

# INSPIRE! africa!

## March 2021 Newsflash

This past year has changed the lives of people around the world in ways we couldn't have imagined. For this edition of our newsletter, we are looking at the effects that lockdown is having on the people of Rwanda.

### An Interview with our Rwandan Friend, Ivan

We wanted to know what lockdown is like in Rwanda and the impact it is having on the lives and businesses of Rwandans. To do that, we talked with one of our Rwandan friends, Ivan, who was sponsored by INSPIRE!africa several years ago to go to university and now owns his own business.

Ivan completed his science and technology university studies in 2016 but decided to follow his passion in fashion and design. He has been working in this field for 4 years now. Ivan designs and creates custom pieces of clothing, as well as repairs and resizes any piece a customer brings to him. Ivan called his business House of Hippo but recently changed the name because he felt House of Hippo sounded more like a tourist focused company. It is now called Injongi, which means "Beautiful Queen" or "First Lady". You can follow Ivan's business on Facebook at:

[Hirwa Yves Jordan | Facebook](#)



*INSPIRE!africa 2018 Volunteers meet with Ivan in his Studio*

### !!a – How has COVID and lockdown affected your business?

**Ivan** - The first word I can say is “too much you can’t believe that”. As you know, for clothing sales and design to be successful, people need to be happy - getting out and having fun: celebrations, parties, church services, and so on. Now that we’ve been locked down for 10 months and everything has been shutting down, people don’t have events to dress up for, so it means there is no work anymore. It is the worst I have ever seen, and everyone thinks so.

### !!a – What are your future plans for your business?

**Ivan** - To be honest, I don’t have a plan except to pay for the things I have now. It has been ten months of lockdown and I don’t have regular work, but I do have a lot of bills to pay including tax and rent.

### !!a – How has COVID-19 and lockdown affected you personally?

**Ivan** – As for daily life, things have changed a lot! I can’t access food as I don’t have enough money to buy it. We are only eating to survive, eating just once a day, not like normal times at all. It’s just one day at time. A few months ago, the government set the law so that only 50% of each bus could be filled with people. You can only travel within your own district. Bars, stadiums, and other places where there are usually a lot of people are closed. Actually, everything has been closed down except the pharmacy, supermarket and mini shops that sell food. There are signs all over that say “stay home, stay safe” or in Kinyarwanda “Guma Murugo”.

### !!a – What is lockdown really like for Rwandans?

**Ivan** - There has been a curfew since March 2020 and the government has been strict about enforcing the laws. To go out, you have to get a pass. You get one by writing to the police and asking for one. You wait for 48 hours and then get a pass to go out for something, but only for necessary things. You have to wear a face mask and social distance 1 metre away from others.

We don’t actually have the chance to get money from the government, but there are some people the government helps. It is called the “Ubedehe Program”. It is a program to support the poorest people. They get 3kg of rice and 2kg of beans every 2 weeks. There is no financial support available for other people or businesses, like myself.

### !!a – Is testing for COVID-19 available?

**Ivan** - The COVID test is free for everyone but it is expensive for the government so they pick who they will test.

### !!a – Do you know if Rwanda has started giving the vaccine?

**Ivan** - There is some news that says a vaccine is on its way, but none has arrived in Rwanda yet. We are still waiting for the government to announce it.

**Update:** We are very happy to report that since we spoke with Ivan, Rwanda has started giving the vaccine to healthcare workers.

**!!a – Is COVID-19 and lockdown affecting your mental health and the mental health of others?**

**Ivan** - Yes! I am affected very much! There is no mental health help and no financial help, not even food except for the poorest. Actually, people here are leaving because there is no work. You can't stay home for 10 months without being affected! A lot of people don't have savings - as you know, it's not easy to get money for food and savings here. People are suffering a lot, not only me, but families, kids, and people like me are all hungry and in pain.

**!!a – Do you feel any hope that things will get back to normal soon?**

**Ivan** - Hearing what the government says I really don't have any hope for that.



*Ivan at work in his studio*

We are very grateful to Ivan for being so open and honest with us about what life is like in Rwanda right now. As you can see, it is very difficult; people are hungry and losing hope for the future. Fortunately, our Rwandan partner organization SURF is providing food hampers to the most needy and has expanded its telephone Help Line to assist with mental health challenges. To support these programs, please donate to INSPIRE!africa. Details are below.

## Mental Health in Rwanda

Around the world, people from all walks of life are struggling with their mental health due to COVID-19. However, lockdown in Rwanda is very different than other places as it is reminiscent of the way things were during the genocide. Uniformed officials patrol the streets to enforce curfews, announcements are made in the streets telling people to stay home, businesses are closed, people are not able to go to work, people are hungry. Because it is so similar to how it was during the genocide, it is sometimes hard for Rwandans to separate how they felt during the genocide and how they feel during the pandemic, and so they are reliving the trauma yet again.

For World Mental Health Day in October of 2020, our Rwandan partner SURF worked with GAERG (a youth focused development organization) to create this video highlighting the need for mental health support in Rwanda for survivors of the genocide.

### [World Mental Health Day video](#)

A donation to INSPIRE!africa will support these mental health services for Rwanda's survivors. Donation details are below.

## 2021 Commemoration of the Genocide against the Tutsi

April 7, 2021 marks the beginning of the 100-day memorial period in remembrance of those murdered in the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The Rwandan Community in Calgary is holding its commemoration virtually via Zoom this year and we welcome you to join us for this event. Here are the details;

**Date:** Saturday, April 10th (3-6pm)

**Theme:** Remember the Truth, Unite from Isolation, Renew for the Future

**Registration:**

Register with this link to [Eventbrite](#)

**Guest Speaker:** Chigbo Arthur Anyaduba, PhD. Dr. Anyaduba is an assistant professor in the Department of English, University of Winnipeg. His teaching and research interests focus on African and African diaspora literature. His current research explores the cultural representations of genocidal mass atrocities in Africa. He has won several prestigious awards for his research on genocide.



You are cordially invited to join us online for the twenty-seventh commemoration of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

## 2020 Fundraising

We previously reported to you that we raised \$63,000 at our fundraiser in November. In fact, the number was much higher: You raised \$68,000 at our fundraiser! Thank you!! Along with the \$5,000 in COVID-19 relief you donated in the spring, **our 2020 total was \$73,000** for programs supporting genocide survivors. That is an amazing number, and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for giving to survivors during this challenging time for all.

### How you can donate:

- **Canada Helps:** <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/inspireafrica-foundation/>
- **E-transfer:** [info@inspireafrica.org](mailto:info@inspireafrica.org)

**\*\*Please provide your email and mailing address in the comment field so we can send your tax receipt\*\***

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

**\*\* Please make cheques payable to INSPIRE!africa Foundation\*\***

**Company matching programs** – please contact your Human Resources department to find out if your company has a program

## 2020 Tax Receipts

The 2020 tax receipts have been sent via email. If you have not yet received yours, please contact us at [info@inspireafrica.org](mailto:info@inspireafrica.org). Our apologies for the incorrect date on the first version of your tax receipt. Corrected receipts have been sent.

## Take Care

COVID-19 reminds us how connected we really are to each other. We are all in this together. Take care of yourself and each other, and stay safe.

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