

Newsletter from Piet and Pita

June, 2020

Hello.

How are you? Wouldn't it be nice if we could meet up for a cup of coffee and tell you what has happened since our last newsletter? Unfortunately this isn't possible due to the Corona pandemic it's a bizar experience! Isn't it? We got stuck in the Netherlands as the world went into lockdown!



How comes?

We travelled to the Netherlands on the 18th of February for two reasons. Firstly because Piet was experiencing eyesight problems. So we decided to visit an eye hospital in Rotterdam to have it investigated. He is now on special medication which is helping but the doctor also said that it is part of growing older.

The other reason was to prepare a container with donated goods for shipment to Uganda. We wanted to make sure that everything we needed was included and that the container was completely full (because transporting hot air is very expensive) As you can see in the photos, we managed to pack everything in. It's amazing how many people generously donated all sorts of items for the children



Loading



Completely full

including beautiful clothes. We are so encouraged and grateful for these donations. On the 6th of

March the container was finally squeezed

shut and sent on its way to Africa. Praying for its safe journey, we finalised the paper work expecting to receive the container again when we returned to Uganda.



On the lorry going to the harbour

But then the world got into lockdown!

We were only supposed to stay for 3 weeks

Things went wrong, so wrong!!! At almost the end of our 3 weeks stay, Pita suddenly became very sick. Because we are like ‘foreigners’ in Holland it was difficult to make an appointment to see a doctor. We were staying with friends in a village in the middle of the Netherlands and when Pita’s health became really serious, we finally managed to get a doctor to come and see her and she immediately called an ambulance. Pita was driven with screaming



Ambulance

sirens to a hospital in the city of Gouda. But the doctors couldn’t figure out what was wrong with her. Pita was unable to communicate and none of the tests could identify what she was sick with. She didn’t have Corona either. I explained to doctors that we lived in Uganda and that Pita had caught and recovered from malaria a couple of weeks before we travelled to the Netherlands. So it couldn’t be that either. Eventually they tested her for malaria anyway and they discovered that she had an enormous amount of

malaria parasites in her blood. None of the doctors had any experience with malaria so I told them how we treat it in Uganda. That same evening a special prayer request was sent to lots of prayer supporters to pray for Pita’s recovery. She was immediately placed in the intensive care unit and for the first two days we feared for her life. There was nothing I could do but wait and watch the love of my life being close to death. I shed tears and said many prayers. Her condition then started to improve and I was able to talk to her again. I asked Pita if she was going to leave me, to which she whispered “we’re not finished yet”. After 7 days she was allowed to leave the intensive care and on the 19th of March she was discharged from the hospital. She was the last one on the ward which was transformed into a specialised Corona unit to deal with the growing number of victims.



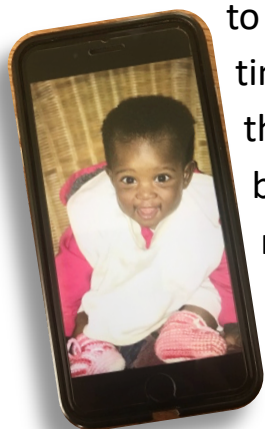
We are still unable to go home

We are still unable to fly home and we don’t have enough clothes for a long stay. It’s a truly bizar experience to be stranded and unable to do anything. What was meant to be a 3 week visit to the Netherlands is now 4 months and we still don’t know when we will

be able to travel back to Uganda. And normally, when we go to the Netherlands, we will travel around the country to visit our friends and supporters. But we can't do that either.



We desperately miss the children and want to go home, but on a positive note we are now able to spend time alone together enjoying each others company. This is something we usually don't get to do because it is never just the two of us. There are always children around us and people needing our attention. So the time we now have to rest and be with each other we are experiencing as a gift from God and only He knows how long we are going to have to wait and be patient. Pita has now fully recovered and we are filling up the time with long walks and bicycle rides. This is also something we never have the time to do at home. We have told each other many times that it would be good for our health to take half a year off to rest and recover but we never did because the children don't like it to be without us and we didn't want to leave the children. Now it seems that God has decided for us, there 'simply' is no way to return. Fortunately we can still see and speak to the children every day via Whatsapp (although it's still not the same).



The situation at Noah's Ark

Noah's Ark is completely locked down. The gates of Noah's Ark were shut and the schools were closed to keep the children safe. Only a minimum of staff required to care for the children and run the Children's Home were allowed to stay and they are not allowed to leave until it's safe again.



Thankfully, our amazing team of staff are perfectly capable of caring for the children during our absence. And we are immensely proud of it that we have been able to inspire them with our vision. We are also available to them for advise from the Netherlands thanks to internet



& whatsapp. There were a couple of incidents with the older children not always following staff instructions but these problems were resolved after we spoke to them on the phone. And thankfully the atmosphere at Noah's Ark is very good, despite the lockdown.

The staff at Noah's Ark are running a special 'lockdown' programme to keep the children busy and entertained. The boys and girls play sports and games in small groups or they help the staff by collecting fire wood from the forest for the kitchen stoves, preparing the meals etc. The children also have special homework sessions so that they can continue with their school work. These are conducted by a couple of our teachers. And in the evenings they get to watch TV or a film. On



Sundays the children and staff are not allowed to congregate in the Noah's Ark church so church volunteers visit the houses with a megaphone to sing songs together, read

scripture and pray for the children.



Noah's Ark was for a while well supplied because when the Netherlands went into Corona lockdown, I (Piet) quickly realised that Uganda might implement a lockdown as well so I instructed the staff at Noah's Ark to purchase extra food and supplies for the Children's

Home before everything sold out or closed down. We also received a lot of



food donations and protective equipment from our Indian supporters (who are the businessmen in Uganda) and for the first time ever the Ugandan government also donated foodstuff. Our farm also produces



Bananas from our farm!

food for the Home. All travel & transportation is now forbidden in Uganda unless you have special permission from

the government. Thankfully, the government has given us permission to use our ambulance and a second vehicle to keep the children's home supplied. After so many

weeks new supplies need to be purchased but the prices of food and basic necessities have almost doubled because farmers are unable to bring food to the markets and nothing can be imported into Uganda.

The situation in Uganda

So far, Uganda seems to have been largely spared from Corona. The number of infections is extremely low and no one has yet died from Corona. When I asked someone from the presidents office why Uganda had implemented a total nationwide lockdown he explained this was because the country will not be able to manage an infection rate similar to Europe or the United States because they don't have the medical equipment or capabilities to care for the sick.



Children playing in our village



A house in our village

However the draconian lockdown measures have resulted in more Ugandans dying from hunger, malaria and childbirth because of the high food prices or because they can't travel to a hospital or clinic. Anyone caught on the roads without government permission can be arrested, beaten or even shot by the police or army. Some of the videos I receive from

Ugandan friends are truly shocking. One showed a pregnant women asking a motorbike taxi for a ride. A soldier stopped her and threatened to shoot her if she got on the bike. She did anyway so the soldier shot and killed both the woman and the motorbike rider! So people are dying not from Corona but from the measures that have been

implemented to prevent Corona spreading to Uganda. We are also worried that the numbers of orphaned, abandoned and malnourished children will drastically increase due to the lockdown.

Even though it is illegal to travel and distribute food during the lockdown, we are using our special travel permit to visit the homes of our children in the villages to check up on them and we are discreetly



distributing food and basic necessities to their caregivers. Most of them come from the poorest families in the surrounding villages so they are really struggling to feed their children.



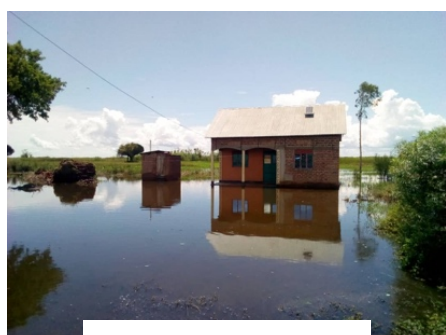
A silent disaster in the making

To make matters even worse, millions of locusts passed through East Africa this year including Northeast Uganda destroying 18% of Uganda's total agricultural production.



Walking through a locust swarm

Locust covered tree



Enormous floodings



Food supplies have also been reduced by heavy rains which have resulted in severe flooding in the villages and regions around Lake Victoria and the destruction of their crops which are now water swamped and rotting in the fields. Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa, has risen by almost 2 meters (7ft). The combination of harsh lockdown, locust infestations and heavy rains have combined to create severe food shortages in Uganda which the government is unable to manage or resolve. As a result desperately hungry citizens are using the



Roads washed away

cover of night to steal food. Our farm, where we stockpiled 4.5 tones of our just harvested rice, was also recently attacked at night by a gang of thieves. Armed with machetes and pickaxes they snuck into the compound, locked the security guard in his house and threatened the farmworkers before attempting to brake the lock of the container in which the rice was stored. However the guard was able to escape via a window and when he started firing his gun in the air the attackers fled. The police were quickly called and using a tracking dog they followed the route used by the gang and found a truck nearby which was ready to take our rice. The farm manager recognized one of the assailants and the police arrested him the very same night. We are very happy that there were no casualties and more guards have now been deployed!



Police on guard duty



People are asking for our help

People are now asking us for help and we are trying to help where we can. They especially need help buying food until the lockdown eases and the harvests improve.

Happy to have food again



For example John, who we have known for many years, also asked for our help. He's a music teacher and good Samaritan who helps children living on the streets because they no longer have a home or are no longer welcome there. He brings them together with food and teaches them to process their grief and frustration with music. About 25 children have now become part of his family. But he is now struggling to support himself and the children who are starving because nothing is being left on the street and begging no longer works because no one has anything to give. So we give him money to buy food for himself and the children. We are happy to share our blessings for as long as we can.



Please help

Dear friends, looking at all of this, Pita and I cannot do anything else, in spite of all corona negatives we go through, then asking you, please stretch out, right now, and help us to do something for the people and the children to survive!

The Lockdown, Locusts, heavy rains, and the loss of income is driving many Ugandans to the edge off the cliff!

Can you help?

Then we warmly recommend this to you

Thank you and kind regards; Piet en Pita

www.nacmu.org/covid-19

Gift idea as we buy in whole sale most used products in Noah's Ark and Uganda!

1 sack 50 kg Maize flour	\$ 34.25
1 sack 100 kg Dry beans	\$123.30
1 sack 50 kg Sugar	\$ 61.65
1 jerrycan 20 liter cooking oil	\$ 38.40
1 box 24 pcs Bar soap	\$ 26.30
1 box 12 tins Formula baby milk	\$ 95.90

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