

Connecting lives



Eagles is partnering with churches across Malawi to help them respond effectively to Covid19, reaching vulnerable people in areas where no one else can, like Rose - pictured with her own 'tippy tap' (see p.2)

Welcome to Connecting Lives! We are so grateful for your ongoing support at this difficult time. Your partnership is more important than ever. Political tension in Malawi is high due to the re-running of the General Election this month, so the current government has little credibility. People are gathering in their thousands for election rallies and ignoring the few measures the government has put in place. With false rumours spreading about COVID-19, it is vital that Eagles and the churches with whom we work equip people with accurate information to contain the pandemic.

Eagles' response to the Coronavirus

With Eagles, you are reaching people that no one else can. Many see their local church as the only trusted authority. Our strong relationships with pastors and communities enables us to keep in close contact and means that Eagles' information is believed, even with so much false news.

Government efforts are not enough to reach everyone in remote areas. Thousands have no understanding of what the virus is and how best to protect themselves from it. Nor do they have access to soap or disinfectant. Eagles cannot visit all these areas during the pandemic; but the network of churches with whom we work remain at the heart of their communities.

With careful safety measures in place, we are training pastors how to respond to the crisis and distributing buckets and soap for hand-washing.

Where in-person training is not possible, Eagles' staff contact pastors and community leaders by phone to ensure that villages have accurate information about Covid-19 and the best ways to avoid spreading it. We encourage pastors to mobilise their communities to care for the sick as safely as possible and without stigma. In response, many leaders are now explaining to people how to protect themselves and others, as well as distributing soap to the most vulnerable.

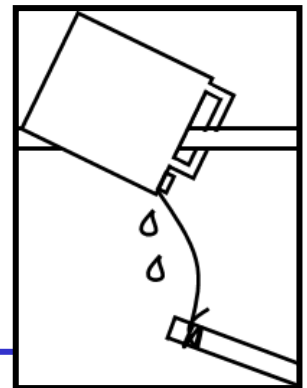
While no coherent strategy exists at national level, we are working with local government to support district plans, especially helping with mass-communication. Jimmy, Eagles' Church Mobilisation Coordinator in the South has recorded ten radio shows with other pastors to share life-saving information.

Simple sanitation saves lives

The fear that we have all experienced over the last months of a potentially deadly virus (with no treatment or vaccine yet available) gives us a small insight into the daily reality for millions of people in Malawi. However, for them, lack of sanitation and contaminated drinking water puts them constantly at risk of many other diseases as well as COVID-19, including cholera, diarrhoea, parasites and blinding trachoma. In Balaka, southern Malawi, Eagles has trained community volunteers to build simple latrines and handwashing facilities from locally available materials. These volunteers then equip many others to do the same for themselves, prioritising the most vulnerable.

Even those in deep poverty like Rose (see cover photo) can gather the simple materials needed. Thrilled, she quickly built her own pit latrine and tippy-tap for handwashing (see below how she does this). The tippy tap is a simple device for handwashing with running water—as your hands only touch the soap, it makes the process much more hygienic. Now people have a better chance of protecting their own families and preventing COVID-19 from spreading:

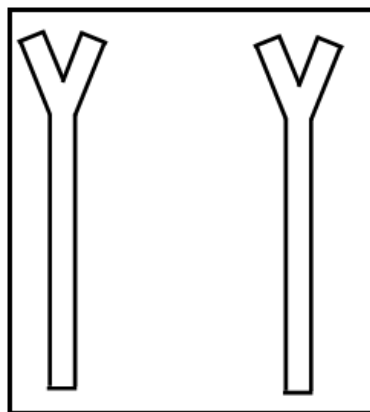
"This hand washing facility is easy to use and prevents us from contracting diarrhoea diseases!" Rose says as she demonstrates how to use it.



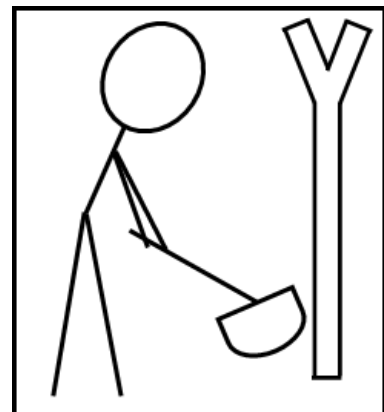
Building a tippy tap



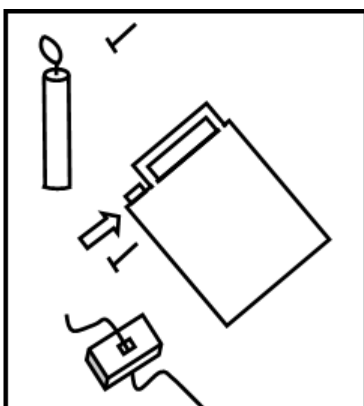
Dig two holes 45cm deep and about 60cm apart



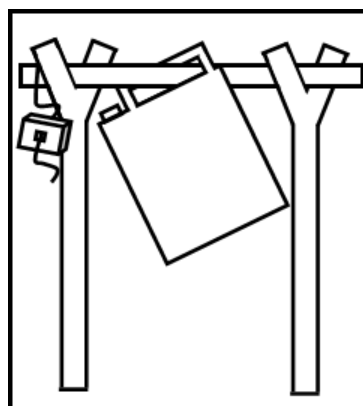
Place the forked sticks in, ensuring they are level



Fill holes with soil & rocks so sticks do not fall



Heat the nail and make hole in water container. Make a hole in the soap and thread the string



Hang container and soap and fill with water



Attach string to water container and to the foot lever stick

Confident, creative courage

Resourceful women in Chikwawa (southern Malawi) are making and selling simple, affordable soap, made from extracts of Moringa and Neem trees, known for their medicinal and antiseptic qualities. They are helping to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus while providing for their own families. Before Eagles began working with them, many had lost hope, feeling trapped in endless cycles of bad harvests, hunger and an inability to support their children. Now they are confident, creative and with the courage to act to protect themselves and others. They are even hoping to expand their business by selling to local shops and other organisations responding to the crisis.



Making the soap from Moringa and Neem trees



Completed soap, ready to sell!

Worshiping with a mop

Seeking to demonstrate God's love both physically and spiritually, several churches, mobilised by Eagles, have decided to support their local clinics. Noting the chronic shortage of staff and resources in most hospitals and clinics, some churches have supplied soap and disinfectant and volunteered to do the cleaning.

The Chair of a local clinic in Bolero, Northern Malawi, was concerned that his staff did not always have time to care for patients, as well as keeping on top of the cleaning. He was delighted when a local church, trained by Eagles to identify and respond to local needs, cleaned the whole hospital, freeing up the staff.

"If all churches would do this, hospital work would be made easier for the hospital staff as they would focus more on the patients!"



Church members in Mzuzu, Northern Malawi, volunteer to clean their local clinic.

Church sacrifice in crisis

Churches in Chikwawa, southern Malawi, already trained by Eagles to respond to local needs, continue to give to others through the Covid-19 crisis. They care for the most vulnerable in their community – even when their own families are struggling.

Learning from experience

In 2019, Cyclone Idai devastated people's lives in the villages of Kalulu and Nyangu, Southern Malawi. Houses collapsed, fields washed away, hope sank. Church, often a centre of community culture, seemed irrelevant as people were forced to look for daily labour on a Sunday so that their family could eat that day.

Then Eagles trained church leaders in the biblical mandate to care for those in need. They equipped them with skills and confidence to work with their communities. Ten churches set to work, rebuilding homes for elderly people, constructing toilets, saving from their small amount of food to give to those with none, sharing clothes, and planting trees to restore God's creation.

Serena had been sick for some time. She was overwhelmed with gratitude when people from the local church sacrificed their scarce resources to bring her food.

Meles, another widow (see photo right), had been sleeping on the church floor for over a year, terrified that her damaged roof would collapse on her. Despite their poverty, church members saved everything they could, strengthened the walls of her house and rebuilt her roof.



Meles' roof would have collapsed if the local church, mobilised by Eagles, had not intervened

The church as the centre of social strength

The training at that time transformed the way churches saw themselves. According to one pastor, ***"We thought it was the responsibility of organisations to come and help the needy but now we know it is the responsibility of the church."*** Another shared: ***"Amid severe hunger, most community members found it difficult to share food, but after the trainings we are able to share the little food we have with the poorest of the poor in the community. Widows and orphans and the most vulnerable are being taken care of by the local church."***

Churches are revived and are now again centres of social strength. Esther, a church leader, recommitted herself after seeing the wonderful work they were doing: ***"I stopped attending church services because I had to go and look for food for my children who usually went to bed on an empty stomach. But now I have learned to plan and work within the week to separate a day to go and worship God. My spiritual life has improved greatly!"*** They have also witnessed renewed love between spouses, greater care for their children, and unity within the church.