

# HEALTH IN ACTION

Health Poverty Action and Find Your Feet Newsletter

Spring 2020



In this edition:

Find Your Feet celebrates its 60th birthday!

**Plus:** Coronavirus prevention in Myanmar, back to school in Rwanda and more..

**HEALTH  
POVERTY  
ACTION**

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# INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH POVERTY ACTION AND FIND YOUR FEET

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

Health Poverty Action was founded in 1984 after a young British doctor returned from Afghanistan with a profound understanding of the connection between health and poverty. We act in solidarity with health workers, activists and communities worldwide to improve health and challenge the causes of poverty.

Health is an issue of social, political and economic justice. That's why we campaign to tackle root causes while working practically alongside communities to support their struggle for health.

Find Your Feet was founded in 1960 by the journalist Carol Martin, in response to the plight of Eastern European refugees after the Hungarian uprising.

Over the years we have evolved from being an organisation that provides humanitarian aid to one that supports long-term rural development projects. We have also shifted our geographical focus from Europe to Asia and Africa where we believe the need is greatest.

We help poor rural families in Asia and Africa to grow enough food so they don't go hungry, to strengthen their voice so they can speak out against injustice and to earn enough money so they can find their feet.

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**Front cover: A street-trading couple with their basket of wares in India**

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# CORONAVIRUS PREVENTION

## IN MYANMAR

Health Poverty Action has been working with communities in Myanmar to prevent and prepare for the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Over the past months, we have been engaging with local partners in Myanmar to address the threat posed to remote and marginalised border communities by the coronavirus outbreak. You can see how, with funding from the Global Fund and Unicef, we've been supporting efforts to deal with the pandemic below; from testing body temperatures at border crossings to sharing vital supplies and public health information.



▲ Conducting body temperature tests at the border with China



▲ Using public information posters to share preventative messages



▲ Delivering vital healthcare supplies



▲ Informing the public about risks at community meetings

### CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY APPEAL

To find out how you can contribute to tackling the coronavirus outbreak, please see further details on the back cover.



# REPORTS FROM RWANDA

Health Poverty Action has been working in Rwanda since 1998 on programmes related to girls' education, youth employment, sexual and reproductive health, gender-based violence, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and social inclusion. This programme is funded by the Girls' Education Challenge Fund from the UK Government.

## Life lessons

Today is savings day in Senior Five class of GS Nyabimata, a secondary school in the Nyaruguru District of Rwanda. The students have come prepared with their weekly contributions to add to the growing box of francs. Bright Futures savings group has been saving together for two years, with the goal of starting their own business after graduation.

Like many teenagers, saving was not the first thing on these students' minds two years ago. They would spend their money on snacks and sundry items. Come graduation, they would often have no savings. Health Poverty Action has partnered with 28 schools in the Nyaruguru district to teach young people about the importance of saving, self-development and planning for the future, helping to establish 60 savings groups.





## Transforming schools in rural Rwanda

Francine, a member of the Bright Futures group tells us: ‘When Health Poverty Action came to my school and taught my class about saving, I didn’t see the importance of it. Once my friends started saving and I saw what the group was accomplishing together; I joined and didn’t look back.’

In two years, they have purchased three goats, a cow and a pig that they are raising outside of school. When the group graduates this year, they plan to sell these animals and use the profit, along with their additional savings, to begin a pig farming business. Pork is in high demand among hotels and restaurants in the area.

Group member Angelic explains: ‘Now that we are saving for a purpose, I’m more interested in looking for small jobs after school and during my free time.’

There was a member of our group who didn’t have a school uniform and out of embarrassment began skipping school. As a group we decided that there was no reason for one of us to be left behind, so we allocated some of our savings towards buying him a uniform.’

Since the establishment of saving groups, students are feeling more prepared to move towards graduation knowing that they have a plan. Those who are unable to continue their studies into University understand that they still have options and the power to save, start their own businesses and, as the name states, create a brighter future for themselves.

Health Poverty Action has partnered with LINK Community Development to introduce School Improvement Plans (SIPs) to 28 schools in Nyaruguru District; involving teachers, parents and members of the community in their development.

SIPs define the steps a school needs to take to improve students’ achievement and welfare. We evaluate the schools, and present our findings and recommendations to head teachers and school committees. We then convene a community meeting, where parents, students, teachers and community leaders contribute to planning for next year.

Sister Triphine, head teacher of GS Muganza, one of the participating schools, tells us:

‘Before we participated in this process, parents were not involved in the planning and decision making at school...Now we take a whole new approach to improving our schools; parents are becoming more involved because they feel that their voices and opinions are valued, and this translates beyond the classroom.’



*Spotlight on*



# Happy 60th Birthday!!!

This year, we celebrate Find Your Feet's 60th birthday; a remarkable milestone that has only been achieved because of the dedication and commitment of supporters, staff, volunteers and partners. As we commemorate this anniversary throughout the year, we will be reaching out to friends and family to share memories and to look forward to the future!

Sixty years ago, the hunger and malnutrition being experienced by Eastern European refugees after the Hungarian uprising prompted journalist Carol Martin to establish Find Your Feet

After working in numerous countries over the years, in 2004 we chose to focus our work in India and Malawi in order to maximise our impact. In 2011 we started working with families in Nepal and Zimbabwe. Below, we look at how Find Your Feet has worked with rural communities to

build a future free from hunger and poverty.

## On the ground in India

Find Your Feet started working in India over 25 years ago. Initially we focused on empowering communities across India through enterprise development. In recent years we've prioritised sustainable rural livelihoods for disadvantaged groups in northern and central India, especially tribal communities.

Over this time, we've supported workers, small farmers and forest/tribal peoples to demand their rights - directly benefitting 100,000 people. Through local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and community partners, we have established a number of Community Based Organisations, including a Weavers Association, Vegetable Growers Association, Land Rights Forum and Tribal Rights Forum.



## Still Standing in Malawi

Find Your Feet has worked in Malawi since 1993, alongside local partners, to support rural families experiencing poverty. Given the widespread success of its projects, recognised expertise and increasing ability to secure funding, Find Your Feet Malawi was able to register as an independent organisation in 2016. While Find Your Feet UK continues to partner with staff and partners in Malawi on key projects, Find Your Feet Malawi continues to grow its work developing rural livelihoods through existing and new alliances.

Find Your Feet Malawi is currently implementing new 'climate-resilient' agriculture techniques, fisheries conservation projects, livelihoods programmes, and water sanitation and hygiene projects across Malawi. Their programmes have seen 60,000 households access clean drinking water, attain food and nutrition security, start small businesses and improve their homesteads, while empowering citizens to hold duty bearers accountable and demand good quality services.

## Walking together in Zimbabwe

We have worked in Zimbabwe since the late 1990s. In 2010 we began to develop the Farmer Innovation & Learning Programme, in cooperation with Towards Sustainable Use of Resources Organization (TSURO) and various local partners in the Chimanimani district of Zimbabwe. This programme promoted organic food production, marketing and farmer-led research as key elements of sustainable agriculture. Through a farmer-led research and learning programme we helped to establish a hundred learning groups, where farmers share expertise and knowledge.

In 2018 we started the innovative 'Promoting Mental Health, Well-being and Resilient Livelihoods' project alongside our partners TSURO and Basic Needs, with funding from Comic Relief. This project supports over 2000 people with mental health conditions in Chimanimani district to lead healthy and productive lives - helping them to access appropriate health services, participate in support groups, improve their livelihoods, tackle discrimination, and speak up for themselves.



◀ **Chakalipa Kanyenda dedicated his life to developing Malawi**

# REMEMBERING CHAKALIPA KANYENDA

A tribute to the late former Country Director of Find Your Feet Malawi by Chimwemwe Soko, Executive Director of Find Your Feet Malawi

Chakalipa Kanyenda (9th December 1947 – 16th January 2020) was not just a development worker; he actually lived and spent every day thinking about what to do to better the lives of the many disadvantaged Malawians.

Having studied Agriculture and Animal Production at university, Chakalipa worked in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security for many years. He became a well-known figure nationally as the head of the Malawi Agriculture Extension Services, supporting farmers across the country. After retiring from the public sector, he joined Find Your Feet and became the first Country Director for Find Your Feet Malawi from 2012 to 2016.

Find Your Feet staff and partners remember Chakalipa as cool-headed, wise, intelligent and passionate

about ensuring farmers were well supported to develop. Through his involvement, policymakers took notice of Find Your Feet programmes in Malawi, helping to increase support for farmers and impact many more households.

Chakalipa will be greatly missed by the communities with whom he worked so diligently to free families from hunger and poverty. He will also be fondly remembered by the many stakeholders he engaged in intelligent discussions. Chakalipa, rest well and know that we will run with the torch of development you passed, as we move towards bringing about transformational change.







## **A GIFT IN YOUR WILL HELPS FAMILIES ACROSS AFRICA AND ASIA CONTINUE TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR OWN LIVES**

Stand with the communities, campaigners and activists who've been taking a different approach to tackling poverty and hunger for over sixty years.

Find Your Feet was founded in 1960 and originally focussed on supporting Eastern European refugees. Today, because of our committed supporters, we are able to work with communities across Asia and Africa.

**To find out how even a small gift in your will  
can make a huge difference, please contact  
[fyf@fyf.org.uk](mailto:fyf@fyf.org.uk)**



► **Engaging with civil society representatives from across the world to create positive change**



# BEYOND AID

Rethinking how we work together to develop health globally

Health Poverty Action was honoured to co-launch the Kampala Initiative in November 2019 alongside a group of civil society organisations from across the world.

The Kampala Initiative, funded by the Open Society Foundations is a community of health professionals, activists and NGO workers from both the Global South and the Global North. Our aim is to explore how we can best work together within the international aid sector to improve health, as well as how we can collectively create a world where everyone is able to live a healthy life and aid is no longer needed.

The initiative was launched following a two day workshop in Kampala where 30 representatives came together to discuss issues around aid and health. Topics of discussion included private sector involvement, funding for health aid, and the way we talk about health issues globally. Together with allies from across the world, Health Poverty Action explored the powerful impact that language

has on how people understand the causes of poor health.

To get us “thinking outside the box”, we used creative exercises to explore our current language and to find more truthful and respectful alternatives. For example, we agreed that talking about “people who’ve been marginalised” was more accurate and helpful than describing communities as “voiceless”. We also developed an action plan on how we can continue to engage people from multiple countries in these discussions – stay tuned for more information on this in our next newsletter.

**You are welcome to join our community and help to improve how we work together, within and beyond international aid, by signing the Kampala Declaration either as an individual or an organisation. You can find the declaration here - [www.medicusmundi.org/kampaladeclaration](http://www.medicusmundi.org/kampaladeclaration)**

# ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE



A new policy role in our Africa office will focus on tackling issues around mental and physical health across the continent

We are excited to announce that a new Policy and Campaigns Officer will be joining us in our Africa regional office. They will be helping Health Poverty Action advocate for the rights of the communities we work with across Africa, as well as developing a new area of policy work on mental health!

We are committed to addressing the root causes of poor health, not just the symptoms. This means understanding that the causes of mental ill-health are complex and that social and economic factors such as poverty and discrimination impact people's emotional wellbeing. It's well known that the violence and trauma of colonialism impacts people's mental health and this has had devastating consequences for indigenous peoples and many other communities.

So far our programmatic work on mental health has focused

on supporting communities in Zimbabwe to access appropriate mental health services, participate in support groups, tackle stigma and discrimination, and demand better policies for people experiencing mental health issues.

More generally, our programmes often tackle the discrimination and stigma faced by indigenous peoples in accessing appropriate health services. We continue to advocate for recognition and incorporation of indigenous concepts of health.

Going forward, we aim for the Policy and Campaigns Officer to work with national governments across the African continent to advocate for culturally-appropriate and integrated mental health strategies. By improving awareness, access to and quality of mental healthcare, we hope to contribute to better mental health for all.



# CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY APPEAL

**Help to reach more people in remote and marginalised communities across the world**

## **Make a donation today**

As we work with communities across Africa, Asia and Central America to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, it is becoming increasingly difficult to support the most vulnerable people, with costs rising and income falling.

From conducting testing to sharing vital supplies and information, we are working alongside local partners to help people stay safe, often in the face of chronic under-resourcing. At a time of great uncertainty, we are striving to raise enough funds to reach those facing the greatest risk.

Please give whatever you can to Health Poverty Action's Coronavirus Emergency Appeal and help people across the world come together to protect health for all.

“The situation is especially difficult for people who were already facing systemic and personal health challenges”

**Bangyuan Wang,**  
**Head of**  
**Programmes –**  
**Asia**

Registered charity in England and Wales, number 290535.

## **How to donate:**

**Web:** [www.healthpovertyaction.org](http://www.healthpovertyaction.org)

**Email:** [fundraising@healthpovertyaction.org](mailto:fundraising@healthpovertyaction.org)

**Mail:** Health Poverty Action,  
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