NHMI staff safe.
- For the Lord to use the pandemic crisis to advance his kingdom in Muslim West Africa.
- For the Lord to provide financial resources needed for NHMI to continue to support the ministry in West Africa.

To donate securely online, visit NewHarvestMissions.org/Donate or write a check and mail it to:

New Harvest Missions International
P.O. Box: 458
Elfers, FL 34653

Be sure to specify in the memo line COVID-19 funds

All your gifts are tax deductible.