May 11, 2020

Dear friends,

What does leadership development have to do with a pandemic? As it turns out, quite a lot! Over the past few months at DAI, it’s been business as usual, although this “business” looks quite different than anything we’ve done before.

We have often said that at DAI we don’t directly feed the hungry, run the schools, stop the injustice or govern nations – we just equip all the people who do! And while this still remains true, these unique times have called us to adapt and partner with local leaders on an entirely new level.

**The past couple of months have seen DAI turning into a temporary relief organization.** In mid-March, when many of us were still focusing on the direct health consequences of COVID-19, our staff and alumni from around the world started talking about urgent relief efforts they were already carrying out in Haiti, South Asia, Pakistan, Myanmar and many other places.

Because our priority at DAI is to reach those with the least access, many of our students either live next to or were themselves the ones most severely affected by the coronavirus’ economic fallout. Whether rural pastors depending on a weekly tithe, children’s homes or daily wage earners surviving one day at a time, the world’s poorest were thrust into a starvation situation by government-imposed lockdowns.

In response, many of our staff and alumni started immediately to initiate relief efforts to deliver food rations and hygiene kits to vulnerable households in their communities. Sometimes this even meant giving out of the little they had to feed their own families. **We were privileged to come alongside and support these projects, ultimately reaching over 2,000 households in 21 countries.** (To watch a short video, visit [https://bit.ly/3dF2tKB](https://bit.ly/3dF2tKB))
However, we were even more blessed to witness the generous and completely unexpected outpouring of financial support from many of you that made this possible. **Together, we raised over $145,000 in just seven short weeks.** That has been enough to provide a month's worth of critical food and supplies for well over 2,000 families.

Although we have been doing relief work, I don't see this as a diversion from leadership development so much as the logical fulfillment of it. True leadership, like that of Jesus, responds with compassion and practical care to the needs before it. God's work is never boundaried into neat categories, but overflows from one to the other.

So it is not surprising that our leaders have, without hesitation, put the needs of others ahead of their own and applied their natural and learned skillset to bring the love of God to their neighbors in material form. Their actions demonstrate the servant leadership, strategic thinking, partnering, fundraising, community development and so many other critical skills that are central to DAI's mission.

We have been privileged to continue consulting and mentoring with these local leaders in this new terrain, serving them as they serve their communities. In the coming months, we are excited to see what fruit this ministry of compassion will bear in these leaders' ministries.

But apart from relief work, how has the pandemic affected the rest of our work? Not surprisingly, many of our workshops and MA residencies have been postponed, as international and local travel has ground to a standstill. However, DAI staff around the world have been quickly adapting to these limitations by offering courses on Zoom for the first time. Our newest virtual Servant Leadership course brings together students from the US, Canada, Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya in an incredible learning convergence that wouldn't have been attempted before.

Food Distribution Efforts in South Asia
Thankfully, DAI’s decentralized “starfish” structure makes our global network particularly adaptable to global disruptions like this one. Therefore, although there may be many challenges ahead, I am more excited than anything to see God’s plans carried out in new and unprecedented ways. We are in the hope business and our God is a God of hope. This time has confirmed anew for us just how critical local, servant-hearted leaders are and we are both energized and humbled by the task before us. But, of course, we need your help to carry out that task. Please consider an extra gift to DAI during this time of turmoil as we try to meet more leaders’ needs with less resources. You may either use the envelope provided or go to daintl.org/give.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.
2 Thessalonians 3:16