

UPDATE OF COVID-19 CRISES AT MADERA

Dear Gudrun,

Thank you for the concern and care you have towards us. I am fairly pushing on and would like to appreciate greatly that in spite of the struggles we are going through, there are still good people who think well of us!!

As a country, nationally since the lockdown was pronounced, the population has experienced enormous shortfalls ranging from inadequacies of food, transport and healthcare facilities. Government tried to procure food but unfortunately, the distribution has been limited to only Kampala and Wakiso districts of the Central Region covering about 1,500,000 families thereby leaving the remaining vast part of the country yawning. Moreover, the local weekly markets that have been the food granary where people used to buy food items at fair prices were shutdown, transport restrictions were too imposed limiting it to only Lorries that carry food stuffs and this has translated to monopoly of a few also restricted markets with high prices that the common person cannot afford and of course people also find walking to these distant markets very hard. The situation in Soroti has not changed much either from the beginning of Covid – 19 and a lot of people are suffering.

The food supplied by government only covered a few families who were given 6kg of maize flour and 3kg of beans respectively.

The lock-down was partially lifted but schools, churches and bars have remained closed making it still a difficult situation to contain.

This is a season in the year when people would be expecting first season harvest of food crops from the gardens/fields, unfortunately rain has become too much that has made the nearly mature food (Grains and tubers such as cassava and sweet potatoes) to rot in the fields. Therefore, shortage of food and other supplies has caused a lot of conflicts and/or domestic violence in many families. The men who are the bread winners are now unemployed and thus- not able to provide for their families. Unemployment has rendered a majority of people idle at home. Some young girl-children have been forced to early marriages so as to raise money to support the family to live on. Some parents have been tempted to exchange their young daughters for just a cow or goats that can easily be sold to raise money and it is worse because these little girls used to spend much of their tender times at school as a way of protection with the boarding sessions being more protective than the day sessions. My daily prayer and hope is let not any of our daughters of Madera Girls' Primary School fall prey to this vice. It is a pitiable situation!!!

Here in Madera, the main activity around is the upgrading of the road. This development has uprooted and razed down the entire protective fence to the school and her neighbors that has exposed and put us under sleepless nights of fear, anxiety and stress experienced from trespass and attempted break-in to the school and convent. Our local guards seem to fail to manage securing the vast open places. There is equally so much pollution ranging from heavy and cloudy dust that we fear of its impact on our health as during day and night dust accumulate and pile in our living room and bed rooms giving us difficulties in breathing, sisters are having persistent running noses and cough due to choking dust and of course not forgetting the noise and tremors from the heavy machines as they grade and compact the road. The tremors and vibrations have cracked part of the walls to the two (2) old dormitories built in 1933 using locally unbaked and one of our old houses towards the small gate to the guest house and school. Also all of our trees that have been protecting us and the buildings against heavy winds besides the road were cut down and hence some roof parts of the convent houses were blown off by strong winds.

Since March 20, 2020 when all schools throughout Uganda were closed, apparently our school compound is abandoned with over-grown grass (too bushy now) as there are no learners and staff that has become a dangerous habitat and breeding place for mosquitoes, snakes and many other dangerous reptiles and insects.

The school depends majorly on parents' fees contributions to hire the grass mowers as our old grass trimmer broke down and cannot be repaired anymore; and also pay support workers who are also locked-down in their rural homes and cannot walk for long distances to school. It follows suit to the P.T.A teachers locally paid at school (Not on government pay-roll) going without wages/salaries from the months of April till schools will be reopened.

The school too, is faced with the challenge of electricity bill payments as it was closed in the middle of first term with a majority of parents who contribute to many school activities had outstanding fees balances and electricity has been disconnected. I am unable to pay for the bills to keep even the security lights on during the nights.

There was some food left in the store that I shared together with the entire staff of fifty-five members of course with their families!! This food support took us for a period from March 25, 2020 to middle of May 2020.

I have contact with few a girls that are near Madera but majority who are a bit distant, there is no much contact. The staff is locked down in their houses suffering with no food and other basic supplies and teachers together with support staff not on government payroll but locally paid by the parents are worse off. They have gone without wages/salaries since April. I feel pity for them because I am equally in a helpless situation. Some staff members have resorted as a way to earning a living into burning charcoal from the trees that were cut down when the road was being upgraded. They sell the charcoal to get money to buy basic supplies and some use as fuel for cooking. This situation has not spared even us as nuns living at Madera convent!!!

As of the previous music competitions, these were from Regional to National. At the Regional level we merited position number one out of the nine (9) Districts and one (1) Municipality that participated. While at the National level with 134 Districts and 12 Municipalities we became the 15th overall and the best Municipality and we won two (2) trophies.

Thank you so much for the concern.

God Bless you.

Sr. Elizabeth