

HEALTH IN ACTION

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet Newsletter

Winter 2020



In this edition:

Supporting mental health
around the world

Plus: Global poverty and its colonial
roots, Coronavirus update and more...

**HEALTH
POVERTY
ACTION**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the latest edition of your newsletter, Health in Action. My name is Hamimu Masudi and I work as a Policy and Campaigns Officer, based in East Africa. In my role, I advocate for the rights of the communities we work with across Africa and look for ways to address issues around mental health globally.



In this edition, we launch our mental health appeal and highlight some of the long-term and immediate challenges people are facing. We are asking supporters to contribute whatever they can towards essential work alongside communities to address these issues. We also look at how we've responded to the challenges raised by the coronavirus pandemic, an innovative education project we've launched in the UK and much more.

Thank you for all your support – I hope you're interested and inspired by reading about our work.

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet share resources and expertise so we can better support marginalised communities to enhance their health, livelihoods and wellbeing.

Front cover: A roadshow in Zimbabwe promoting mental wellbeing.

IN THIS EDITION

P2

Introduction

P3

Mental health appeal

P5

Tribute to Chimwemwe Soko

P6

Coronavirus update

P8

International development and public policy

P10

Global poverty and its colonial roots

P11

Get involved!

JOIN THE MOVEMENT – HEALTH FOR ALL IN A JUST WORLD

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Registered charities in England and Wales, numbers 290535 and 250456



MENTAL HEALTH SHOULDN'T BE A PRIVILEGE

Our winter mental health appeal highlights our approach to addressing mental health across the countries we work in, while shining a light on the root causes of under-resourced health systems.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought discussions of mental wellbeing into the forefront. Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet are working to advance these conversations globally, as well as partner with communities and health workers around the world to support people's mental health.

In the Global South, up to 85% of people don't receive the treatment they need for their mental health conditions. In some cases, stigmas lead families and communities to fear people living with a mental health condition. Under-resourced health systems offer little or no support and, in many areas, there aren't enough people trained in mental health to meet communities' needs.

Good mental health shouldn't be a privilege. To that end, we are:

- Helping to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing, as well as bust stigmas that prevent people with mental health conditions from getting the support they need.
- Building relationships with key community members – elders, religious leaders and traditional healers – to help inform how together we can best respond to people living with a mental illness.



▲ **Social workers can help communities address mental wellbeing**

Continues over ▶

Continues from previous ▶



- Training and supporting health care workers to be able to identify and provide treatment for people who have too often been neglected.
- Advocating for systemic change.

The lack of government spending on mental health is fuelled in part by decisions made by governments like ours. Mental health is neglected within already small health budgets across many countries. When governments in the Global North allow global tax dodging by big corporations, for example, countries miss out on vast sums in tax which could be spent on public services - like quality mental health care.

Prazer's Story

Prazer Matemba lives in Chimanimani district in rural Zimbabwe and is a respected and experienced farmer in his community. It wasn't always this way.

When Prazer was 29, he started experiencing hallucinations: "I would hear strange voices speaking to me, as a result I would take in a lot of alcohol".

Prazer's mother sought help. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia and prescribed medication at the nearest hospital. He returned home to find his wife had left him. Despite this setback, Prazer continued his treatment.

His mother helped connect him to our Farmer Action Learning Group, established by Find Your Feet alongside our local partner with funding from Comic Relief. They trained Prazer on sustainable farming techniques, enabling him to become an experienced farmer. He also refers people with mental health conditions to the hospital so they can get the same help he did.

Prazer is doing well and is seen as a valued member of the community. "I'm now looking forward to reconcil[ing] with my wife so that I can have a happy family," Prazer told us with a smile on his face.

"I really appreciate the work being done [by Find Your Feet]...it has changed the lives of many people in my area, including myself."

Donate now:

You can help people around the world, like Prazer, to lead healthy, fulfilling lives by contributing to our mental health appeal today. Give by 31st December, 2020 and all donations up to £10,000 will be matched by a generous donor!

 www.healthpovertyaction.org

 Health Poverty Action, 31-33 Bondway, London, SW8 1SJ

Remembering Chimwemwe Soko



A tribute to the late former Executive Director of Find Your Feet Malawi by his colleagues in Malawi and the UK

Chimwemwe Soko (11th October 1975 – 15th June 2020) was not only an expert in his field, with great technical knowledge in food production and environmental science, but also a passionate and tireless advocate for social development and justice.

Having studied Biology to master's degree level, Chimwemwe was keen to use his expertise to help communities develop and families move out of poverty. He joined Find Your Feet as Program Coordinator in 2007, later serving as Program Manager and then, since 2016, as Executive Director of Find Your Feet Malawi.

Under his leadership, Find Your Feet Malawi registered as an independent charity, constructed a

permanent office and proceeded to greatly expand its work; supporting many families and communities to develop their livelihoods and defend their rights.

Chimwemwe's colleagues remember him as a hard-working, compassionate and kind man who empowered his team to develop both the organisation and themselves.

While Chimwemwe will be sorely missed by his family, friends, colleagues and the wider community, his dedicated and selfless service will be remembered for years to come. We will all strive to continue his good work.

▼ Chimwemwe Soko (centre) and the Find Your Feet Malawi team



CORONAVIRUS

UPDATE

This year, as we commemorate Find Your Feet's 60th birthday, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has posed serious challenges for families and communities striving to build a future free from poverty. As we continue to work with rural families across Africa and Asia, we've had to find innovative ways to protect lives while supporting livelihoods.

FUNDED
BY
**COMIC
RELIEF**



▲ We ensured people could secure essential supplies

India

In India, COVID-19 lockdown measures meant that we had to delay much of our planned activities due to restrictions on travel and gatherings. Alongside our local partners, the Ayo Aidari Trust (Women's Rights Trust) and Badlao Foundation, Find Your Feet has been providing practical assistance so that people can stay safe and continue supporting their families.

Hundreds of thousands of migrant workers returned to Jharkand state from regions with higher infection rates. We helped to establish the Tribal Rights Forum (TRF) and Community Based Organisations (CBO), which have been working with local authorities to raise awareness of preventative measures such as social distancing, wearing masks and regular hand washing.

▼ Distributing face masks



Restrictions on movement made it harder for people to support themselves and their families through work. We helped those eligible to claim food rations from the government. However, these rations simply didn't meet the nutritional needs of pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, children and older people. We secured additional supplies for these groups and also for people who were denied government support.

With funding from the Oak Foundation, we were able to provide soap, hand wash, face masks and food to hundreds of individuals and families. This helped people to maintain a healthy diet during lockdown while reducing the risk of infection.

As the pandemic progresses, the government has introduced various community development schemes to boost employment – from water harvesting to tree planting. Our local partners have helped over 900 people start working as part of these schemes!

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, COVID-19 lockdown measures meant that our local partner, Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organisation (TSURO), were unable to visit the

communities we work with in Chimanimani District. Also, the Farmer Action Learning Groups and Community Health Clubs that we'd established were unable to meet as planned.

However, lockdown hasn't stopped us reaching remote communities with the health messaging they need. Together with TSURO, with funding from Comic Relief, we launched a COVID-19 prevention campaign in the area, putting up COVID-19 awareness posters in health centres, business centres and markets. We shared vital health messages with community leaders and rural nurses via text message, so they could ensure that even people living in remote villages know how to stay safe during the pandemic.

We trained community members on the transmission and prevention of COVID-19 and health workers on identifying, referring and managing cases of the virus. We also supported the refurbishment of a local hospital as a COVID-19 isolation and treatment centre. This means that people diagnosed with COVID-19 can be treated while minimising the risk of infection to health workers, other patients and the wider community.



Your contributions mean we can continue to provide vital support to families and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please visit www.findyourfeet.org to donate today.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY

While COVID-19 dominates the headlines, Health Poverty Action continues to demand action on the root causes of poor health and poverty. Never has it felt more important to protect people's health.

This September, Boris Johnson merged the UK Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The government has been clear this move will make UK aid 'safeguard British interests and values overseas', giving the green-light to put profits and politics before people in poverty. For example, more aid might go to the expensive, private hospitals that are already funded by UK aid instead of supporting public hospitals.

Health Poverty Action is speaking out on this. Whether working with allies, or at events like the recent Labour party conference, we are pushing for an end to aid used to benefit big business over people's health.

At the same time, our work pushing for a health-focused, fair approach to global drug policy continues. The current prohibition-based approach to drugs adopted by most countries causes untold harm to health - and fuels poverty. It punishes small-scale growers who often have few other options to make a living, while enriching corrupt officials and often violent cartels. It is a major driver of global conflict.

Health Poverty Action is calling for the legal regulation of drugs, in a way which works for the people harmed by current laws. As more countries explore drug policy reform, there is a risk that the vested interests which shape global trade today - and fuel poverty and inequality - will rig new systems in their favour. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Canadian pharmaceutical companies are able to legally grow cannabis. While they profit, local small-scale growers are criminalised.

Health Poverty Action has convened a series of ground-breaking events exploring how to ensure the move to a legally regulated drugs trade doesn't penalise people in poverty. From generating tax to invest in public services, to protecting the environment, now is the time to set out a bold and progressive vision.



**A GIFT IN YOUR
WILL HELPS PEOPLE
AROUND THE
WORLD CONTINUE
TO TAKE CHARGE OF
THEIR OWN HEALTH.**



Stand with the communities, campaigners and doctors who've been taking a different approach to tackling poverty and poor health for over thirty years.

Health Poverty Action was founded in 1984 by a young doctor on his return from Afghanistan. Today, because of our committed supporters, we are able to work in 18 countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

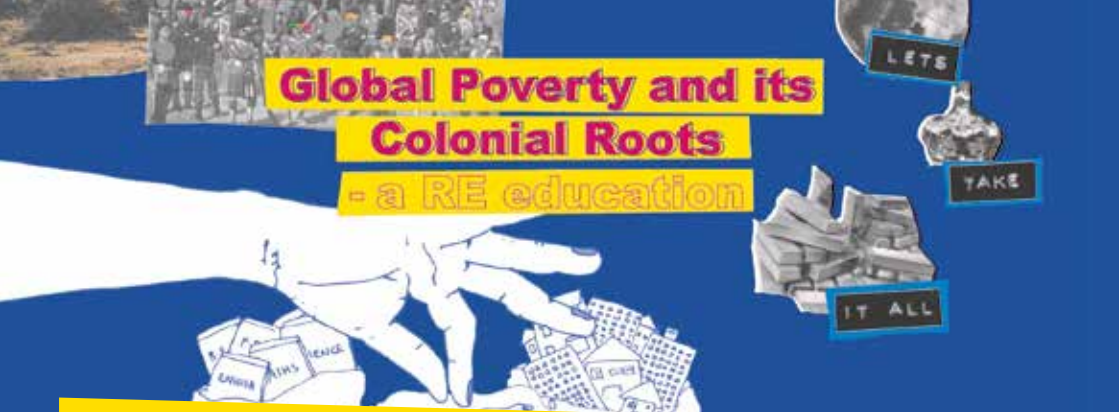
To find out how even a small gift in your will can make a huge difference, please contact

fundraising@healthpovertyaction.org

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Global Poverty and its Colonial Roots

- a RE education



Poverty exists due to decisions made by people, countries and companies with power. Today's world is still structured to ensure power and wealth grow for those who already have it, at the expense of people in poverty. We need to re-educate young people on the real reasons why poverty exists today.

In the UK 86.2% of school pupils learnt about the Tudors while only 7.6% learnt about the British colonisation of Africa.



paying taxes to countries in the global south, and the exploitation of natural resources.

At Health Poverty Action we believe that the truth about the legacy of colonialism is sidestepped when the British Empire is taught. And we think that understanding how poverty is created and maintained is the first step to addressing it today.

For example, West Africa loses around \$1.3 billion because of illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing every year conducted by foreign and national fleets. Similarly, \$17.1 billion is lost through illegal logging in Africa yearly with many foreign firms taking advantage of corrupt permit systems.

That's why we have developed a radical new lesson plan to teach 16-18 year olds about the truth of colonialism, and how it continues to shape poverty and inequality in the world.

We want young people to understand that poverty and inequality is a result of power dynamics, and decisions taken by people, countries and corporations - so they can take action to address the root causes of poverty.

Our teaching pack highlights how the power imbalances that were established during colonial times are still sustained today - through decisions being made today like allowing big companies to dodge

With this free participatory lesson Health Poverty Action wants to highlight the histories and facts that have been sidelined.

GET INVOLVED

There are many ways to support the work of Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet. Here are just a few ways, and you can find more on our websites at www.healthpovertyaction.org and www.findyourfeet.org.

Be a Xmas Party Hero

This year we're coming together in different ways to celebrate the festive season. That's why we've joined the #XmasPartyHeroes campaign which brings businesses and charities together to turn unused Christmas party budgets into charitable donations. If you'd like to take part and become a Xmas Party Hero yourself, please ask your employer to pledge your festive budget to our winter fundraising appeal.

Support while you shop

If you're beginning to prepare for the festive season here's a great opportunity to raise money whilst you shop online; easyfundraising works with over 4,000 retailers who donate to your chosen cause as a thank you for shopping with them. Simply sign up at easyfundraising.co.uk and select Health Poverty Action. Then each time you begin your shop at easyfundraising you'll be supporting our work, at no extra cost to you.

London Marathon 2021

Missed out on the London Marathon ballot? Don't worry, we still have places available to run in October 2021! Registration costs just £150 with a minimum sponsorship target of £2,000 and we'll be here to support you every step of the way. If you've been racking up the lockdown miles and want something sooner, we also have places in April's Royal Parks Half Marathon. Entry is £35 with a fundraising goal of £350.

Get in touch!

We're always looking to forge new relationships with schools, community and faith groups. Please get in contact if you would like to fundraise for us or host a virtual event in aid of our work, we'd be happy to help.

Contact: Josie
on j.mcallister@healthpovertyaction.org



MENTAL HEALTH FOR THE WORLD

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

Support communities that are coming together to improve mental health

Make a donation today

In the Global South, up to 85% of people don't receive the treatment they need for their mental health conditions. Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet are working with communities around the world to find solutions.

We are partnering with community leaders and local healthcare workers to break down barriers, like stigma around mental health conditions, and providing training so people living with a mental health condition can get the help they deserve.

Please give to our winter appeal and help communities come together for good mental health.

How to donate:

Web: www.healthpovertyaction.org

Email: fundraising@healthpovertyaction.org

Mail: Health Poverty Action,
31-33 Bondway, London, SW8 1SJ

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