

# LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

## AUTUMN 2020



# → CEO'S WELCOME



As we approach the end of 2020, a year of unprecedented challenges for most of us, I present our latest Life Support Newsletter – a reminder of the life-saving and life-transforming work you have continued to support so generously.

Despite the significant challenges facing the charity sector, placing many small charities under threat, we have been able to continue providing urgent health and disability projects in Haiti and East Africa throughout 2020. This has been thanks to your incredible support.

In Haiti, we've been at the forefront of the COVID-19 response, opening one of the country's WHO certified COVID centres. Whilst we are grateful that numbers in Haiti remain low in comparison to Europe, our HHA funded COVID unit has still provided life-saving care for around 40 patients. But beyond the immediate health challenges of COVID-19 there is now a wave of other major issues being caused by the pandemic. As an example, in 2019, 135m people were estimated to be food insecure. The World Food Programme reported earlier this year that this number could double in 2020, and that without urgent action *'we could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions.'*

That's why tackling food insecurity and malnutrition has been at the forefront of our emergency response in East Africa in the last few months, providing life-saving aid to over 600 refugees a month. In this addition of 'Life Support' you will see the incredible impact your support is having.

Yet, whilst the frontline challenges in fighting extreme poverty have grown, the resources of the UK's charity sector to tackle such issues are, sadly, diminishing. Whether it be through cancelled fundraising events or a reduction in giving, the projections for the charity sector are bleak. Thanks to your generosity, we are incredibly grateful that so far we've been able to weather this storm, but we'll need all the support possible in the coming year to ensure this life-saving work can continue. Together, we can continue making a significant difference.

With love and thanks,

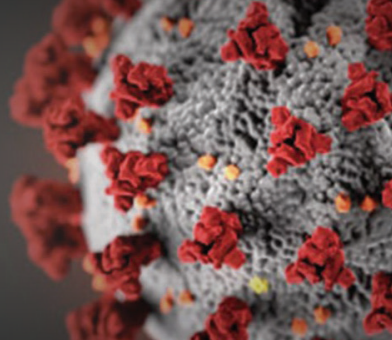
**Carwyn Hill**

CEO and Co-Founder of HHA





# HAITI COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE



➔ COVID-19 has dominated 2020 for much of the world including Haiti. Throughout the summer, we sent regular updates on HHA's COVID response in Haiti, including an urgent appeal to fund this important work.

With instances of COVID-19 in Haiti now thankfully at low levels, we wanted to take this opportunity to round up what's been going on, and what your amazing support has achieved in Haiti during this global crisis.

With cases increasing worldwide during the spring, HHA coordinated efforts to prepare our partner hospital for Haiti's surge in cases. As primary healthcare providers, it was the hospital's responsibility to offer the best care for COVID sufferers as possible. But it was also a priority to ensure the hospital's core services remained open, and safely accessible, for vulnerable groups such as mothers and babies.

It was a concern that fear of catching COVID-19 would deter pregnant mothers from seeking hospital care, placing themselves and their babies at greater risk. We've worked hard over the last 8 years to improve access to, and uptake of, maternal healthcare in Northern Haiti. Without action, this year's crisis could have undone much of that work.



HHA's UK, US and Haiti based teams worked closely with the hospital staff to coordinate a three-pronged response.



## ➔ SCREEN EVERYONE ENTERING THE HOSPITAL SITE

We implemented a triage system screening all staff and visitors for COVID symptoms as they entered the hospital. Tens of thousands have been screened with the aim of keeping the main hospital site remained a COVID free zone.

## ➔ OPEN AN ISOLATION WARD FOR SUSPECTED COVID PATIENTS

HHA provided funding, training and equipment to set up an isolation ward which has cared for around 40 patients. Due to the thoroughness of the preparations, it was chosen as one of Haiti's WHO certified COVID referral centres. The isolation ward, set up in the hospital's sports centre, was carefully designed to minimise the risk of infection spread. Each of the bed spaces were equipped with an oxygen concentrator, a vital resource in treating severe COVID cases. Doctors could perform remote consultations using video conferencing. A specially trained team of nurses and support staff were put together to work in the unit, doing an amazing job in very difficult circumstances. The ambulance team was, again, vital to the success of the operation performing many critical patient transfers and linking the region's COVID facilities.

## ➔ INCREASE COMMUNITY HEALTH EDUCATION

With only minimal healthcare infrastructure in Haiti, a high peak in cases would have completely overwhelmed the system. So a key part of our response was to educate the local population in ways to minimise the spread of infection, and what to do if they experience symptoms. Our Community Health Team stepped up their work to provide community based training and resources on COVID-fighting hygiene practices.

Alongside these important activities, it was vital to keep the Maternity and Neonatal wards open throughout the peak. If forced to close, hundreds of women and babies would have been placed at greater risk – a situation averted thanks to your incredible support.

With second waves of COVID-19 sweeping Europe, we remain vigilant, continuing to review the situation in Haiti and adapt our ongoing response accordingly.

# STORY FROM THE COVID WARD

Throughout the COVID peak in Haiti, the hospital's isolation ward was operating as an additional emergency department with patients assessed, treated or transferred as quickly as possible. It was rare for the staff to find out what happened to the patients they treated once they'd left. One lady called Rose is an exception.



Rose tested positive for COVID-19 and became one of the patients at our partner hospital's isolation ward. She came in a poor state and her symptoms were severe.

*"I was very scared, and very sick"* says Rose.

The medical personnel were close to transferring her to another facility, but on review the team were able to keep her here at HCBH under close supervision. Using the latest treatments, including Dexamethasone and Antibiotics enable resource-poor settings, like HCBH, to treat patients successfully in ways that were not available at the start of the pandemic.

*"Her oxygen was so low, I thought we were going to lose her"* says Nurse Najeska.

The oxygen concentrators, installed as part of the COVID preparation, showed their worth as life-saving machines delivering a constant supply of high-flow oxygen. Over the course of a week in the COVID ward, Rose's health steadily improved as she began to respond to the medication and oxygen.

2 weeks after she was discharged, Rose visited the hospital in her jewellery and nice clothing. She came to show how well she is doing now and to thank the staff. An integral part of Haitian culture is to look smart and dignified so this visit was important to Rose – looking like a different woman from the one critically sick in the ward bed. Nurse Najeska and the team were very encouraged to see her, and they all treated each other like old friends.

Rose is just one of the success stories from the COVID ward this summer. We're very proud of the local team who have worked tirelessly in tough conditions to care for so many sick patients. And we remember those patients, and their families, who did not survive. We give our sincere thanks to everyone who supported our Emergency COVID Appeal for making this life-saving work possible.

# HHA US LAUNCHES

We've shared previously about our intentions to bring US-based sister charity 'The Haiti Health Trust' under the umbrella of Hope Health Action. We are excited to announce that, in September, the name HHA US was adopted publicly, bringing opportunities for greater fundraising synergy between our UK and US efforts. We have worked so closely with the US team behind HHA US over the years, and are excited by the opportunities this new chapter will give us all. If you've got any friends, family or contacts in the US who may want to support the HHA's mission, they can now do so!

# NEW WEBSITES

As part of the name change in the US, we took the opportunity to build a brand new website for our UK and new US supporters.

As before, you will find the HHA website at [www.hopehealthaction.org](http://www.hopehealthaction.org), but now it has a fresh look with some exciting new elements. You will also be presented with an option to view the US version of the site, also available directly at [www.us.hopehealthaction.org](http://www.us.hopehealthaction.org).

Please take a look round the new site. While there is still some refining to be done, we hope that you find the new information and functionality interesting. We now have an exciting new project section with detailed info on all of our main projects, which is filterable by location and project type. We are also using a new payment system to collect donations which we hope will be more user-friendly and reliable. We're excited about this new resource and what's to come with HHA US up and running.





# SUPPORTING EAST AFRICA REFUGEES THROUGH THE COVID CRISIS

The consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak are disproportionately affecting the poor and marginalised around the world, and have exacerbated many wider inequalities unrelated to the health implications. Case numbers, though steadily rising, have remained mercifully low in Uganda and South Sudan, but breaks in supply chains, funding challenges among the aid community, and restrictions geared at containing the virus have had an immediate and dramatic effect on food security for the most vulnerable.

The World Food Programme has reduced rations for refugees in Uganda by 30% and states that COVID-19 is intensifying pre-existing regional crises (record global food insecurity & displacement, desert locusts) potentially leading to unprecedented levels of hunger in 2020/21. Food insecurity in South Sudan has reached the most extreme levels since independence in 2011: almost 7 million people – 60 percent of the population are struggling to find enough food each day.

With thanks to extraordinarily generous support, HHA launched an ambitious food security programme aimed at the people struggling the most. For six months, we are supporting 600 South Sudanese refugees in Palorinya refugee settlement and Mijale, in northern Uganda, with emergency food supplies. In addition, we are providing 170 farmers, most of whom have disabilities, both in Uganda and South Sudan, with seeds, equipment and training so that they can reap their own harvest sustainably.



Yunis is just one of the South Sudanese refugees who we've helped this year. Yunis has a mobility disability and reached the Ugandan refugee settlements against all the odds when her son, and only carer, died at the border. But life in the settlements is hard with disabilities and a shortage of food. HHA was able to help her with her own wheelchair, and emergency food rations.

*"I am thankful to HHA for providing me with a wonderful wheelchair. With it, I can go to various places; market, clinic, church. When I had no food, HHA quickly rescued me. HHA has contributed so much to prolong my life by this food." Yunis*

## → PLUMPY'NUT

Plumpy'Nut is a Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) sachet designed to treat severe acute malnutrition for children of 6 months of age and older. Each box of Plumpy'Nut has enough sachets to treat one child with malnutrition.



UNHCR and HHA representatives on a field visit to Agiste's family who was discharged after treatment for malnutrition.

We are excited to announce our generous donor and supplier of Plumpy'Nut, Edesia, are shipping an additional container of 1,600 boxes of Plumpy'Nut to Uganda this Autumn. Thanks to these donations the supply chain of Plumpy'Nut is secure enough that currently every child within the settlements that requires treatment for malnutrition is able to receive the treatment they need without delay. Considering there are 1.4 million refugees in Uganda spread across 14 areas – this is an extraordinary achievement and a mercy in the current climate.

At the end of June, HHA and UNHCR conducted a first, joint field-visit to Kyaka II refugee settlement. This site is mainly populated by DRC refugees and is one of those benefitting from the shipment of 2000 boxes Edesia sent in the Spring.

The HHA team were deeply moved and encouraged to see the difference Plumpy'Nut is making to children and their families' lives.



Onasmus is 8 months old. His mother Janet was worried because he was not increasing body weight but didn't know what to do. There can be significant suspicion around visiting health centres and modern medicinal treatments. Fortunately, his grandmother advised that they go to the health centre where he was diagnosed with malnutrition and has been taking Plumpy'Nut. He is finally gaining weight and his mother told us:

*"I would advise mothers to follow doctor's guidance as it has a positive effect. I hope he grows up to be just like any other child."*

# LARGE DISABILITY PROJECT LAUNCHES IN BIDIBIDI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, UGANDA

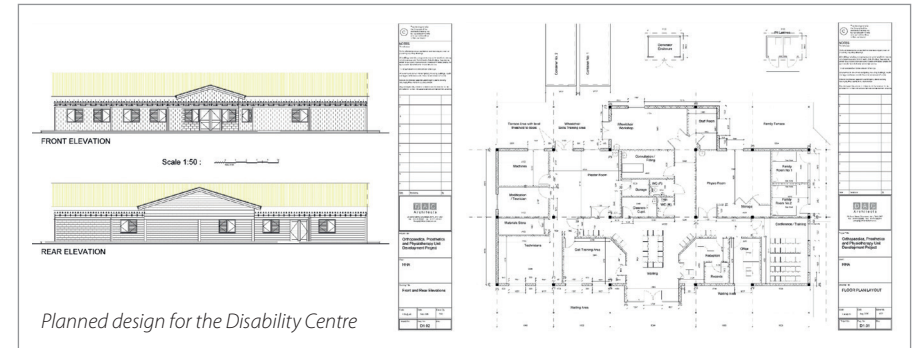
While 2020 has been an enormous challenge, it has also presented the most amazing blessings. We are so happy to announce a new grant funded project in partnership with SwissLimbs ([www.swisslimbs.org](http://www.swisslimbs.org)) for a new Disability Centre in BidiBidi refugee settlement.

This project aims to incorporate three approaches, to provide an holistic service to the refugee and host communities, with the goal of providing them with the best opportunity of independence:

- Fully equipped locally staffed rehabilitation centre, specialising in outpatient care which will provide locally appropriate assistive devices (prosthetics and orthotics, and wheelchairs) and outpatient physiotherapy services.
- Mobile team (in recognition of the vast distances in the settlement 250km<sup>2</sup>) which will be fully equipped to provide assistive devices and assessment in the community. This team can also serve Palorinya refugee settlement, with a population of 122,238 (at 50-60km from proposed disability centre) and other areas across the north.
- Community Based Rehabilitation team which will follow the WHO 5-pronged matrix of Health, Education, Livelihood, Social and Empowerment and aim to reduce stigma and maximise community integration with the goal that the project has the maximum impact on each person's life.



*Planned site for Disability Centre at BidiBidi's main Health Facility, which is being used as the central referral unit for the 5 zones of BidiBidi*



*Example of what the fully equipped mobile health unit will look like.*

BidiBidi has a population of 232,733 (as of September 2020), 86% of whom are women and children. A highly conservative number (5.1% of population) places persons with disability at almost 12,000 in BidiBidi with little to no current service provision.

Life without mobility in a refugee settlement is extraordinarily hard and the centre will provide bespoke prosthetics and orthotics, wheelchairs, physiotherapy and CBR to thousands of refugees. We couldn't be more grateful and excited about this opportunity and look forward to sharing stories in the months and years to come.

We are busy making preparations for the project and planning for construction, which will be underway in 2020.



## NEW HAITI TEAM MEMBERS

This Autumn, we are very excited to have 2 new long-term volunteers heading out to join our Haiti-based team. They both have a passion to help others in need and possess fantastic skill sets to move our range of projects forward in Haiti. Here is a little introduction from them:

### ➔ BROOKE BARISICH DISABILITY COORDINATOR



My name is Brooke Barisich, and I'm a paediatric physical therapist from New Orleans, Louisiana. As a PT, I get to spend every day helping the most amazing kiddos get stronger, develop their gross motor milestones, gain independence, and reach their goals...all while having FUN! Both therapy and international missions have been my passion for a very long time now, and I am incredibly excited and grateful to have this opportunity with HHA. I'm looking forward to making connections with members of the local community. I can't wait to hear their stories, share in daily life together, and learn from them. In my free time, I love doing anything and everything outdoors, from swimming in the lake to hiking in the mountains. Some of my favorite things to do are baking, running, exploring new places, watching Clemson football, and spending quality time with my family and friends.

### ➔ PHIL McRAE OPERATIONS COORDINATOR



I am Phil McRae and am deploying to Haiti at the beginning of November to co-ordinate HHA Operations out there for the next 12 months. I was a Naval Officer for 25 years, during which I served in submarines and had a number of support roles including procurement and logistics. For the last 8 years I have been a Project Manager in various environments, including setting up a pharmacy. Since volunteering for a Disaster Response charity last year, and most of this year in the fight against COVID-19, I have felt the satisfaction, and true value, in serving others. I am delighted that HHA gives me the opportunity to continue serving, particularly where the need is so strong, and in a context where the impact is direct and the benefits tangible. In my down-time I enjoy travel, watching rugby, low level DIY and motorbike touring; though have decided against taking my crash helmet to Haiti.

## HAITI CONTAINER

In the next 3-6 months, we intend to send another container to Haiti as part of our mission to build healthcare capacity at our partner hospital. Some of the projects benefiting from this latest shipment include:

### ➔ NEW NEONATAL EQUIPMENT

Building neonatal capacity through more, and improved, resources is a top priority for HHA, so we're excited to be sending a new batch of equipment for the NICU. This includes new infant-specific CPAP breathing machines, phototherapy units and specialist monitoring devices.



### ➔ SOLAR UPGRADE

This year, we embark on an ambitious multi-year project to achieve self-sufficiency in energy. Thanks to some specific funding for this project, we are implementing phase 1 with the shipment of a significant battery and inverter upgrade for the main solar system.

This 'plug-and-play' box will significantly improve the system's ability to store and use the energy collected by the existing panels. This is the first of several phases but we're excited by the difference this upgrade will make. Thanks to our friends at OffGrid Energy for supporting HHA with this work.

### ➔ X-RAY MACHINE

Thanks to our partners at the Swiss Paraplegic Foundation, we have another donated x-ray machine to boost the hospital's radiology capacity. Maintaining sensitive electrical equipment, like x-ray machines, in Haiti is a big challenge resulting in downtime for this important service.

This new equipment and expertise from our Swiss friends will be a big help as we look to improve capacity in this area.

# FUNDRAISING FOCUS

2020 has continued to be an incredibly challenging environment for fundraising, with many small charities predicted to close in the coming months and years. But thanks to your incredibly dedicated support this year, HHA has so far weathered the storm. Thank you so much for all your support.

While we have experienced frustration and disappointment at the postponements and cancellations of organised events such as the Brighton Marathon Weekend and our own Welsh 3 Peaks Challenge, we have been blown away by your response when we've asked for your help. During 'lockdown' many of you got creative and came up with your own fundraising challenges and events. And this summer, you got behind our Emergency COVID Appeal, raising money to support our COVID response in Haiti.

## ➔ FUNDRAISE YOUR OWN WAY

We want to keep the momentum for home-based fundraising going, as many of us enter further COVID restrictions. The money raised this year from these kinds of events has been so important to our work in Haiti and East Africa. Whether you take on your own 'Hike for Haiti' or even organise an online pub quiz or concert, the possibilities are endless.

Setting up a fundraising page on JustGiving or Facebook is simple and allows the funds you raise to come straight to HHA including Gift Aid. So as we approach Christmas this year with uncertainty all around us, why not do something that you know will make a positive difference to many people's lives?

We're here to help so get in touch on [info@hopehealthaction.org](mailto:info@hopehealthaction.org) with any questions you might have.



## CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2020

In the coming weeks, we will be sending out our Christmas Appeal for this year. At times like these, it's more important than ever that as many people as possible get behind this appeal, raising money for our maternity and neonatal projects. Please look out for our communications and share our film within your networks.

This year, we're focussing on the reality of life for the world's most vulnerable communities recovering from the impact of COVID-19. 2020 has seen economies crumble, healthcare systems overwhelmed, and huge rises in food insecurity. These realities will be felt for a long time and are affecting the poorest communities the most.

HHA will be raising money this Christmas to ensure mothers and babies in Haiti and East Africa can still access prenatal support, safe childbirths, and adequate nutrition to stay healthy.

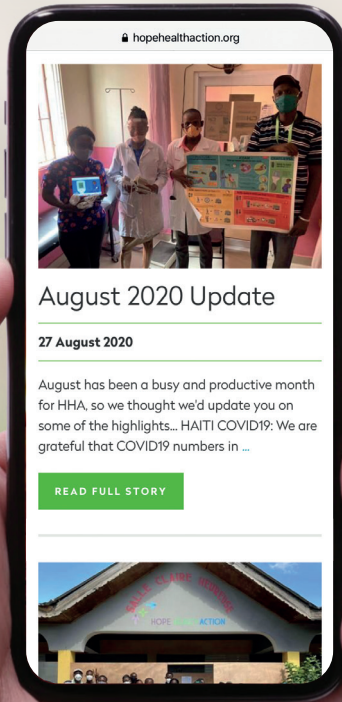
Please support and share our appeal with your family, friends, colleagues and church. Thank you.

# CHRISTMAS APPEAL



# KEEP UP TO DATE

To sign up for regular email updates and read our latest news and blog articles, visit our website at: [www.hopehealthaction.org](http://www.hopehealthaction.org)



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