

Corona emergency fund for the weakest communities

Austria is very slowly on its way to a time after Corona. In many other countries, the outbreak of the new corona virus has only just begun - among them many countries whose health care systems are already overloaded and undersupplied. Pope Francis, together with Missio Austria, is supporting them and has set up a Corona emergency relief fund.

By Missio Austria

Hundreds of thousands of people live closely together in temporary camps in northwest Syria. Often several families are living together in only one tent. Staying at home is not an option for them - the almost one million refugees no longer have a home. In the still embattled province of Idlib, fear of the virus is spreading, Brother Hanna describes in an [interview with Missio Austria](#). As a priest he cares for the last three Christian villages in the region.

Dramatic news from the church around the world

Meanwhile, the situation is coming to a head in India, where Prime Minister Modi has extended the shutdown - with drastic consequences for the country's approximately 1.3 billion people. Particularly affected are the many men and women who have lived as migrant workers or day labourers. For five weeks now, they have been earning nothing and are therefore unable to buy food. Hunger and the worry about the survival of their families drive many to despair. The church tries to prevent the worst with aid packages consisting of staple food, protective masks and soap.

In Uganda, on the other hand, it is still unclear how many people have already been infected - there are very few tests being taken. The population is not sufficiently informed about the virus. In the densely populated slums of the big cities, it will hardly be possible to prevent the spread of the virus. Not only elderly people, but also women, men and children with a weakened immune system by HIV, for example, are particularly at risk.

Pope Francis cares for the weakest

Refugees, the unemployed, people living on the margins - the "weakest brothers and sisters" are the concern of Pope Francis. Before the traditional "Urbi et Orbi" blessing on Easter Sunday, he drew attention to their already very difficult living conditions, which have been made even harder by the Corona crisis. With the help of the local churches they should be helped as quickly as possible. Therefore the head of the church recently commissioned the Pontifical Missionary Societies under the leadership of Archbishop Giampietro Dal Toso to set up a Corona relief fund and has already donated 750,000 US dollars for this purpose. At the same time, the Pope appeals especially to the Church in wealthy countries and asks that solidarity with the poorest be shown at this very moment. "This time does not permit indifference, because the whole world is suffering and must unite in the fight against the pandemic," says Francis.

In many countries of the South, the Church is the main provider of social services such as hospitals, nursing homes and schools. The people rely on the help of priests, religious women and committed lay people. "Without our support, the Church cannot be there for the people in the countries of the global South," emphasizes Father Karl Wallner, National Director of [Missio Austria](#). "We receive daily news from our project partners in Africa and Asia. They write of outbreaks of violence and starvation due to curfews. It is really dramatic!"

Aid from Austria

During this time, the National Director of Missio Austria is relying more than ever on the support of the Austrians. With the help of the fund, life-saving measures are to be implemented quickly in the most affected countries in Africa and Asia. Church hospitals,

for example, could be quickly supplied with protective equipment and food could be distributed to needy families to bridge the period without income. In addition, the Corona emergency aid of Missio Austria has already started in [Syria](#), [India](#) and [Uganda](#) - every day counts for the many people who are ill or do not know how to survive in the countries of the global south. They must not be left on their own now, demands Pope Francis on Easter Sunday. "This time does not permit selfishness ", said Francis.