

COVID-19 UPDATE

Friends and Supporters,

I hope that you and your loved ones are safe and well.

I wanted to provide a short update on what's been happening at Standing Voice, in light of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Since announcing its first case last Monday, Tanzania has confirmed 12 cases of COVID-19. The government has taken action to halt the spread of the virus, banning public gatherings and closing schools and universities. In Malawi, where no cases have yet been documented, the president has declared a state of emergency and adopted similar measures, aiming to prevent a national outbreak. We are closely monitoring the situation as it develops in both countries, ensuring we comply with the latest guidelines.

Our top priority throughout this uncertain time is to protect our beneficiaries and staff across Tanzania and Malawi. Although we've had to adapt to new restrictions, our clinics remain operational in hospitals and we're working hard behind the scenes to ensure that people with albinism continue to receive the support they need. We've produced a COVID-19 Action Plan, which outlines the steps we're taking to mitigate risk and ensure continuity of care in the event that regular programming is interrupted. New measures include the establishment of an emergency hotline, so beneficiaries can reach us at any time, and the delivery of essential health packages including sunscreen and protective clothing directly to patients' homes. We will also be distributing guidance to help people with albinism and their families better understand the unfolding crisis: to debunk myths already proliferating around COVID-19, and advise appropriate measures to prevent further spreading of the virus.

In a crisis like this, society's most marginalised are hit first and hardest. With health services under strain, jobs at risk and children out of school, people with albinism face tough times ahead in Tanzania and Malawi. Food security may be threatened, forcing many into outdoor labour hazardous to their skin.

COVID-19 will have a social impact too: reports have already surfaced of people with albinism being labelled 'corona', blamed for spreading a 'foreign' virus that would otherwise not affect black people. There's an opposing risk that people with albinism may be seen as a *solution* to the outbreak; that their body parts, already perceived as a gateway to fortune, may be hunted and harvested in a fresh wave of violence, this time ignited by COVID-19.

To break this cycle and protect those we support, please consider [donating](#) to Standing Voice today. In this uncertain time, when the stakes have never been higher, we are asking you to help us weather this storm. Only with your generosity can we continue to safeguard the welfare of people with albinism in Tanzania and Malawi, and prevent this vulnerable minority from falling further behind.

Should you have any questions about our response to COVID-19, please contact our team on info@standingvoice.org.

Warmly,
Harry Freeland
Executive Director

26 March 2020