



Diocesan Old Girls' Association Limited 拔萃女書院舊生會有限公司

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Joyce Samoutou-Wong

Class of 1993

Co-founder of New Sight Eye Care

I am a missionary doctor serving in the Republic of Congo, Africa. I grieve with the world at the devastation caused by COVID-19. As of 5 May, there were 236 confirmed cases in Congo, and many untested. Healthcare-wise, while Africa carries 23% of the world's disease burden, it has only 1% of the finances and 3% of the workforce.¹ The African continent has fewer than 2,000 ventilators and fewer than 5,000 ICU beds.² Economically, Africa may lose half of its GDP and shoulder an additional USD10.6 billion in health spending.³ As for prevention, the majority are struggling to follow basic measures: Only 15% of Sub-Saharan Africans have access to hand-washing facilities;⁴ and since 80% work in the informal sector, not going out to work means no food for the family.⁵

Living in Congo is like watching developed nations struggling in advanced four-wheel drives, following them on the same track heading toward the same terrifying exponential curve, and wondering how our rusty cars can miraculously swerve to minimise loss and death. Like everyone, I am battling against an overwhelming sense of helplessness.

One afternoon, before we went into lockdown, I asked our nursing students how they could help the COVID-19 situation. They responded they had no money. We went on to discuss the exponential power of health promotion and how we can all play a part. Right then, they composed a song about prevention and

mobilised a group to record it. The song is now on the radio all over the country. More importantly, these youths were empowered, and I saw that while many things are out of our control, we can still do something. That conviction became the lifeline for this challenging season and spurred us on: our charity set up a [COVID-19 relief fund](#), distributed over 12,000 [leaflets](#), [recorded interviews](#), donated soap and disinfectants. Our children wrote a [radio play about COVID-19](#) that is being broadcast, which the local authorities picked up and is recording into 15 dialects. What our kids had was small and insignificant, yet like the five loaves and two fish in the hands of Jesus, their efforts made a difference. Indeed, there are many things that we can no longer do, but that cannot stop us from doing what we can with what is in our hands.

Notes:

¹Anyangwe, Stella C. E., and Chipayeni Mtonga. Inequities in the Global Health Workforce: The Greatest Impediment to Health in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 4 (2): 93–100; 2007.

²Macleane, Ruth, and Simon Marks. 10 African Countries Have No Ventilators. That's Only Part of the Problem. *New York Times*; 2020 Apr 18, updated Apr 20 (cited 2020 May 4). Available from [here](#)

³Economic Commission for Africa. 13 March 2020. ECA estimates billions worth of losses in Africa due to COVID-19 impact. 2020 Mar 13 (cited 2020 Apr 2)



Kaleidoscope

New Issue#26



Conversations

New Minnie Soo, Coco Lin, Karen Tam, Toto Wong



Events Calendar



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¹Anyangwe, Stella C. E., and Chipayeni Mtonga. Inequities in the Global Health Workforce: The Greatest Impediment to Health in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 4 (2): 93–100; 2007.

²Maclean, Ruth, and Simon Marks. 10 African Countries Have No Ventilators. That's Only Part of the Problem. *New York Times*; 2020 Apr 18, updated Apr 20 (cited 2020 May 4). Available from [here](#)

³Economic Commission for Africa. 13 March 2020. ECA estimates billions worth of losses in Africa due to COVID-19 impact. 2020 Mar 13 (cited 2020 Apr 2). Available from [here](#)

⁴Ibid.



Events Calendar



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Subcommittee Past Events

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