



Lock-down in Cambodia.

The biggest Covid-19 outbreak in Cambodia can be traced back to 20 February. Before this localised outbreak, Cambodia had very few cases of Covid, with no reported deaths. Since then, the numbers have dramatically increased. To stop the spread of infection, the government announced on 14 April a number of restrictions. Locking down roads, preventing provincial travel, closing markets and factories were some of the strict measures that came into place. This was the first time Cambodia had seen any form of restriction placed on their day-to-day lives and most were unprepared.

One area which was particularly hard hit was the garment factories. The exact number of these factories is unclear but back in 2016 Cambodia reportedly had 586, yet only last year 112 new factories opened their doors. Keeping some safe distance in these factories is nearly impossible. Added to this, the living quarters of the workers are small, close together and not properly ventilated, a perfect environment for any virus to spread

To help curb the spread of infection, the government has created a detailed map of Phnom Penh, with areas coded red, orange and yellow, red having the most cases; almost all these factories fall within the red zone.

The Prime Minister has ordered the roll-out of vaccines to be concentrated in the most infected areas of the city with up to 85,000 jabs being administered each day. Reports are favourable, with current figures of 350,000 people immunised in the red zones. As of 8 May, 1.7 million people in the country have received their first injection.

Despite some good news, people in Phnom Penh have faced difficulties with shortages, especially of fresh produce. Most of the fresh meat and vegetables are imported from outside the city. As a result of the travel restrictions into the city, most fresh food sellers have been barred from selling their produce, so households have had to live on basic food-stuff. Local government have set up controlled distribution stations where people can get canned fish, rice, noodles and soy sauce.



Kindness in the community.

Sometimes, during difficult times, the best in people seems to be brought out. With areas of the capital city in lock-down, many people were reliant on the kindness of others for basic commodities including food. I want to applaud people (and organisations) who helped their neighbours and communities, freely giving out rice, noodles and other essentials. I want to mention just two examples.

Susan Smith of the Sunrise project, who received some donations for food, bought a truck load of vegetables, less likely to be donated and harder to find after the government closed many (Covid-spreading) markets. These vegetables were sorted, packed and delivered to families in need, with the co-operation of local churches. Susan loves her immediate neighbourhood and tells me that she keeps a close eye on her close community, those living in the same street, seeing where she may help. This is what being a true witness of God's goodness is all about.

Throughout Phnom Penh's lockdown, M'lup Russey, another of our partner organisations, has been working with the authorities to provide practical services to vulnerable children who are in areas where families are unable to access food, or who are suffering in other ways due to Covid. Four orphanages requested help. In total, 47 children living in two of those orphanages have so far been

supported with emergency food support packages and M'lup Russey will be delivering food to the other two orphanages next week. Some of M'lup Russey's own team members also face the challenges of food security and concern for their own children's health because of the areas they live in. M'lup Russey is using the Staff Care and Well-Being budget to deliver emergency food packages to 23 team members and their families in this difficult situation.

The provinces are also badly affected by the situations caused by Covid. Social Affairs officials in six provinces are requesting emergency food packages for vulnerable children. So far, nearly 30 of those children have already received emergency food packages from M'lup Russey, and there are more deliveries and requests expected.

Please pray:

- Numbers have risen dramatically from less than 600 in February to close to 20,000 now. Sadly, as of 9 May, at least 120 people have lost their lives due to Covid. Pray that all the measures in place will help stop the spread.
- The government have launched an information drive to educate people on the dangers of Covid - pray that this information will be received and heeded.
- Our team and our partners are hard at work to help out where possible - pray that God will give them open doors and opportunities to share not only bread but the Bread of Life.
- Pray that more good neighbours become active within their own communities, lessening the stress of the effects of Covid.