



HfH Covid-19 Response 3 – The first days of Lockdown

30 March 2020

It has been just over three weeks since the first Covid-19 case in South Africa and barely two weeks since our president announced a state of disaster. The world and how we work has changed unimaginably in this short time and I want to recognise the Home from Home team for adapting so well in this first phase of the war against Covid-19.

This first phase has been about setting ourselves up so that we are able to fight the war through social distancing and enhanced hygiene measures. This involved the following

- Information sharing, where our Social Worker team visited all the houses ensuring that the necessary education was done with foster families about staying safe.
- Delivering hand sanitizer, masks, additional medication, groceries and some indoor activities for the lock down. We are grateful to the donors who have come to support us in many of these needs.
- Preparing connectivity for all office staff to be able to work from home.
- Establishing guidelines for meetings for office staff.
- Establishing support guidelines for the foster families

Now, almost four days into the lockdown, it feels like the quiet before the storm. We don't yet have reports of staff or youth being infected and our preparations appear to be in place. This however, only announces the second phase of preparation which is so important to begin putting place. These are the plans for what must be arranged when members in our foster families become sick. How do the homes practice protection or isolation within our small homes? If Foster Mothers are sick, how will they isolate and who will be running the households, doing the shopping, caring for the children? Furthermore, with the likelihood that schools will not open after the lockdown, plans to keep our children's education going will need flexibility and creativity.

The more immediate safety and wellbeing of our foster families are obviously our primary concern, but there is of course the slightly longer term threat that is looming heavily. The economics of the world and our country are in a tailspin and that will shortly have a direct impact on our work and how we do it. Planning for this will need to start soon and it is likely that some fairly austere measures will be needed.

Being aware of all the threats and dangers is undoubtedly a good thing because one can plan better for these eventualities. But let us not overwhelm ourselves into paralysis, with these realities. Our HfH children, who could never have planned their lives from the outset, have through their resilience and faith in humanity and the world, triumphed thus far. We will do well to take a leaf out of their books and practice a good measure of this too.

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