



April 2020 Newsflash

An Update on COVID-19 and Rwanda

We hope that you and your family and friends are well and staying safe during these uncertain and challenging times. Since this is a global situation, we wanted to fill you in on how Rwanda is being impacted by COVID-19 and let you know how you can help survivors through this difficult time.

Note: We have recently changed how we distribute our newsletters. About 2 weeks ago we sent a newsletter to a few of you, but were unable to reach all of you. We have now fixed the problem and are sending an **updated** newsletter to everyone. Sorry for any confusion this may cause.

The Situation in Rwanda

We have been following the situation in Rwanda closely and have been in touch with our Rwandan partner organizations as well as our many Rwandan friends. As of April 24, there were 176 confirmed cases and no deaths. Fortunately, the Rwandan government was quick to respond when the first COVID-19 case came on March 14. A week later, borders were closed and the country put in lockdown. Rwandans are confined to their homes except for medical or shopping purposes and many who did have jobs are now unemployed. Since most live pay cheque to pay cheque, many are now without food and struggling to pay rent. The government is distributing food to the needy however it is severely inadequate. The only rent relief is whatever each renter can negotiate with their landlord. Our partner organizations have suspended most of their programs. Staff are working from home and focusing on supporting the most vulnerable survivors with their immediate needs, such as food and medicines. Medical clinics remain open and the INSPIRE!africa funded Helpline continues to provide its telephone-based counselling support.

The Helpline

The Helpline has always been critical during the genocide memorial period (April 7 to July 16) when the need for mental health support is particularly high. The Helpline is a toll-free telephone counselling service for genocide survivors, mostly youth.

The need this year has increased considerably since survivors can't meaningfully connect with friends and family to lessen their trauma when they have flashbacks. In addition, trauma is being triggered more frequently as survivors have difficulty separating genocide memories from the current COVID-19 restrictions. For example, 'stay at home' public broadcasts were common during the genocide.

To respond to the increased need, our partner organization Survivors Fund (SURF) has increased the number of Helpline Peer Support Counsellors from 15 to 200.

Support Survivors Impacted by COVID-19 on Giving Tuesday – May 5

Tuesday May 5 is Giving Tuesday, a global day of giving and unity in response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19. If your situation allows, we ask that you consider a donation to INSPIRE!africa to cover the additional costs for the Helpline.

Here is How You Can Donate

Canada Helps: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/inspireafrica-foundation/>

E-transfer: info@inspireafrica.org

Mail: send cheque to 102-520 Cedar Cres. SW, Calgary, AB T3C 2Y8

Annual Commemoration of the Genocide Against the Tutsis



This lockdown comes during the April genocide memorial period. Typically, Rwandans mark this time with commemorative gatherings and travel to memorial sites in their hometown to pay tribute to those they have lost.

Here in Calgary, the Rwandan Canadian Society of Calgary has cancelled their annual commemoration event, which was scheduled for April 18.

In Rwanda, commemorations began on April 7, but with some changes this year. Each district appointed a delegation of fewer than ten people to gather at a memorial site to pay tribute to the people buried there. During the first week, nationwide talks will be broadcast each afternoon. Because survivors will not be able to attend the normally public commemorations, many in Calgary,

and around the world will feel even more isolated by their horrific memories of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis.

With this in mind, we ask you to please keep the survivors in your thoughts and reach out to the Rwandan community. You can do this through any personal contacts you may have and also by posting on the [INSPIRE!africa Facebook page](#).

Take Care

We will keep you informed as we learn more. We are all in this together. Take care of yourself and each other, and stay safe!

INSPIRE!africa on Social Media

Facebook: INSPIRE!africa

Twitter: @inspireafrica2