

# Health Help International

# Tidings



Summer  
2020



What a momentous time it has been since the last issue of *Tidings*. Across the world, the pandemic has shown little sign of abating and is especially severe in India. In Zambia the situation is relatively better, but as the weather has cooled the virus has surged and added to the hardships of many of the poorest people who live there. The UK has been hard hit and the continuing impact upon daily life has made it impossible to organise face-to-face fundraising meetings.

This is where we have to say a huge thank you. Many of you, aware of our problems, have made extra and sometimes sacrificial donations. Amazingly, because of this, we have been able to maintain our work in both Zambia and India. A big thank you, too, because we know that you keep us in your prayers - a vital support to our Christian charity.

We also have to acknowledge extra help from Charitable Trusts. They have been especially helpful in developing the successful work at Ashram Kira Ashram and at Happy Valley. We are particularly grateful to the Souter, Ashworth and James Williams Charitable Trusts.

We also need to share with you news of an important development concerning Health Help Zambia (**HHZ**), our sister organisation in Monze. Following extended and detailed discussions with them, we have decided to help them move towards a greater degree of independence. They now have their own board of trustees and a management group and it is right that they should have a greater say in directing the work in Monze. We will always want to support the needy and vulnerable in this part of the world but, in future, more of our work will be undertaken directly with schools, hospitals and other organisations.

## The Retirement of Ann Marchant

We meet so many people as we journey through life and we are indeed fortunate when we meet someone whose ethos and spirit seems to resonate so well with one's own. Such a person is Ann Marchant who answered my advertisement in the 1980's for someone who understood accountancy to help with the establishing and running of a new nationwide company I was setting up, the **Instat** Group. Engaging Ann was one of the best business decisions I ever made.



20 or so years later we retired from **Instat** around the same time and God led me to set up **Health Help International**. Ann, now my firm friend, was eager to help and became our first voluntary Treasurer. As the Charity began to grow and it became obvious that we needed someone to organise the Government's Gift Aid Scheme and Ann suggested she would like to take over this responsibility.

So a new Treasurer was appointed in David Green and Ann set up the necessary Book Keeping arrangement which she has continued to do in an exemplary manner from that day to this.

You may never have met Ann or heard much about her, for she always kept a low profile, but those of us who worked closely with her, always enjoyed her ready smile and helpful manner. Unfortunately, she has had, during recent months, a spell in hospital and although she is recovering well, she has decided to hand over this valuable work to a new volunteer, Tim Hatherall, whom we are delighted to welcome into the **HHI** family. She will be a hard act to follow, but one thing is sure, it will not be a hard job for Tim to take over Ann's records which she is at present handing over to him.

Thank you, Ann, for all you have quietly and efficiently done for us over so many years. We shall miss you greatly and we wish you God's continued blessing for a healthy and happy final retirement.

*Ron Prosser*

Patron

## Face masks

Wherever in the world you are now, the pressure to stay safe is paramount. Hand washing, social distancing, shielding, and self-isolation are words that we hear many times each day - each carrying the 'stay safe' message. Recent advice now favours wearing a mask to protect others as well as ourselves. In Zambia, the cheapest mask is K5 (about 20p) which many people in rural areas can't afford, which means that they are unable to enter shops.



Seamstress Primeldah fitting free face masks for the vulnerable who come seeking help. A hand-washing station has been set up in the **HHZ** compound by the gatehouse.



With schools in Zambia being closed during lockdown the Menstrual Hygiene project has been on hold, but the **HHZ** seamstresses have re-directed their sewing skills towards mask-making so that they can be handed out freely to the poorest people in the area.

Here, in the UK, our friends at Hope and Market Uniting Church, Merthyr have extended their entrepreneurship too. Before lockdown they supported **HHI** regularly with generous profits from post-Sunday service coffee, cards and **Traidcraft** sales. During lockdown they have turned their skills to mask-making with profits from their sale being used to help **HHI**.



Face masks made and sold by **HHI** supporters in Merthyr Uniting Church with all proceeds going to **HHI**

Brilliant-Thank you to both Merthyr and Monze for your sewing efforts in the face of adversity.

### **Isaiah is growing and in good health.**

Two years ago Priscilla, a physically disabled Zambian schoolgirl, found herself pregnant. There was no prospect of practical support from her poor parents nor was there any knowledge as to the whereabouts of the man who raped her. She was totally helpless. Now, two years on, thanks to regularly monthly support from **HHI**, she is a confident mum with a home, bathing facilities and a healthy two-year-old boy whom she has named Isaiah. Isaiah can walk, talk, and hear which, sadly, are all abilities which his mother does not possess. He adores Priscilla, and his grandmother, and together they have been able to cope with the Covid-19 pandemic because of the funding received from **HHI**.



Isaiah walking outside his home in Ntambo.



Priscilla with face mask protection



HHZ chairperson, Mr Gondwe, delivering the monthly provisions for Priscilla's family

Each month Priscilla and her family receive food and provisions including face masks, (made by the **HHZ** seamstresses) soap, toothpaste, washing detergent and cooking oil.

We continue to give thanks for the good health and safety being provided to vulnerable people like Priscilla and her son.

### Further Developments at Muumba



Even though Coronavirus has changed the way we live and work, those involved in education are finding ways of preparing for the safe return of children to their respective

schools. How classrooms will function in the future has yet to be determined but one essential aspect of a return to school will, no doubt, be a concentrated focus on hygiene.

Thanks to the generosity of **HHI** supporters, good hygiene for the children attending Muumba school will be made a little easier. Hopefully, they will soon be able to use the brand-new flushing toilet facilities which are currently under construction.

Mr Bbilika (the school's headteacher) wrote recently:

*"The coronavirus situation in Zambia has caused another threat due to increase in the number of both new positive cases and death toll. This has also resulted to high increase in the price of commodities as well as shortages. Erecting of walls has been concluded today with a few challenges though we managed to overcome them by adjusting our budget. Our plans are to start roofing next week."*

We wish Mr Bbilika all the very best and we pray that this essential facility will be completed before the return.

### **Saving lives in Chipata Central Hospital**

Many long-time **HHI** supporters will recall that John Phiri was funded by **HHI** to become a doctor and since then he has been promoted to District Health Director for Vubwi district in northern Zambia. His wife, Martha, is a highly qualified paediatrician working in Chipata Hospital. Last October when Jute Williams visited the maternity wing of Chipata Hospital with Martha she expressed a real need for a CPAP to save the lives of neo-natal babies. A CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine ensures that babies with respiratory and lung problems will be able to survive once attached to the machine. The machine can support two babies at a time. It cost just over £1000 including transporting it directly to the hospital. Global Health have provided the machine and despite Covid-19 it has been delivered to Lusaka and it should be saving babies before you finish reading this article!

There are many more needs on the list for the maternity ward which over time we hope we can help with.



Martha Phiri in the maternity ward of  
Chipata Central Hospital



The Punami CPAP - Continuous Positive Airway  
Pressure machine.

## The show must go on!

The Covid-19 virus has hit India hard. Rising numbers of infections led the Government to introduce a strict lockdown, often violently enforced, which threw millions of people out of work and into instant destitution. Many of these had travelled to the cities to find work, and tried desperately to return to their home villages on crowded buses or even by walking, spreading the virus as they went. The Government introduced supporting measures but many people, often those who need it most, are getting little or no help.

Kerala acted early and decisively, and has had some success. But the virus has returned and, at the time of writing, Kerala is in the grip of a further lockdown - currently all offices, markets, shops, worship places, public places, the Medical College and even hospitals are closed. Tamil Nadu has been severely affected as well.

Against this background, our partners are doing what they can to continue their work with some of the poorest and most needy people in their area.

Everyone in India seems to have a smartphone, and connection charges are cheap. So Happy Valley, our special needs school in Kalathara, Kerala is continuing its work remotely. Philip reports that the parents and children are co-operating, and that the tuition is working well and is appreciated.



Remote learning: online class in progress

A few children are able to come to the tuition groups. We have provided face masks and sanitiser for all of these. The rest of the children are given the help that they so desperately need through remote learning, similar to Happy Valley.

The support that we provide for people with long term medical needs is continuing. Philip supports 23 of these.

Visiting them has the added advantage that he can assess how poor they really are, and make sure that the money that you give so generously is used as effectively as possible. The usual contribution is Rs. 500 a month - about £5.50 at present exchange rates. It doesn't sound significant, but it is - money goes a lot further in India, locally produced medicines and rice cost pence not pounds, and Rs. 500 is enough to make the difference between destitution and getting by.

Some of the recent additions to the list of those we help are:

- Sara who has cancer. She is a widow with just one daughter.
- Babu is 60 years old, and also has cancer. He used to be a daily labourer, but cannot work any longer.
- Syamala Kumari is 52 years old and is recovering from a stroke. Her husband has heart problems.
- Balan used to be a daily labourer, but is ill and needs medicine.
- Rethish has psychiatric problems. He has no parents or brothers who might support him - just one sister whose husband is a pastor.
- Kuchuthersia is 56 years old. She has heart and kidney problems and is diabetic. Her husband is also a heart and diabetic patient.

In addition to these, we are continuing to support 27 kidney transplant and kidney failure patients with immunosuppressant drugs or dialysis.



Philip also uses the money that we send out each month to provide help towards the cost of shorter courses of medicine and operations for other sick people. In addition to all this, he took the initiative to make up and distribute a large number of food parcels to people in the area who needed it most.

Over at the Neyyar dam, Pastor Wilson is keeping up the good work. The sewing training is continuing remotely, with advice, training and guidance being provided over the telephone. Wilson has asked us to provide food parcels for the starving families in his area. Your contributions meant that we were able to provide hundreds of these.



Essential food distribution to hungry villagers by the Neyyar Dam



A long but orderly queue formed quickly and the food was distributed - all captured on video and available on YouTube through our website or Facebook page.

Another request was for Rajesh, a 32 year old father with two small children and an invalid mother, who was severely burned with over 42 percent of his body being affected. He was admitted into Trivandrum Medical College Hospital who prescribed an urgent course of ten injections. Each injection would cost Rs. 2,800 (about £30), money that he didn't have. Again, your faithful giving meant that we were able to send this money out immediately. It has been passed on to him and he can have the treatment.

There are many such requests. As Tom is still in Australia, and there are fewer demands for help coming from Philip, we have a little money available, and we are using this to expand our work through Pastor Wilson in the Neyyar Dam area.



Sunday worship at Thanal House

For **Thanal House** it has been a difficult time. The home has been in lockdown and totally isolated from the wider community, which has meant that they have received few of the contributions in kind that used to help them stay afloat financially. It also means that some essential building work has had to be put on hold, as workmen have been unable to come in. But Salini, Sanil and Valsala are coping admirably with the problems - we're really proud of them.

Across the border in Tamil Nadu, **Asha Kiran Ashram** is continuing to look after some of the residential children who were unable to return home before the lockdown. We are also looking to the future - we have managed to get grant funding towards the new physiotherapy hall that we have been wanting to build for some time now, and we have taken the decision that this can go ahead.



Physiotherapy at Asha Kiran Ashram

At the moment planning permission is bogged down in Indian bureaucracy, made far worse by the Covid-19 crisis and some local elections, but Santhosh is applying pressure and we are confident that the building work can start soon.

This will be a great addition when it is finished - it will give a dedicated, purpose-built facility where all the equipment can be stored in one place, and where poor villagers in the surrounding area can come for treatment, in addition to the children of Asha Kiran Ashram - who will be the first to benefit.

So the work in India is still going ahead, despite all the challenges. The needs are greater than ever, and you have provided us with the money to meet as many of them as possible - despite the trauma of our own lockdown and the uncertainty as to what tomorrow brings, you have continued to provide. Thank you all for your incredible ongoing generosity that makes all this possible - we couldn't do it without you.

### News from Strathaven

This year would have seen the 19th Round Strathaven 50 Charity Cycle event (**RS50**) – unfortunately cancelled because of Covid-19. The first **RS50** was held in 2002 organised by the Friends of Strathaven Scouts and over the years has raised £129,000 for various Charities of which a total of £38,200 has been donated to Health Help International.

**Strathaven Friends of HHI (SFHHI)** is campaigning this year to raise funds to help purchase the new bus for Philip Mathew's Happy Valley Special Needs School in Kerala.

Other fundraising efforts have had to be put on hold while the present Coronavirus restrictions continue but the committee is hoping to benefit from the ‘alternative’ RS50 which is to be held at the end of August.



The **RS50** committee plans to run a ‘virtual’ fund raising event and hopes for the support of many of their regular cyclists. The monies raised are to be shared between a local Hospice and the **Happy Valley Bus Fund**. In addition, Iain Park is seeking sponsorship for the latter by trying to complete the difficult fifty-miles course. Iain was the founder of the **RS50**. Now aged 83, this is no mean challenge for him as Alun Williams (Jute’s husband) will testify, having taken part himself in a previous **RS50**. Iain has been training throughout the four months of lockdown.

Please support the **SFHFI**’s efforts to help the bus fund by either donating online at [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/round-strathaven](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/round-strathaven) or by sending a donation in support of Iain’s efforts for the fund to **HFI** (gift aided if possible).

### ‘Tom Sutherland – Under the Shade of the Banyan Tree’

Iain Park’s biography of Tom Sutherland has, finally, been completed and is now with the publishers. It will be produced under the above title towards the end of September. More details and how to buy a copy will be published in the next issue of **Tidings**.



# HELP!

*Worldwide, in some way, everyone is feeling the impact of Coronavirus.*

*However, for the poorest people in the world the situation is unimaginably dire. This email, received from Wilson, gives us some idea of developments in Kerala, India.*

*'Hello Very respected Edmond sir,*

*Praise the lord. I hope you all are fine*

*Here every where lock down. People haven't job, not going out, restrictions starving, hungry, poverty suicides increasing covid patients increasing quarantine families.*

*Here we are thinking what we can do for them.*

*Very sad BGM not able to help them. Lack of empty fund.*

*Please pray*

*God bless you all. Remember in prayer*

*Wilson Kochukunju, Director @ BGM Social Service Centre'*

**What can WE do for them?**

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