

Ancillae-Assumpta Academy responds



with the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
to help people in need around the world
during the COVID-19 pandemic

The World Bank reported in February 2021 that over the last year, COVID-19 has pushed as many as 150 million people into extreme poverty.

Families in extreme poverty survive on an average of \$1.90 a day or less per person.

While pandemic-related income losses mean that families have less money to buy food, global food prices, as measured by a World Bank food price index, rose 14% last year.

Together with the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, the rise in hunger around the world has been devastating.

According to UNICEF, there are around 370 million children worldwide who are absent from school due to the pandemic and have thus lost the opportunity to have their only meal of the day.

In 2020 and 2021, the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and their collaborators have sought creative ways to care for and educate children as restrictions closed schools around the world.

The Sisters tell us that the need for food and health care has increased. In many places, school scholarships have become food bags for families, and teaching in classrooms has become remote education aid, visiting families to bring them materials or contacting parents by mobile phone to offer support.



Ecuador



In Bikop, Cameroon, in an area surrounded by the rain forest, the Handmaids run a preschool and kindergarten for children 3-5 years old.

The \$65 annual tuition is highly subsidized by donations. The COVID pandemic is causing financial hardship for many families in this African country. Almost half of the parents in Bikop have not been able to pay any tuition this year.



Sister Julie, the school director, sent these photos earlier this month.

Sister explained,
"Just today, I was with one student who came very hungry. She's been hungry since last night and couldn't stay in class."

Many children come to school hungry because their parents do not have food at home. Hungry students have a hard time learning in school and are often sick.

The Handmaids run a medical clinic next door to the school. Tests show that the children suffer from fatigue, low iron, and vitamin deficiency.

The school in Cameroon serves lunch and hopes to offer breakfast as well, when the Sisters can afford to purchase more food.



Donations help the Handmaids
in Cameroon assist students
with scholarships, food,
medical care, and school supplies.





Although the families in Bikop are poor, they are rich in generosity.

During this Lenten season, Sister Julie invited the students to act in solidarity with others by sharing food or soap with those most in need in their community.

Some students have brought in soap to share with others whose families cannot afford soap to wash their dirty uniforms.

St. Rafaela Maria School,
located in the suburbs of Kinshasa
in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
enrolls 300 students between the ages of 6 and 13



Social distancing is difficult,
as the school in the DRC is very crowded.
Virtual school is not an option here
because most families do not own
computers or smartphones.





As at Ancillae,
classes in the Democratic Republic of Congo
are making use of the outdoors.



Sr. Alexandrine sent these photos from the DRC and tells us,

“The great difficulty we live here is, with the lockdown, the families can't leave to work and earn money to pay tuition.”

The Handmaids are trying to increase scholarships for students.

From the Mumbai Diocese, Sister Brigit reported that cyclones and unemployment added to the difficulties of the pandemic in India.

In tribal areas and in the city, parents were unable to work, and families were hungry. The Handmaids distributed food, masks and soap. Schools provided online work when possible.

The Sisters are working to promote entrepreneurship and job creation.



Ecuador



When the children in El Guasmo in Guayaquil Ecuador had to stay home from school last Spring, the Sisters and teachers used remote learning when possible and delivered activities for the children.

Sister Elina reported that parents were unable to work because of the curfews imposed, and the Handmaids found many families living in extreme poverty.



To help these families, the Handmaid Sisters and teachers in Ecuador delivered packages of food along with at-home lessons.



From Peru,
Sister Doris shared how
the Handmaids supported
the young women from
rural areas who are
studying at the the Fe y
Alegría educational center
Ntra. Sra. De Chota.
Last summer, while they
attended class online, the
students were able to pick
up lunch from the school
dining room.



Philippines



St. Rafaela Maria School
in Quezon City
was among many
in the Philippines
which closed
in late March 2020.



The students live in small, crowded homes, with so little space that the children often play in the street.

For poor families, hunger was a much larger problem than the school closures.





Many school parents make a living as street vendors, drivers, and scavengers, and were unable to work during the lockdown. They could not buy food or medicine. Families were hungry. The Handmaids helped with food.

The Sisters organized help from parishes, dioceses, and religious organizations. In addition to meals and packages of food, the Handmaids coordinated delivery of protective equipment.



Heart to Heart donations help the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
serve the poorest of the poor around the world.



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