

The Itaka-Escolapios network amid the COVID-19

Facing a crisis that is not only health-related, but also social and educational.



Since the beginning of 2020, when the COVID-19 health crisis broke out on the international level, we have seen how this crisis has affected all the places of presence and projects of the Itaka-Escolapios network.



Its impact has been at different times and in different ways depending on the countries, and while widespread, it is of special concern in the most impoverished places and the most vulnerable people we work with. Because we know that, once the health emergency is over (something that in many places is still far from happening), its consequences in social and educational terms are not going to stop and may even get worse, compromising the progress made in the projects and making the situation of those who are worst even more complex.

What measures has the Itaka-Escolapios network implemented to deal with the current crisis? In general terms, we can summarize them in the following lines of action:

- **Maintain as much attention as possible to the people in our projects**, adapting the activities to respond to their needs, even in the situation of closure of schools, social centres and other Piarist works. All of this is being done in a responsible way, taking into account that in many contexts it is not possible to communicate through the internet (families and even some centres do not have access).
- **Identify and try to support the new problems and needs worsened by the crisis**: help with food and basic products, distribution of sanitary and hygienic material, sensitization of children and their families about prevention measures.
- **Review the budgets of Itaka-Escolapios in each country and office**, to adapt them to the current situation. Unfortunately, some of the income to sustain the projects will not arrive, which forces to reduce expenses to ensure the sustainability of the most essential and to postpone investments.
- **Intensify the communication and the feeling of co-responsibility within the network**, especially in this context, to share information, concerns, good practices and hopes.

In the following lines, we will go through the different continents and countries of the Itaka-Escolapios network, to know the most relevant points about how the COVID-19 crisis is being lived and faced.





afriC@

The incidence of the virus is low according to official numbers for the time being and is mainly localized in the cities. However, the weakness of the health systems and the existence of previous structural problems make us alert about the terrible effects that a lack of control of the disease can have.

WEST AFRICA

On 16 March, all schools, boarding schools, parishes, and social centres were closed. Although in Ivory Coast the whole country, except the capital, has returned to normality and in Burkina Faso the confinement measures have been relaxed, the situation remains worrying. In Senegal there have been three attempts to reopen the education system that have had to be postponed and there is concern about the fact that the disease continues to spread despite the measures taken. Our centres are already prepared to reopen when it is possible because not everyone has the means to follow the classes and exams online. A very hard reality is that of street children, whose situation in these conditions is even more vulnerable. In Burkina Faso, it has been possible to maintain a school reinforcement programme in safe conditions.

CENTRAL AFRICA

Despite the apparently low number of infections the situation is worrying because of the reality that the lack of evidence and the weakness of the health system can hide. The sanitary measures adopted are difficult to comply with because of the context. After two months, the schools in Cameroon have already reopened between strict sanitary measures. The conditions and the means available have prevented many from accessing education online during the confinement, so other alternatives have been necessary to continue education at distance. The efforts of our projects have also been to attend other needs such as food, and currently we are trying to support the implementation and access to sanitary measures, such as distributing masks. This crisis is exacerbating a pre-existent humanitarian drama caused by the armed conflict in the North (the anglophone area) of Cameroon.

MOZAMBIQUE

Although in terms of infections the worst situation is in the capital, Maputo, in Cabo Delgado (the region where the Itaka-Escolapios projects are located) there are more cases than in other areas of the country. It seems that this is due to the international traffic generated by the multinationals and the enormous natural resources of the area. The declaration of a health emergency has led to the paralysis of educational, social, and pastoral activities since April, with uncertainty about when they can be resumed. The food and health situation are worrying because many families are living on a subsistence economy. The health crisis is also aggravated by the armed conflict, which is causing families escaping from the violence in the surrounding areas move to our area.



america

The crisis caused by the pandemic has been very different in each country, but it began to have an impact at the beginning of April. The demarcations in which Itaka-Escolapios is present looked towards Europe when the Covid-19 made the jump to America.

MEXICO

The activities were suspended, and we have been able to maintain contact with users and workers through social networks and the Internet. The teams have continued to work from distance, and we have been able to maintain contact with the communities and the boarding school in Campeche. In addition, the openness and participation of the Fraternity have been strengthened in these times with specific formative activities, as well as in the Province's Vocational Week. The socioeconomic situation is worrying because of the great number of families that depend on the informal economy, as it is the sustainability of the Piarist works in a scenario of crisis.

BRAZIL

Únicamente la Casa Lar permanece abierta para seguir funcionando como hogar para los niños y niñas que acoge. Los centros sociales se encuentran oficialmente cerrados, aunque mantienen el contacto con las personas usuarias y se están realizando apoyos alimentarios. En un país con grandes desigualdades y que se ha convertido en el segundo país del mundo con más casos confirmados de contagios, el hambre está haciéndose presente con fuerza en muchas familias de nuestro entorno.

VENEZUELA

Although at the beginning all the activities of the social-educational centres and the Calasanz Movement were paralyzed, it did not take long to give response to the needs that were arising in the different presences, mainly to attend the fields of food and health with the home delivery of foods and medicines. The aid implemented by Itaka-Escolapios to meet food needs in recent years has allowed a quick response to the new emergency. As a specific problem in Venezuela, access to fuel has become more complicated. Various online training activities have been promoted with people linked to Itaka-Escolapios.

BOLIVIA

After the closure of the schools and boarding schools, the students have had to return to their communities where the proposal of online education that has been carried out in many other countries does not reach. In the cities, contact is maintained between the educational community, although it is not broad due to the lack of means. In the countryside, where they can self-supply easier, there are fewer supply problems than in the cities, where Itaka-Escolapios is trying to meet the needs of its surroundings by distributing food packages from the parishes. At the university, classes have started virtually, and we have chosen to open partially our residence so that young people can have access to it, since they do not have internet at home. Despite the established quarantine, the cases of COVID 19 do not seem to diminish, which increases the uncertainty about the near future.



asia



INDIA

India decreed a very strict confinement to try to stop the spread of the virus in a country with more than one billion people. Although mobility between states has been totally restricted, the spread of the disease has not been stopped. The schools in Aryanad and Kamda as well as the boarding school in the latter are closed since March and efforts are concentrated on trying to maintain education telematically. There is uncertainty about when the new school year will begin, which should have started this June.

INDONESIA

Although no infections had been recorded in the region of Atambua in previous months, they have started to multiply in June, which is of enormous concern because of the poverty situation in the region. Both the boarding school and the extracurricular project "Learning With Calasanz" are suspended while waiting to resume face-to-face activities. Holiday activities are being scheduled while the situation and the measures to be taken are being discussed in the coming weeks.

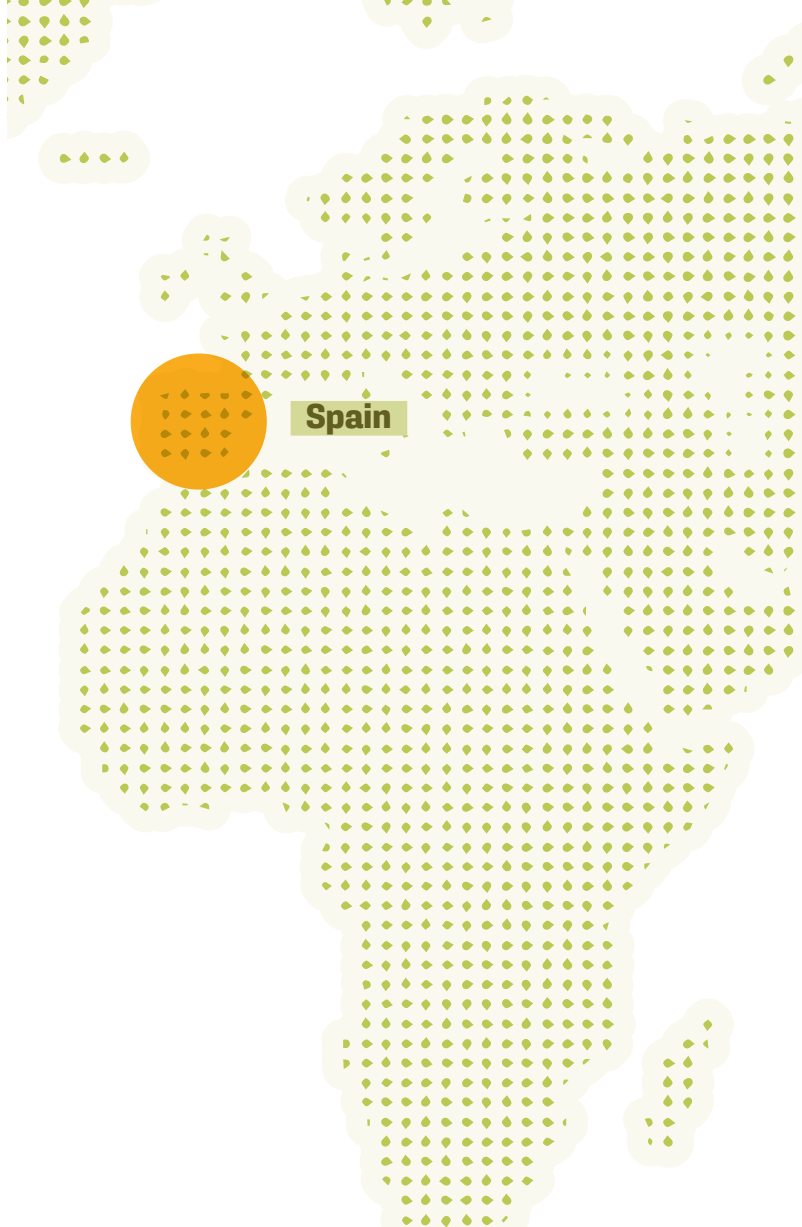
PHILIPPINES

In a context where many people live from day to day and have to go out to earn a living, one of the strictest and most difficult confinements has been decreed. In this regard, very serious violations of human rights have been recorded. The government is not fulfilling its promises of aid and, in the case of Kiblawan, the situation of a population still trying to recover from the earthquake that destroyed our school in December is worsening. Despite this, it is slowly being rebuilt, so that it will be ready when the students can return to classes.

In the Philippines, the aid promised by the government does not materialize while the situation of the population worsens.



europe



In mid-March, the state of alarm was declared in Spain in response to the crisis generated by the pandemic, which led to the confinement and closure of most of the activity throughout the country. Our concern has been to address the educational and social needs of the most vulnerable groups that have been left unattended.

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EMMAUS

Although much of the presential activity stopped, the homes continued to operate with the required health measures as well as social orientation programmes did. The activities of the Calasanz Movement have been maintained in a telematic way and for this summer activities and presential camps adapted to the health situation have been organized in dialogue with the families.

BETHANY

The presential activity was also paralyzed and the social-educational centres have offered telephonic follow-up to the families, accompanying those who did not have the facility to follow the classes online. This time has been used for the training of educators and volunteers. For this summer, a program of urban camps has been organized.

data map

	 Pandemic situation (WHO*)	 Schools situation	 HDI rank (out of 189)	 Doctors / 10,000 inhab.	 Percentage of vulnerable employment
EUROPE					
Spain	4 Community transmission	Localized closures	25	40.7	11.3

	 Pandemic situation (WHO*)	 Schools situation	 HDI rank (out of 189)	 Doctors / 10.000 inhab.	 Percentage of vulnerable employment
AMÉRICA					
México	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	76	22.5	26.9
Venezuela	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	96	?	32.9
Bolivia	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	114	16.1	58.1
Brazil	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	79	21.5	27.6

*Situation of the pandemic: **1 No cases** . **2 Sporadic cases** . **3 Cluster of cases** . **4 Community transmission**

Sources OMS, 22/06/2020. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports>

UNESCO, 22/06/2020. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

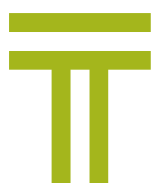
PNUD, 2019. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>

					
	Pandemic situation (WHO*)	Schools situation	HDI rank (out of 189)	Doctors / 10,000 inhab.	Percentage of vulnerable employment
ASIA					
India	3 Cluster of cases	Country-wide closures	129	7.8	76.7
Philippines	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	106	12.8	33.8
Indonesia	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	111	3.8	47.3

					
	Pandemic situation (WHO*)	Schools situation	HDI rank (out of 189)	Doctors / 10,000 inhab.	Percentage of vulnerable employment
ÁFRICA					
Cameroon	4 Community transmission	Localized closures	150	0.9	73.8
Gabón	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	115	3.6	31.5
Equatorial Guinea	4 Community transmission	Localized closures	144	4	55.8
D.R. Congo	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	179	0.9	79.7
Senegal	4 Community transmission	Country-wide closures	166	0.7	65.1
Ivory Coast	4 Community transmission	Localized closures	165	2.3	72.4
Burkina Faso	4 Community transmission	Localized closures	182	0.6	86.4
Mozambique	3 Cluster of cases	Country-wide closures	180	0.7	83.1

In response to the COVID-19 challenge, let us maximize our solidarity

In an overall assessment, the current panorama and the forecasts for the near future place us before an enormous challenge for the Itaka-Escolapios network.



The health crisis has triggered a social and economic crisis in the different countries with even more lasting effects, impacting especially on the most vulnerable people, exacerbating poverty and increasing inequality and exclusion.

On the other hand, the scenario of greater social and educational need that the Piarist mission is facing will coincide with a strong decrease in resources from some important sources to support the projects of Itaka-Escolapios: local contributions that due to the effect of the crisis will not arrive, reduction or loss of international cooperation subsidies and aids, etc. Without going any further, only the limitations in our international solidarity campaign due to the emergency of these months, have meant a loss of nearly 200 thousand euros for the Itaka-Escolapios network in 2020. And unfortunately, in terms of external contributions, public or private, we foresee that the worst is yet to come. In view of this, we are faced with the challenge of maximizing our solidarity to respond to the challenge of the present crisis and the new situations of need in our projects, especially in the most vulnerable countries and populations with which we work.

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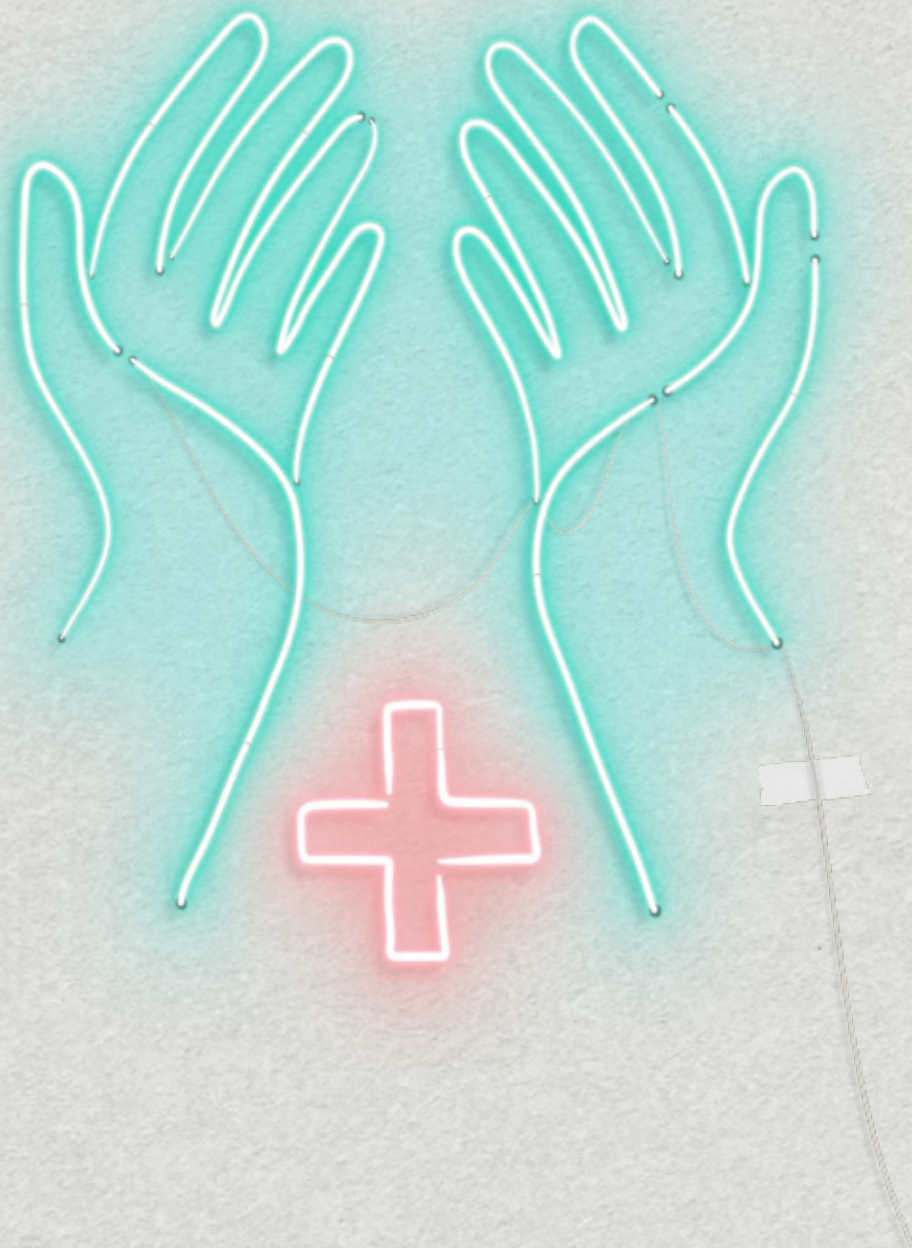
time of pandemic and crisis has taught us that this way of understanding the world and the mission is not only valuable, but vital to take care of ourselves and build a future that is worthwhile. Let us continue to make it possible through the mission we share, by strengthening our solidarity.



Some gestures of solidarity

We close this newsletter on the situation of the network by gathering some of the solidarity proposals that we have been getting to know. These, along with many other anonymous and unknown ones, will be turned into educational and social resources for the people who are suffering the worst social effects of this crisis.

- » In some educational communities, the Associations of Parents, sports clubs, etc. have made extraordinary donations for the Piarist mission.
- » Some religious of the Order have reduced their personal allowance to a minimum, to focus it on attending to the needs of the people closest to them.
- » In some Fraternities it has been proposed to strengthen the commitment of solidarity beyond the tithe, in this situation of special need.
- » Other persons, whose income has not been affected, have expressed their willingness to convert the extraordinary payment of these dates into a special donation.
- » The figure of the collaborating partner consolidated in Spain is being joined by the first people from other latitudes: France, the Dominican Republic...



Edited by



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