

## Editorial



The novel corona virus has brought normal life to a standstill in almost all countries of the world, although the measures and their effects differ from country to country. How does the crisis affect the people we know from our projects in Kenya, Ethiopia and Nepal? What are our partners, coordinators, suppliers and the many stove manufacturers doing during this difficult time?

At our request, the local coordinators have slipped a little into the role of foreign correspondent for you, as well as sharing their personal impressions with us. While reports from Anita Badal and Christa Drigalla from Nepal, Abebaw Birhanu from Ethiopia and Hillary Mutuma from Kenya all show how admirably people are dealing with unfamiliar restrictions, it also shows just how state authorities are not dealing so well with the crisis.

These are clearly unsettling and uncertain times and no one really knows what consequences the pandemic will have in the economic sector and social infrastructure in the countries our projects are located in. One example is how can a call for donations arrive?

We especially want to pass on the call for help from our Kenyan partner OI Pejeta Conservancy. Now, in addition to all state aid, worldwide solidarity is more important than ever, in which everyone gives a little of what they can give. Please support OI Pejeta by a direct donation to the conservancy. We have provided their link later in our newsletter.

Dr. Frank Dengler, Chairman

## Nepal

Although with a slight delay, the corona pandemic has now also reached Nepal.

My flight to Kathmandu was scheduled for March 29th. At the beginning of March, it was announced that, for fear of the virus being introduced by travelers, the possibility of being issued a visa directly upon entry was suspended. Then they learned that entry was only possible with a valid health certificate and a few days later the flights from countries already affected by Corona were rejected. It was a confusing game until all international flights were stopped on March 21st. This will hit tourism very hard. From expensive expeditions to simple trekking tours, everything comes to a standstill.

In parallel, all long-haul bus connections were suspended from March 23 and the lockdown was prepared. As a result, many travelers were stuck in the country and could not get to the capital. For Germans, the embassy has started a huge and very complicated return campaign within Nepal and organized several flights to Germany.

Nepalese labor migrants (ordinary workers who mostly find a job in the Gulf countries and India) became unemployed as a result of the crisis had tried to get home. Thousands of people dammed up at the border crossings with India prevented from crossing because of the fear that an open border would invite further infections. The workers returning with flights were

# The Chulo-Herald

Special Issue, April 9, 2020

Building Stoves in Times of Corona



initially "waved through" without any further checks (except for fever-measuring), until symptoms appeared in a young girl and an infection with SARS-CoV-2 was found. To date, not all of the passengers from that flight have been identified. This fact means that returnees from Qatar and other countries are "not welcome at home". For fear of spreading the virus in Dolakha for example, the houses of the returnees must be marked with a red flag for at least 14 days.

In Kathmandu, as throughout the country, there has been a curfew since March 24th. With the exception of the essentials, such as shopping, people are ordered to stay at home. These regulations are strictly controlled by police officers and in the first few days, more than two thousand people were "caught" on the street. The police have long telescopic poles with a kind of clamp on them, with which they fix the "sinners" and keep them at a distance. Most of the time, you are quickly released with a fine.



I am in regular telephone contact with Anita Badal, the manager of our partner association Swastha Chulo Nepal, and can therefore report what everyday life in Kathmandu and our project areas look like and how people are doing. The situation is characterized by great ignorance and fear. In the villages in particular, imparting basic knowledge about viral infections would be extremely important. The simplest behaviors are little known and even to a lesser degree, followed. The virus has now definitely arrived in Nepal and will spread. So far, there have been nine documented cases of illness, but the number of unreported cases can hardly be guessed at. There also seems to be very little testing compared to other countries. At first, they only spoke of the "introduction of the virus from abroad", but since April 4, the first transmission within Nepal has been verified and the spread has thus entered into a new phase.

In Kathmandu, one notices the empty streets and the increased number of patrolling police officers. The traffic police are currently not needed. The one more positive impact is the direct improvement in air quality and the clear distant views of the mountains.

There is a small vegetable market near Anita's house in the mornings and evenings. The prices have increased enormously, which is due to the difficulties of transportation. The streets are largely empty and most of the shops have long been closed. Day laborers, porters, shoemakers, fruit sellers and tourist guides are particularly hard hit.

The beggars who have always begged their daily food on the side of the road or in front of the temples and who now have no chance of any benefits are to be provided for by the city of Kathmandu. At least that's what is written in the newspaper.

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Anita is in contact with the “outstations” of our stove construction activities. In Arghakhanchi, Kiran Lama stayed on site to be close to the stove builders. In March, they were able to build around a thousand ovens, but collecting the relevant receipts is difficult because the curfew is also strictly controlled there. Some of the Nuwakot stove builders, who are always ready to work in remote areas, can no longer get home before long distance traffic was stopped. Therefore, they are stuck in Arghakhanchi and we very much hope that they can continue working soon.

Unfortunately, there is no replenishment of material and "strangers" are probably not so welcome in the household, especially in the kitchen.

Bel Bahadur Tamang, our coordinator for the East, made it to Dolakha before the lockdown and so he managed to build a few hundred stoves in March. Unfortunately, stove builders are currently not being welcomed specifically because of their fear of workers returning from abroad. This is completely understandable because it is difficult to keep a safe distance with such work. So here - as in Arghakhanchi - stove construction will come to a standstill.

However, in both areas we sent our workers a few basic instructions and material for self-protection: instructions for washing hands and soap, as well as hand care cream. Whenever the coordinators are in contact with the stove builders, they should remember and constantly practice this information just like a mandala prayer.

The health system in Nepal will collapse very quickly if there is a massive infection with many sick people. Attempts to set up tent hospitals and procure material from India or China appear as haphazard and helpless gestures. Many private clinics reject patients for fear of infection, and one repeatedly reads reports of people with medical problems who simply did not receive help. In addition, treatment is usually only provided conditional upon payment.

Due to the loss of tourism revenues and the massive reduction in transfers of migrant workers from abroad, Nepal will lose at least half of its gross domestic product. The extent of the economic and societal impact from Covid-19 can only be guessed at and tragically, it will primarily affect the poorest. A bad road with bad prospects ahead for many.

*Christa Drigalla*

All pictures from "Kathmandu Post" and "Himalyan Times" from the last few days.

## Ethiopia



Abebaw Birhanu

Everything is fine with us at home. The government has given orders to stay at home. Road traffic is suspended with the exception of trucks that bring groceries to the communities.

Alem Ketema has also been banned from driving for ten days. In March, we were still able to build stoves relatively well, I received reports of over 150 new stoves over the phone. However, it is difficult to collect the confirmation forms because I can no longer go to the villages.

I tried to reach as many active stove builders as possible by motorcycle or phone and to point out the necessary rules of conduct when building stoves, such as keeping your distance, no shaking hands and frequent handwashing. Riding a motorcycle is now completely prohibited. I have to stay at home and see how things go from one day to the next.

Die Ofenmacher since it is an established organization, have provided water buckets and two large containers, which are regularly filled with water by the local health department and the city administration. This is how our stove builders can wash their hands. Fortunately, there are no confirmed cases in and around Alem Ketema.

The situation is really difficult at the moment. If the pandemic spreads as it has in Europe, the United States and China, it will be a nightmare.

*Abebaw Birhanu*

## Kenya

So far, we are doing well. In the administration of the conservancy<sup>1</sup> everyone now works from home. We are doing everything possible to limit the spread of the virus.

I am in constant contact with the stove builders and the community representatives. The municipalities have also taken measures and restricted visits to households. The elders and community leaders support the measures. This largely limits the mobility of our stove builders. I advised them to stop working and to stay safe at home.

The government has imposed a curfew between 7 p.m. and 5 a.m. All public gatherings are prohibited and the police patrol to enforce compliance. But there is a lot of activity in Nanyuki until about four in the afternoon, because everyone is trying to do things before the curfew.

I am currently at home and from there I do my work in the spirit of #stayhomestaysafe.

*Hillary Mutuma*

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<sup>1</sup> Hillary is an employee of OI Pejeta Conservancy. His regular place of work is in the administration building, which is located in the center of the Conservancy, about 15 km from Nanyuki, where he lives.

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## Call for help from our partner OI Pejeta

For more than five years, we Ofenmacher in Kenya have been working successfully with OI Pejeta Conservancy contributing our clay stoves to the Community Program, which provides the surrounding communities with infrastructure, e.g. with health facilities and schools. OI Pejeta is a non-profit company that aims to conserve endangered species and is largely financed by tourism revenues.

In the past 31 years, for example, OI Pejeta has managed to increase the rhino population from 3 to 133 individuals. Many other endangered species such as lions, elephants, giraffes and ostriches have found a protected space in the conservancy where they are safe from poachers. To ensure this protection, the conservancy must go to great lengths. The entire area of approx. 400 km<sup>2</sup> is fenced, patrols patrol, and an intervention team and sniffer dogs are available to prevent poachers from entering. Unable to provide a more in depth look at their work in this newsletter if you would like to learn more, just click on the following link - [OI Pejeta does a lot more.](#)

With the expected economic damage from the Corona crisis and the plight of the Kenyan population, the pressure from poachers will increase. At the same time, the breakaway tourism means that OI Pejeta's means to maintain the great effort to protect the animals are dwindling. The achievements of the past few years are in danger! For this reason, we ask you to [support OI Pejeta](#) through this difficult time.

A tip for all friends of wildlife observation and photography: The "Big Five" and many other species can be found in OI Pejeta equaling and perhaps even better than in the larger more well-known reserves like Serengeti and Kruger National Parks. In addition, your visit supports a unique concept of the coexistence of livestock farming (cattle breeding) and the protection of wild animals. Perhaps the next time you plan a visit to this beautiful country it will be to the foothills of Mount Kenya.

*Frank Dengler*



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