

# NEWS BRIEF

May 2020

## STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD DURING AN INTERNATIONAL PANDEMIC

**Before you read this news brief, I encourage you to take a minute (or more) and simply take a few deep breaths. I have found that I need this more often now than before, and each time I take that moment to find some peace, peace meets me there.**



### How are you?

Have you found time during these two months to process how you're feeling and what you're experiencing? It's been different for everyone. For us in Virginia, we've been encouraged to stay home and stay socially distanced which has created space between communities and loved ones.

As I've been thinking about how we're experiencing this pandemic in Virginia, I've also found myself wondering "what will it be like to share these stories years down the road with people who were experiencing the same pandemic in a different place?"

Working for GSSM, I have a little insight into how things are going in other places, but I wanted to find out even more and really hear about how our students, alumni, and other friends of GSSM are doing around the world. I sent messages, asked questions, and got some answers.

**Reading the answers to these questions as students and alumni responded to my messages gave me more of a glimpse into the many different experiences that communities are having all over the world.**

**As you continue reading, you'll see responses from...**

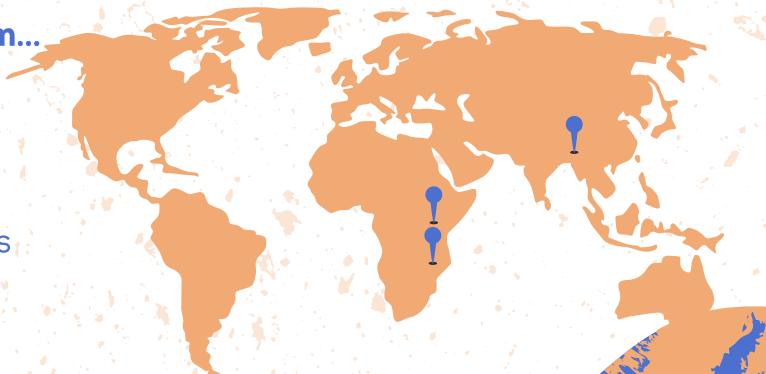
★ **Muan**, a current student in Churachandpur, India

★ **Ivan**, an alumni Mbarara, Uganda

★ **MacGeofry**, an alumni in Lilongwe, Malawi

★ **Ojok**, a current student from Lira, Uganda who is currently is stuck in Gulu

★ **Isaac**, an alumni and Ebenezer team member in Kampala, Uganda



## How has the pandemic affected you?

"By God's grace, [there are] no cases in our place." - **Muan**

"Indeed it has [affected me]... Shutting down all my daily work, ministry work, discipleship classes, and soccer training with the ministry children. [We can] no longer do social ministry like ministry of presence, visiting those who aren't well and home visits. [We are not] able to go to Church [and the] Easter outreach was also affected."

- **Isaac**

## Have you still been able to minister during the pandemic? If so, how and to who?

"Yes, I do [still minister] among Sunday school students and some friends. So far I have been talking about salvation [and] Christian life to more than 150 [people]. I took this lock down as an opportunity to work for the Lord as full time." - **Muan**

"So far things are going on well with ministry however the challenges are going on like [getting] funding and other materials [for ministry]." - **Ivan**



**Isaac and some of his young athletes before the pandemic.**



**Muan with his young athletes in Churachandpur.**

"Yes one thing that Covid19 has done on a positive note is that it has revealed the depth of our discipleship levels in our churches. Those who are making disciples in their churches at this moment, (the virus) has made them rise up spiritually."

- **MacGeofry**



**Muan's Sunday morning discipleship class**

"[Yes]...by using the available means that can reach those I can. At the ministry, we agreed [that I would] be sharing with the teens each morning the Word of God [through WhatsApp messages] and they send me there reaction to it, how it applies to their lives and how to execute it in our daily lives and the present situation. And it has been great, today one [teen] just told me that it is the Hope and devotionals I share with them that makes the difference in his life." - **Isaac**

## What is the feeling like among your community during the pandemic?

"Depends on the person. But majority [are] serious about the pandemic and maintain the protective rules laid down by the government." - **Muan**

"There is no lockdown here for it cannot work due to poverty levels and economic infrastructure cannot accommodate lockdown." - **MacGeofry**

"Things are not easy at all, life is becoming difficult time and again but through prayer and hope that I have in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior, I believe everything will be fine and He will stand with our family." - **Ojok**

"There's fear. [People are] discouraged and not knowing what is next. [They are] kind of desperate. [We] need the Hope, [we] need Jesus." - **Isaac**

## How can we pray specifically for you during this time?

"Please pray for the school [in] which I'm working. The school [is facing] financial problems due to lock down. Pray for my family."

Pray for the Sports ministry here in our place. Pray for my health."

- **Muan**



"[Please pray for my family] Being only one in the family who was employed, all support was coming from me but currently everything is stopped."

- **Ojok**



"My prayer request is [for] restoration and even more for what God's children have lost during this pandemic." - **Isaac**

## Using his gift of encouragement, Isaac also sent this message as he reflected on the present situation:

"In such a season [as this] my focus is on the fruit. The letter of Philippians was written when Apostle Paul was in prison, which might apply to what we are in now. In Philippians 1:12 he says how all that happened to him helped in advancing the Gospel. I believe as well for what is happening today in the whole world is and can work well and has worked well in advancing the Kingdom. Yes, we might not know what is going to happen next, Paul in Philippians 1:22 also didn't know what would happen next but the scriptures tells us that it will end great - in Jeremiah 29:11 He promised that the future He has for us will give us [hope] and in Romans 8:18-30, [Paul] tells us that what we are going through now is nothing compared to the glory that will be shown to us."

**I don't care what am going through now but I know that what is coming from our Lord is far more great than the present situation.**

Let's focus on the fruit, our spiritual and heavenly rewards and those [things] worthy of thinking of as it is written in His Word. Let's accept to be pruned, rooted and established for all this is working well for the advance of the Gospel." - Isaac Lugya

Thank you all for taking the time to read these updates from GSSM members around the world. I encourage you to keep finding moments to pause and reflect on how you're doing and to pray for GSSM students and alumni around the world. Though we may all be having different experiences during this pandemic, we are all going through it together.

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## A note from Sequoi...



*At the beginning of 2020, I prayed about ways my involvement with GSSM can continue to be beneficial by meeting needs that our organization has and creating processes to do so efficiently. As I continue my role as Associate Director at GSSM, I am always desiring to work hard while I learn more and more about expanding the Kingdom through ministry.*

*I feel that, in 2019, I was able to truly gain my footing and embrace my position at GSSM. I am so thankful that the Lord has given me more of a picture of why He has me at GSSM and that He has given me vision for how to continue to be a useful member of the team. As I have prayed about what the Lord wants me to do moving forward, I continue to hear Him say "use your gifts to help my Kingdom grow" - so that is what I am prayerfully doing in 2020 with GSSM!*

*Some of the projects I have been working on in 2020 so far are a new Alumni Communication Program, an upcoming Student Sponsorship Program, finding ways to strengthen our lessons by providing more resources for our students, and learning more of the daily "ins and outs" of the administrative and directorial aspects of GSSM. My life is also changing in some ways and my financial needs have changed with those. I am so grateful to Alyssa, Russ, and the GSSM board for encouraging and supporting me as I stay focused on growing in my position with the organization.*

*In light of all of these changes to my position at GSSM and my life in general, I am seeking additional monthly support and would be so honored for you to prayerfully consider supporting me and joining me in this journey. If you would like to know more about my role at GSSM or more about my financial need, please email me anytime at sequoi.phipps@globalssm.org or leave a note on your response card that you would like to receive more information and I'll be sure to reach out to you.*

*Thank you in advance for your support and encouragement! It means so much to me.*

In Christ,  
Sequoi Phipps  
Associate Director