

NEXUS

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Ordinary people can make an extraordinary difference

CALLING FOR HELP COVID-19 relief for our project partners on all continents

~by Connie Gerwing~



The emergence of the COVID 19 pandemic in February and March caused major issues all over the world. Our project partners had to stop what they were doing and deal with the health and food security needs of their communities. They came to Rainbow of Hope for Children Society for help. We set up a fund to provide what we could right now. Hopefully donations will keep coming because this issue is not going to be over soon and more of our help will be needed.

You can see themes in the stories coming from our different projects. Developing countries have very poor health care systems that often charge even the poorest for their services. There are many endemic diseases from malaria, typhoid, and cholera, to parasites so the health of their populations is already compromised.

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COVID-19 relief cont.

Food insecurity is always an issue, most are one crop away from hunger. Unemployment is high and people often survive on short-term work. These sources of work have disappeared in many of these countries where tourism is one of the main employers. We in the developed world know that this pandemic is disrupting our economy but our issues pale beside those of the poorest countries.

NEPAL

Our partner in Nepal, the High Himalayan Community Projects Nepal (HHCPN) in the Rasuwa District, was the first to ask for our aid. Nepal confirmed the first case in Kathmandu on January 24, 2020. On March 24th the whole country was placed in full lockdown and the economy effectively shut down. Initially, like many places in the world, people hoped that the lockdown would be short-lived but that did not happen. By May, the HHCPN requested funds to help with food relief. Most people in Nepal are subsistence farmers who sell extra produce if they have it. They supplement their incomes with short term jobs in things like tourism. One crop failure or adverse weather event, losing a job or contract, tourism operators closing along with the borders, all mean that people do not have enough to eat. Harikrishna Devkotah, project head, initially collected money from local people to help the worst off but with the lockdown continuing, their only hope was aid from outside. They borrowed money and asked regular donors for immediate aid. Rainbow of Hope responded with \$39,000 in May.

The community also developed a plan to plant maize, potatoes, rice, and millet on every square inch of land that was available including government land. These crops were available to harvest in August and September and will be shared with the whole community. In total 1033 families received food aid.

In mid-July the government eased the lockdown and partially opened the country but cases rose quickly and the lockdown was reinstated. In late August, a doctor in the Jibajibe hospital tested positive for COVID-19 and the whole hospital was shut down. There are also cases of typhoid in the area. Life continues to be very difficult in the Rasuwa district of Nepal.

KENYA and TANZANIA

Kenya closed its borders on March 15 and closed schools on March 20. A nationwide curfew was enacted and remains. Initially, the capital city of Nairobi was closed but was opened in mid-July. International flights were again allowed on August 1. In a country where most people are peasant farmers who supplement their incomes with precarious work in areas such as tourism, small

business or agricultural labour, this meant that hunger was close at hand.

Our partner, Kinyambu Rural Education and Community Development (KRECD), requested funds to support the neediest families in the area. While there are no reported cases in the Kinyambu area, travel is still restricted and many people have lost what little work income they have. Crops were good due to high rainfall amounts in the early months of 2020 so those with small farms (shambas), could at least feed themselves. As the pandemic has dragged on though, hunger is becoming more of an issue. Schools reopened in a limited way for 3 grade levels on October 12 and the community is planting crops now in hopes of good rains in November.

For the small sum of \$3360 Rainbow of Hope helped 50 families in the Kinyambu area with food supplies and also provided masks, soap and sanitizers to the local health clinic. We will consider more aid if it is requested.



Alphonse Ngwisya Kimanathi, Nursing Officer in charge, Kinyambu Dispensary with Simon Ngumbi, chair of KRECD.

Tanzania, Kenya's neighbor to the south, has declared that it is free of COVID-19, but that is likely not the case. The country stopped reporting case numbers in May and the president declared the country free of the disease on June 8, 2020. The country is open to tourists and they seem to be coming. While we can't know for sure, this is very different from neighboring countries and there may be similar levels of the virus in Tanzania. Kenya closed its border with Tanzania in May.

In June we received a request from the Tabora School for the Deaf. Here is how they characterized the situation; *“The most marginalized families and communities feel devastating impacts of COVID-19 during this pandemic. COVID-19 has pushed many families into acute food insecurity. Every day disabled people worry about how they are going to survive the pandemic. To them the great threat of their lives is food. Deaf families are worried and distressed because no-one is working, they have no money to buy food, and there is no one who can employ them.”*

It is difficult for people with disabilities everywhere but in developing countries with no social safety nets it is very problematic. Families often support them for the rest of their lives and they are regularly ostracized because disabilities are seen as a curse on the family. Rainbow of Hope responded quickly to this request with \$10,000 to help families of the poorest students in the School for the Deaf with food, sanitation supplies, and clothing.

BALI



Delivery of the donated PPE to the Bali Department of Health by Gede Bingin, Executive Manager JFF and Komang Wardhana, Project Manager.

Our long-time partner, the John Fawcett Foundation that does such great work in Bali with their vision projects, requested assistance in May. We provided \$5,000 for them to purchase personal protective equipment for their front-line workers. They are continuing their work providing glasses, cataract surgeries and other vision services to the poorest people of rural Bali.

BRAZIL

Grota da Alegria is a favela, a slum area, of 14,000 people living in extreme poverty on the outskirts of Maceio. Despite the squalor, neglect, and violence, the residents cling to hope in the name which means "Valley of Joy". Brazil has one of the worst outbreaks of COVID-19 in the world and many cases are in the crowded favelas where people can't physically distance. The Center for Popular Education and Citizenship Zumbi dos Palmares (CEPEC) a non-profit non-governmental organization was created in 2000. Al Gerwing and George Bunz worked with this group for a number of years.

One of the greatest difficulties faced by residents is lack of work to ensure the livelihood of their families. The majority of heads of families are women who support their relatives by working as domestic servants and street vendors. The pandemic has caused many of these sources of income to disappear. The government has provided some small relief packages, but these are minimal. CEPEC asked Rainbow of Hope for funds to alleviate the

suffering of 200 families in the community with the delivery of basic food baskets and hygiene material. They will also provide some social supports such as conversation circles and virtual groups to discuss the social problems that might occur after the pandemic. A core value of the organization is that people in the favelas need more than just food and shelter. They need connection to others and self-esteem to keep fighting for their rights to education, work, and health. Rainbow of Hope was pleased to be able to support this project for just under \$4000.



CEPEC distributes 50 food baskets and 50 personal hygiene kits to 50 poor families.

EL SALVADOR

Our long-time partner in El Salvador, Centro de Intercambio y Solidaridad (CIS) also requested funding for food, soap, sanitizers and face masks. While the numbers of cases of COVID-19 were not high in El Salvador the shutdown of the economy hit people hard. Again, in a land where most people barely subsist losing work is one of the biggest issues. Public transport was not available so even if people might have work they were unable to get there. Schools were shut down and distance learning was difficult where little internet is available. In the midst of all these issues a ten day tropical storm hit at the end of May, killed 30 people, and damaged many homes and businesses.

CIS was able to help 326 families with our assistance. The only community that they were unable to assist immediately was La Loma, where ROHFC has worked in the past. This community is high on a mountain and the storm washed the road out completely. Just before the storm, CIS was able to send seed, fertilizer and a basic food basket to them so they had enough food until the road is fixed.

COVID-19 will continue to be a huge problem in our world for some time to come. Some projects will need to be put on hold until after the pandemic is under control. We will need to support our international communities so that they can come through this difficult time and we challenge you to help us. ☺

THE AFRICAN EFFECT

How visiting our Kinyambu project changed Canadian participants

~ by **Connie Gerwing** with **Erin Norris, Esther Gerwing, and Chloe Gerwing** ~

We think we have some idea of the developing world from our reading and watching TV and movies. Our imagination can only take us so far. The sounds, the smells, the tastes, the quality of the light, the intensity of the sun, these won't be real until we are there. Most importantly, what becomes memorable are the people we encounter and the experiences we have when immersing ourselves as much as possible in another world. These can change how we see our world when we get home.

In February of 2020 I took a small group to the Kinyambu area of Kenya where we recently built three classrooms and an administration building at Nzavoni Primary School. Our purpose was to paint educational murals on the walls of these buildings to enhance the learning experience of the primary school students. We wanted to help make these buildings special.



Chloe, Connie, Erin, Donna, and Esther by a baobab tree

On her second visit, Donna Kurtenbach designed the murals to incorporate lessons from the Kenyan school curriculum. Three others came on their first trip; Donna's daughter Erin Norris, a nurse from Saskatoon, Esther Gerwing, another nurse, and Chloe Gerwing, a first year kindergarten teacher from Lake Lenore.

We also brought gifts for several schools and got a big donation of tooth brushes and toothpaste from dentist Darren Diakow from Calgary. We all collected hand soap and Erin brought gel and a light that shows where you missed when washing your hands. We didn't know in February how prophetic that would be. They had their handwashing lesson just before COVID-19!

A few months have gone by now and Esther, Chloe, and Erin have had time to reflect on their experiences.

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ESTHER

I was privileged to be part of an amazing group that went to Kenya to work at some of the schools there. We painted educational murals: the planets, the solar system, healthy eating, our alphabet, as well as the Swahili alphabet, parts of plants and insects, and weather. We planted trees, and taught hand-washing and oral hygiene.

One hears about the poverty in Africa, but it just doesn't hit home until you see it for yourself. They are the poorest, most hard-working people, yet they are so, so happy and kind. Oh the things we could live without in our over-abundant lives here in Canada.

Kenya is absolutely beautiful! I was in my glory checking out all the species of plants and trees, and animals. I sure wish we could grow Baobab trees here! Attending church was fantastic. The singing was everything I thought it would be and more, and the people are genuine in their faith and spirituality.

The food was delicious and always made from fresh ingredients. Mangos, pineapple, and papaya never tasted so good! Going for a ride on the boda boda, a Kenyan motorcycle taxi, was exhilarating, plus it temporarily cooled you from the hot African sun. This was such an enriching trip and I will definitely be going again!



Esther on a boda boda

ERIN

Kenya is the beginning of it all. Land of the Great Rift. It is hot, dry landscape on which the most majestic wild animals roam free. Although the people face poverty and political unrest, there is an undeniable spirit of hope and strength.

When I think of my time there I remember singing children, smiling eyes behind niqabs, and delicious simple food prepared from scratch. Especially meaningful were the personal connections I made at Nzavoni School.

Despite hardships Kenyans have managed to take steps toward environmental sustainability. I was impressed by the ban on plastic bags, tree planting initiatives and animal protection. It was a true privilege to see a slice of Africa.

CHLOE

There are moments from my experience in Kenya that will stay with me forever. Some joyful, some unbelievable, some haunting, but all valuable and life-changing. The education I received on that journey is unlike anything I could learn from home, and I wish I could share my new understanding of the world with others; however, it seems that this is the type of learning that can only be completely grasped experientially.

My very first encounter with children in Kenya, and certainly the one with the most impact, was with the special needs classroom at Kinyambu School. I had just gotten off the train in Kibwezi a couple hours before and hadn't even been in Africa for a full 24 hours. To say I was a bit disoriented and exhausted is an understatement, but when I stepped into that classroom I was instantly grounded. After witnessing the crowded conditions (50 to 60 students with multiple disabilities) in which those children are trying to learn and live, and the one teacher that was trying to provide an education for them all, I was humbled. Being a first year teacher myself and having all of the resources that I do in the beautiful classroom I was provided, I couldn't imagine attempting what the amazing staff at Kinyambu School do.

A more personal encounter that I will cherish forever was during our work at Nzavoni School. During one of our early days of painting, I had a group of students teach me how to read the Swahili alphabet that I had just painted on their wall. They made me love and appreciate the profession that I have just begun so much more. A particular memory that makes me laugh, while at the same time putting so much into perspective, was during a tooth-brushing lesson that I helped teach. Back home we had just completed the same Health unit and I remembered my

students complaining about the colour of tooth brush they received. Well there was just none of that at Nzavoni School. I have never seen such genuine excitement combined with gratitude in a group of children before. One very little boy even was turned in by his older peer for sneaking back into the tooth brush line twice in his attempt to bring home three toothbrushes. I will never forget that mixed feeling of humour and sadness, witnessing this boy who was as mischievous as any that I know back home, but at the same time was trying to provide for loved ones in a way that no child should have to.

My days in Kenya were too short, too hot and too large to describe. I am so grateful that Rainbow of Hope gave me this amazing opportunity to change my life and remind me that I am able to do so many things to improve my own life and my friends' lives anywhere in the world. Thank you for that. Thank you for expanding my worldview and introducing me to so many new and amazing people.



Chloe, Erin, and Donna paint the alphabet on the wall

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Africa is a big presence. It feels like you are in the bosom of creation at times with the richness of the plant and animal life. The crowds of humanity, the poverty merge with the simple joys of family, community and connections.

Simon, chair of our partner organization, shared his appreciation in an email a few weeks after we came home. *"The last visitors were a special group because of their commitment to their objectives. They left the guest house at 7:00 AM and returned at 6 PM, worked tirelessly for hours, interacting freely with children and teachers while working or sharing lunch. The work... beautified the school compound, promoted education and created a conducive learning environment."*

It's hard to know who benefitted more from the experience. ☺

Nepali festival foreshadows our Christmas

Celebrated for hundreds of years, Dashain is the biggest holiday in Nepal. In late October people travel to celebrate with their families, eat and drink too much, and give gifts. This holiday celebrates the victory of the goddess Durga over the evil buffalo-demon Mahishasur. The monsoon season is finished and flying kites is a big part of the festival.

Kathmandu has been hardest hit by COVID-19 and most people are not returning home to their families. Farmers selling goats, the traditional dish of Dashain, are not doing well. Money is tight and people are spending less. Dashain is muted this year.



Hari (third from the left) with his family celebrating Dashain

Hari, head of our partner organization in Nepal, has sent photos of his family celebration in the village of Jibajibe. Hari lives in Kathmandu, but since the beginning of the pandemic he has been living in his home village with his parents and children. His sisters' families live close by. One of the religious aspects of Dashain is for the older family members to place a tikka, a red patch of vermilion paste with rice mixed in, on the foreheads of the younger people. It's a blessing and often given to visitors as well.

Hari and his family are happy just to be together, to be healthy and to give each other the traditional blessings of the season. This is likely what we will do as well and it will be a Christmas to remember.



ROHFC ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20 FISCAL YEAR

Greetings to all!

This past year will be unforgettable. On January 1 everything seemed to promise many wonderful events and adventures! Promises of Hope! Who could ask for anything better! Then in February, we learned that we had to begin a search for a new treasurer. Not an easy task, they are like diamonds—hidden away and requiring a lot of searching to find someone who fits the bill. I am very happy to report that we did find a diamond.

We now know all too much about the horrible COVID-19 World Pandemic. Some of this is beyond comprehension. We do not see it, hear it or feel it until it captures an unwitting person. I still find it difficult to grasp the reality of it. How can this pass so readily from one human to another? It is a sly foe and a lethal killer. I do pray that the world can find a solution to this parasite on the human race soon.

In March/April, the world simply came to a standstill to try to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Most work everywhere stopped. Our building projects were pretty much halted in their tracks. However, I am very pleased to inform you that the Rainbow of Hope for Children (ROHFC) has been able to quickly change course, to turn its attention to some of our international partners to help the impoverished cope with the loss of their all too poor-paying jobs.

We put out a call for help with our COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund. With the support of donors like yourselves we were able to help our partners purchase basic food supplies like rice, beans, lentils, salt, sugar, cooking oil, soaps, masks, and sanitizer. I am happy to report that our partners were able to package and deliver food and PPE to over 1200 families (about 4,000 people). We were also able to provide the Bali Eye Hospital with dearly needed PPE for their front line workers. This is just a tiny piece of a huge problem, but we were able to provide critical support at the right time, albeit so little in such a big world. The ROHFC has met the challenges this year and continues on solid footing. The pandemic will not be over soon, and we will continue to provide aid to our partners as best we can in these times.

Thank you for your continuing confidence in ROHFC and support. It is appreciated at many levels.

Charlie Matt, President



INSIDE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY

ROHFC'S NEW TREASURER - CHERYL BUDZINSKI

Rainbow of Hope for Children Society welcomes our new board member and treasurer, Cheryl Budzinski.



I have lived in Spruce Grove, Alberta for 15 years on an acreage with my husband Doug. We have three children and four grandchildren. I enjoy gardening, especially planting flowers.

I have many years of experience with large and medium sized businesses. I received my Certified Management Accounting (CMA) designation in 1996. Recently, I worked for five years in the finance department of Sysco in Edmonton until I retired. Currently I have a small home-based business doing bookkeeping and personal taxes for clients and I thoroughly enjoy the variety and flexibility.

As for volunteer activities, I am the treasurer on the Parkland County Library Board and have held that position for 10 years. I am also on the board of Communities Empowering Youth for Success (CEYS) as their treasurer.

*Thank
you*

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the hard work of Cherry Dumalagan as our past Treasurer. Also the exceptional work that Pat and Laura Hessel did as Interim Treasurer is much appreciated.

The Financial Statements were not available at the time of printing. They will be posted on the Rainbow of Hope for Children website as soon as they do become available: <https://www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca/>

In an effort to reduce costs, the financial statements were prepared as a Notice to Reader by our auditor, Wilde & Co. A copy of the complete financial statements is available from Treasurer Cheryl Budzinski at 780-968-3952 or rohfc2018@outlook.com

Rainbow of Hope for Children Directors and Monitoring teams donated back these amounts to the organization this fiscal year:

- Administration: \$4,099.09
- Project Monitoring: \$ 10,720.35
- Public Engagement: \$3,791.23

The Annual General Meeting - to be held by Zoom on November 28 at 10:30 AM MDT.

You must register in advance. Please contact Charlie at rohfc2017@outlook.com or call 306-242-2484 to register. A Zoom meeting invite will be sent to you in the week of Nov 22.

Join us to meet the Board of Directors and our new Treasurer.

PROJECTS OF THE RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY

Your support is requested and appreciated for the following projects

Program Description	Funding Goals	Program Description	Funding Goals
COVID-19 Emergency Relief	\$50,000	Bantambaari Rural School, Ghana	\$65,000
School of Family Agriculture, Bahia, Brazil	\$20,200	PAMBE Health, Nutrition, and Sanitation, Ghana	\$7,500
Arukharka Health Centre, Nepal	\$62,000	Tabora School for the Deaf Water Tank, Tanzania	\$17,000
Kalika Rural School, Nepal	\$54,000	Paso Puente Dignified Housing	\$10,000
CIS Scholarships, El Salvador	\$50,500	Casa Ambrosina, Gender Equality, Alagoas, Brazil	\$20,500

Projects Waiting in the Wings

We are accepting Donations towards the following projects that we plan to implement in the near future

Kinyambu & Area—Classrooms, Kenya	\$60,000	Hospital, Itasy, Madagascar	\$26,500
PAMBE Future Projects, Ghana	\$20,000	Disaster Relief Fund	\$10,000
Eye Health Care, Reducing Avoidable Blindness, Indonesia	\$10,000	Tabora School for the Deaf- Dorm Beds; and Sewing and Carpentry Shops Training Equipment, Tanzania	\$16,000

The Rainbow of Hope For Children Society (ROHFC) attempts to maintain as low as possible operational costs. The Society allocates 6% of revenue towards those costs. All ROHFC Board members are unpaid volunteers who donate their time and expertise towards these projects. There is no paid staff.

We thank you for offering a gift to any one of these projects and we are pleased to acknowledge your donation with an income tax deductible receipt. Kindly send your donation to:

RAINBOW OF HOPE FOR CHILDREN SOCIETY
WAINWRIGHT, AB T9W 1S7
PO BOX 2883

Registered Charity No: 889160172-RR0001
www.rainbowofhopeforchildren.ca

- All cheques should be made out to the full name of the organization:

Rainbow of Hope For Children Society

- When making a donation using a credit card be sure to include the 3-digit security code on the back of your card. That number is required by the credit card companies.
- Donations of securities have a significant tax advantage. To donate shares please contact our Treasurer at rohfc2018@outlook.com or 780-968-3952

RAINBOW OF HOPE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF ALL OUR DONORS, and

- Several Rotary Clubs, the Knights of Columbus, the Edmonton Community Foundation, the Holy Family Columbus Club, and the Al Gerwing Charitable Foundation.
- George and Louise Bunz who prepared the NEXUS mail-out.
- The Peter Van Winssen Professional Corporation, Wainwright, Alta. for donating the cost of the NEXUS mail-out.



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This Christmas the gift you give
can change the world.



NEXUS: Produced and edited by Connie Gerwing and Jan Schmitz in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan and Rainbow of Hope's Head Office in Wainwright, Alberta, Canada. The expressed views of the authors are not necessarily the views of the NGO.