



THE OR FOUNDATION

# The OR Foundation Kayayei COVID-19 Relief Fund

## A Summary of Our Collective Efforts

Prepared February 2, 2021

**Thank you** to everyone who has donated funds or shared information about the challenges that women working as Kayayei face during this time. We hope that this summary offers transparency on how the funds have been used thus far. We intend on updating the numbers as needed depending on shifts in circumstances, but please feel free to reach out to us at [lizandbranson@theor.org](mailto:lizandbranson@theor.org) with any questions.

**Snapshot of Funds:** Since April 1st we have received donations from 215 individuals. In addition to this crowdfunding effort, The OR Foundation has allocated \$10,302.03 to the relief effort and worked with brand partners to raise an additional \$4254.55. For people living in Ghana who wish to support financially, we have recommended sending mobile money directly to the Kayayei Youth Association (KYA) to avoid any transfer fees. Donations via mobile money total roughly 3,000GHS (520USD), but we do not have official documentation of these mobile money transactions so this is not reflected in the below accounting.

Financial Support Received*	USD	GHS
<i>Unique Donors Online</i>	215	-
Average Net Donation after CC Processing	\$ 45.63	\$ 264.14
Brand Partner Financial Contributions (See Below)	\$ 4,254.55	\$ 24,629.59
Additional Support from The OR	\$ 10,302.03	\$ 59,638.45
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 22,379.24</b>	<b>\$ 129,553.44</b>

Financial Support Dispersed*	USD	GHS
Food	\$ (16,970.91)	\$ (98,244.59)
Bus	\$ (435.31)	\$ (2,520.00)
Sanitizers	\$ (445.67)	\$ (2,580.00)
Masks	\$ (147.69)	\$ (855.00)
Transportation and Translation Services	\$ (131.28)	\$ (760.00)
Documentation and Investigation	\$ (483.68)	\$ (2,800.00)
Kayayei ID Card and Healthcare Registration	\$ (1,381.93)	\$ (8,000.00)
Other Items	\$ (253.64)	\$ (1,468.35)
Transfer and Withdraw Fees	\$ (76.18)	\$ (441.00)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ (20,326.30)</b>	<b>\$ (117,668.94)</b>

In-Kind Support Dispersed*	Units
Sanitizers	1000+
Feminine Hygiene Products	60

<b>Total Populaton Reached*</b>	18,029 People
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\*A/O December 5, 2020

### **Breakdown of Chart:**

- **Food:** Packs include uncooked rice, oil, gari, beans and tomato paste purchased in bulk and redistributed by the Kayayei Youth Association, members of which deliver supplies to Kayayei door-to-door. As of October 5th, the Kayayei Youth Association has used the above funds to provide food for 18,029 individual Kayayei with many now receiving food packs more than once (11,051 of these women live in Old Fadama and 6,978 live in various communities across Accra). Each pack is meant to provide food for a week. From April 1st to June 1st these deliveries typically occurred over the weekends and offered support to anyone who needed it. From June - September (the lockdown was lifted and needs changed) food was primarily given to Kayayei who are pregnant and Kayayei under 20 years old since they are most disadvantaged even as markets open back up. This includes many kayayei who have migrated to Accra in the last six months and are struggling to establish themselves in their new environment. From October - December KYA has worked to reach kayayei in other markets (Tudu, Tema station & CMB) as these women have organized themselves to request assistance. The Kayayei Youth Association provides The OR Foundation with photos and data after each food delivery as well as updates on Kayayei's needs throughout the week.
- **Bus:** On April 7th a fire destroyed over 800 structures in Old Fadama displacing over 1,500 people including many Kayayei. On April 17th a planned demolition by the municipal government displaced additional people including Kayayei. Not only did these women lose their shelter, but they also lost all of their belongings and any form of savings. Many of the fire and demolition victims wish to return home, but without government supported quarantine and testing prior to travel or once home, The OR Foundation does not want to risk spreading the virus to other regions of Ghana. The Kayayei Youth Association did identify a group of 21 pregnant women, however, who were displaced, who cannot return to work and who are most vulnerable sleeping outside. The OR Foundation has supported these 21 pregnant Kayayei with bus tickets to their hometowns.
- **Translation services:** Because the majority of communication surrounding COVID-19 prevention is in English many Kayayei did not have adequate information. Funds were used to translate a PSA into three of the most commonly spoken languages among the Kayayei population and The OR Foundation provided the audio files for broadcast in Old Fadama.
- **Documentation and Investigation:** Because people could not move freely during the lockdown we supported a credentialed photojournalist who frequented Old Fadama. He reported back to us on the fire outbreak, government aid effort and general information about Old Fadama (state of bathrooms, evictions and social distancing). This information informed both The OR Foundation and the Kayayei Youth Association in determining the best use of funds as the situation rapidly evolved. Since the lockdown has been lifted team members visit Old Fadama every couple of weeks for a more in depth understanding of the present circumstances.

- **Kayayei ID Card:** During the lockdown the government failed to deliver adequate (and promised) aid to Kayayei and to the Old Fadama community as a whole. The KYA was told that the government cannot be held accountable for feeding a population of Kayayei if there is not “proper” documentation (despite the government’s public commitment to provide support). The KYA had completed several enumeration exercises prior to the COVID-19 emergency, as have various foreign and local NGOs, but because this data was not captured to an “international standard” according to the Ministries of Gender and Finance, the government refuses to acknowledge it. The KYA has concluded that collecting a formal database of Kayayei across Ghana and issuing formal Kayayei Youth Association ID Cards is essential to withstand future crises. The hope is that this database will not only elevate KYA in the eyes of the Ghana Government but that the data collected will make it easier for groups like ours to respond to specific needs. Kayayei are being charged 20 Ghana Cedi per person to be included in this exercise. We are supporting younger Kayayei who cannot afford to pay for their own card. This project extends beyond COVID relief but we wished to include it here for transparency and because we believe that lack of data is all too often used to render the vulnerable invisible. This is a larger implication of colonialism.
- **Masks:** Because of the nature of their work, Kayayei are in close contact with the general public, so it is essential that they wear masks. Indeed, it is mandatory for everyone in central Accra to wear a face mask, but many Kayayei cannot access masks. When the lockdown was lifted several Kayayei were fined and one was arrested for not wearing a mask. Various groups are donating masks throughout Accra, but the Kayayei population continues to need more. Osei Duro is sewing and providing masks to the Kayayei Youth Association at cost. Unfortunately few Kayayei wear masks even if they have them and we believe that further sensitization is needed by the government as Kayayei have said that wearing masks decreases their chances at being hired to carry loads because of assumption of disease.
- **Other:** Includes cooking utensils for Kayayei who did not have the means to cook for themselves, PPE, bottles for sanitizer that was donated in bulk, cash support for Kayayei who were being evicted and cash support for partners in Old Fadama (Guides and Waste Pickers).
- **Fees:** Accounts for a wire transfer fee and mobile money charges. Liz and Branson from The OR Foundation are paying for all Donorbox fees and have worked with partners on the ground to avoid money transfer fees as much as possible.

**Kayayei Youth Association has used all of the funds they have received through December 8th, 2020**

The above data reflects all funds collected through Donorbox since April 1. The allocation and distribution of these funds has been determined by, and coordinated in partnership with, the Kayayei Youth Association. Our immediate goal is to respond nimbly and in direct support to the most critical needs during this crisis. The KYA will let us know if this money should support further food delivery or the ID card project. We will always prioritize the expressed needs of the

KYA and believe that financial aid is only sustainable when the receiving community is entrusted as the primary decision makers.

We do not believe that providing food aid is a sustainable long term strategy. Please see **Moving Forward** for more on how we plan to address this.

In addition to the crowdfunding effort, The OR Foundation has independently supported another organization in Accra that focused on providing housing for Kayayei who were sleeping on the streets when the lockdown began. The OR Foundation is open to requests for support from other organizations working with Kayayei, but all donations collected via our Donorbox ([deadwhitemansclothes.org/donate](https://deadwhitemansclothes.org/donate)) will be directed toward Kayayei living in Old Fadama as the need for support is ongoing in this community.

### **Brand Support:**

- [Chrissa Amua](#) (AMWA Designs) and [Allbirds](#) -- donated \$570.65 via an online auction of AMWA's special edition Tree Runners. AMWA Designs produces handmade textiles and prints drawing on Adinkra symbols and Ghanaian proverbs as inspiration. Chrissa Amua, founder of AMWA Designs, sees Adinkra as motivation for 21st century living. "If our beings are nurtured in environments filled with wisdoms that promote positivity, upon exiting our homes and stepping out into the world every day – by the power of symbolic osmosis – we all share the opportunity to walk each step with intended harmony".
- [SAGAN-Vienna](#) - has donated \$1,677 as of December 31st and is still in the process of raising funds. SAGAN-Vienna has partnered with Daniel Gebhart de Koekkoek and Office Magazine to produce a limited edition (50pieces) sanitizer bag with 100% of the proceeds (\$40 per bag) being donated to The OR Foundation's Kayayei COVID-19 Fund. SAGAN-Vienna's mission is to produce functional, high quality bags that often explore new materials through collaborations with other designers and artisans. This is ongoing.
- [Bôhten Eyeglasses](#) has donated \$200 as of August 1st and has committed to donating \$500 over five months. Bôhten's mission is to build a sustainable eyecare supply chain in Ghana. The co-founders of Bôhten met Mohammed Salifu, the Director of the Kayayei Youth Association at an event organized by The OR Foundation in January 2020.
- [Plan B1](#) raised \$345 (2,000 GHS) through the sale of facemasks with 5GHS donated for every mask sold. Funds raised were transferred directly to the Kayayei Youth Association via mobile money. Plan B1 is a fashion label based in Accra that upcycles deadstock textiles as well as secondhand clothing into new garments and accessories.
- [True Moringa](#) raised \$1,042 through the sale of Mother's Day Boxes with 20% of each box going to the Kayayei Youth Association. True Moringa has planted 2 million Moringa Trees and supports farming families in Ghana through growing and extraction of moringa oil.
- [Ghandour Cosmetics](#) donated sanitizers to the Kayayei Youth Association. Ghandour is an Accra-based skin and hair care company that has committed to producing sanitizer during the COVID-19 crisis.

- [Collina Strada](#) raised \$420 through an online auction of their COVID19 collection. This collection was created by founder and designer Hillary Taymour with help from artist Charlie Engman who has been to Old Fadama and met with the Kayayei Youth Association on multiple occasions. Collina Strada is an NYC-based fashion brand with a holistic approach to sustainability that has partnered with the OR Foundation and provided financial support for a number of initiatives related to secondhand clothing.
- [Frisky.Ness](#) is raising funds via the sale of a collection of bags with 20% going to COVID relief for kayayei. All donations will be transferred directly to the Kayayei Youth Association via mobile money.

#### **Team / Partners:**

- Chloe Asaam, The OR Foundation Project Manager Accra: investigating long-term strategies for economic recovery, expanding community
- Mohammed Salifu, Director, [Kayayei Youth Association](#): coordinates and oversees all food delivery, advises on funding priorities and identifies high risk groups
- Molly Keogh, Co-Founder, [Osei Duro](#): coordinates transfer of funds, provides masks, visits with KYA and co-led menstrual cup workshop, investing in long-term regenerative farming program
- Yvette Tetteh, CEO, [Yvaya Farm](#): transports food and sanitizers, participates in food delivery, investing in long-term regenerative farming program
- Lauren Goodwin, Founder, [Lavender Ghana](#): donated bulk sanitizers and cleaning agents, investing in long-term regenerative farming program
- Anna Robertson, Founder, [Yevu](#): donated menstrual cups and co-led workshop
- [Food4All Ghana](#): provided prepared meals for fire victims
- [People's Dialogue](#): provided additional population data and consultation on status of evictions

**Background:** The OR Foundation has been researching the secondhand clothing trade in Kantamanto Market in Accra, Ghana since 2016. Kantamanto's Kayayei (female head-porters) carry bales of clothing from importers to retailers, between storage units and between retailers and re-balers. Many Kayayei earn additional income by helping retailers pack their stalls at the end of the day, sweeping the excess clothing into bags and at times assisting with the disposal of this clothing waste. By studying Kantamanto, The OR Foundation met many Kayayei and learned about the health implications of their labor as well as the reasons they migrated to Accra.

In January 2019, The OR Foundation co-founders Liz Ricketts and Branson Skinner met Mohammed Salifu, the Director of the Kayayei Youth Association (KYA) at his office in Old Fadama. Mohammed explained the mission of the KYA and shared insight on the challenges Kayayei face both at work and within the area where the majority of the women live -- in Old Fadama, an informal settlement along the Korle Lagoon in Accra. Following this meeting Liz and Branson met with several of Mohammed's partners to gather further data and to identify ways for The OR Foundation to support KYA's goals.

In partnership with KYA and the National Catholic Health Service (a long time partner of KYA), The OR Foundation was scheduled to begin a series of health initiatives in March 2020. This collaboration was designed to support KYA in their goal of providing regular health screenings and healthcare registration. Girls and women working as Kayayei are often injured on the job, but they are routinely turned away from hospitals (reports confirmed by KYA, Kayayei themselves and the National Catholic Health Service) and few can afford care if they are admitted for treatment. This action-oriented partnership was to focus on Kayayei working in Kantamanto (with service being provided in the market), because these women are often unable to attend other programs offered by the KYA due to the unique work schedule of Kantamanto. In addition to healthcare registration, these initiatives were designed to offer free healthcare screening, Hepatitis B vaccination, treatment for Kayayei with Hepatitis B and chiropractic care for a select group of Kayayei. The chiropractic care would also serve as valuable research in determining the long-term health impacts of carrying loads above a certain weight. There are currently no established thresholds or official health guidelines on head-carrying.

Due to COVID-19 these scheduled health initiatives were put on hold and Liz's flight from NYC to Accra was canceled. Because Liz and Branson had been in regular communication with Mohammed and the National Catholic Health Service, Kayayei and others residents of Old Fadama, as well as with many of Kantamanto's retailers, The OR Foundation was tracking the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on Kayayei long before the lockdown. Kayayei working in Kantamanto were some of the first to be hit economically by the pandemic. The secondhand clothing economy came to a halt in mid March due to stigma surrounding foreign goods. Several misinformation campaigns circulated Kantamanto, claiming that imported clothing could transmit the virus. Retailers were hesitant to handle the clothing and many consumers stopped frequenting the secondhand clothing market (the largest of such markets in West Africa). This left Kayayei without work.

When the lockdown of Accra began on April 1st, the Kayayei Youth Association requested assistance from The OR Foundation. Liz and Branson began by making contact with food banks in Accra, but these organizations were not planning on servicing Old Fadama residents so The OR Foundation decided to work directly with Mohammed and the KYA. The first ten days of the lockdown required a multi-tiered approach as Kayayei were not only unable to access food and sanitizers, but they were also being evicted, many lost their homes in a fire and many Kayayei did not have access to information on COVID-19 prevention. By week three of the lockdown food and sanitizer became the primary focus of the KYA and The OR Foundation.

According to the KYA there are an estimated 19,000 Kayayei living in Accra. The OR Foundation has focused on Old Fadama because over 13,000 of these women live there. The Ghanaian government has foregone its promises to support the Kayayei who live hand-to-mouth in overcrowded conditions. In the Old Fadama community, Kayayei live in cramped and hot rooms often sleeping up to 25 women and their babies; sanitary facilities are shared; open defecation is common; social distancing is all but impossible. To make matters worse, a fire

broke out mid-way through the lockdown destroying the homes and belongings of more than 1000 people. Instead of providing assistance to the homeless women, the Government of Ghana, which recently entered into a loan agreement with the IMF for US \$1billion to be spent on the coronavirus response, (acting through the appointed municipal government) proceeded with the planned demolition of dozens more structures to make way for the dredging of the nearby Korle Lagoon, which has become an environmental dead zone widely considered one of the most polluted areas in the world.

When the lockdown was lifted on April 20th, many Kayayei demanded that the government sponsor buses to return them to their home towns in the northern region of Ghana and provide lodging and food for the women and their children to quarantine once in the North so as to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. In addition, Kayayei who intended to remain in Accra demanded that the government halt all evictions until June 1st and ensure that Old Fadama residents receive free water service until June 1st. While the Government had declared that water services would be subsidized, the Kayayei have not seen the benefit of this and were still forced to pay vendors for water given the lack of clean water and sanitation infrastructure in Old Fadama and due to the informal distribution networks that provide essential services outside of the realm of government regulation.

The OR Foundation supported the Kayayei in their [demand for the Government](#) to support buses and a quarantine plan for young women hoping to return to their hometowns and rent relief and free water for the women choosing or forced to remain in Accra. Unfortunately, the Government did not respond to the KYA's demands. No buses have been sponsored. There has been no effort to trace or quarantine Kayayei who return north. Kayayei continue to pay for water, toilet and housing.

Instead of responding to the KYA's demands, the Gender Minister released a statement saying that the [Kayayei would be re-branded](#). The KYA was told that Kayayei would be given aprons to elevate them to an "international standard" and the Gender Minister says that Kayayei will be given numbers for their head pans as part of the re-branding exercise. In addition to this, the Government supported a census following the lockdown but refused to give this data to the KYA themselves and instead insinuated that this data will be used for political purposes. This is why the KYA feel it is necessary for them to collect their own data. This is upsetting for the KYA and for our team as the Government's response has everything to do with optics and the upcoming Presidential election, and nothing to do with the expressed needs of Kayayei themselves.

**Moving Forward:** The partial lockdown was lifted on April 20th, but Kayayei were disenfranchised before COVID and thus remain vulnerable. Many are unable to find work because the markets are slower than usual. In addition, many of the older women who work as Kayayei would normally return home during the rainy season to help with planting but they were not welcome at home because it is assumed that they could carry the virus.

Given that food security is a long term concern for Kayayei, and even a factor of migration to the challenging conditions of Accra in the first place, The OR Foundation is investigating more sustainable sources of food and income. Specifically we have worked with our partners to locate farm land just outside the Greater Accra Region where we intend on launching a food sovereignty mentor program. This project would allow Kayayei to be involved in growing food for themselves and begin to explore what it would take to regenerate Old Fadama. Communities like Old Fadama are not resilient in crisis whether that be a pandemic or a climate emergency. We have been growing a team to support this project and are currently seeking the funding necessary to ensure that this would be a sustainable and desirable venture for Kayayei living in Old Fadama. If you would like to be involved or have an interest in supporting this long term initiative please contact us at [lizandbranson@theor.org](mailto:lizandbranson@theor.org).

In the meantime, The OR Foundation is committed to providing consistent monthly support of no less than \$1,000 to KYA so that they may continue to provide food to those in need and also so that KYA can continue to serve their community with the resources they need. Unfortunately many kayayei live in survival mode. While food rations are a surface-level solution to a complex problem, they are necessary. We are committed to balancing our support for a more long-term transformative farming program with the immediate needs of kayayei as expressed by KYA. We welcome all feedback on our efforts thus far.

The OR Foundation remains committed to the health initiatives that were planned for March 2020 and will commence with this program whenever it is safe to do so.