



THE OR FOUNDATION

# The OR Foundation Kayayei COVID-19 Relief Fund

## A Summary of Our Collective Efforts

Prepared May 8, 2020

**Thank you** to everyone who has donated funds or shared information about the challenges the 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 every two weeks, 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 195 individuals totalling \$8,512.32. In addition to this crowdfunding effort, The OR Foundation has allocated \$2,000 to the relief effort. 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                 |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| Unique Donors Online                     | 195                 | -                   |
| Average Net Donation after CC Processing | \$ 42.97            | \$ 248.77           |
| Additional Support from The OR           | \$ 2,000.00         | \$ 11,578.00        |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>\$ 10,512.32</b> | <b>\$ 60,855.82</b> |

| Financial Support Dispersed*            | USD                  | GHS                   |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Food                                    | \$ (7,380.77)        | \$ (42,727.25)        |
| 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)         |
| Other Items                             | \$ (253.64)          | \$ (1,468.35)         |
| Transfer and Withdrawl Fees             | \$ (101.49)          | \$ (587.50)           |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>\$ (9,379.53)</b> | <b>\$ (54,298.10)</b> |

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

|                                 |             |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Total Populaton Reached*</b> | 7592 People |
|---------------------------------|-------------|

\*A/O May 8, 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 May 8th, the Kayayei Youth Association has used the above funds to provide food for 7,592 kayayei (6,852 of these women live in Old Fadama and 740 live on the street in various communities across Accra). Each pack is meant to provide food for a week and deliveries typically occur over the weekend with the latest one scheduled for Sunday May 10th (expected to reach 1,500 kayayei). The Kayayei Youth Association provides The OR Foundation with weekly photos and data after each food delivery. Some of these women could be counted repeatedly, but we believe that number is a relatively small percentage of the total 7,592 people reached.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

**Of funds raised through May 8th we have yet to disperse \$1,132.79.** Kayayei (and all residents of Old Fadama) are still paying for water despite the government's promise of free water until June 1st. This is a growing concern for the Kayayei Youth Association, so we are investigating ways to provide rainwater catchment, now that it is the rainy season in coastal Ghana. It is possible that some of these remaining funds and potentially additional funds collected will be directed towards this effort, but most likely food will remain the top priority. Our immediate goal is to respond nimbly and in direct support to the most critical needs during this crisis.

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.

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:**

- [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.
- [Bôhten Eyeglasses](#) 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 Bohten met Mohammed Salifu, the Director of the Kayayei Youth Association at an event organized by The OR Foundation in January 2020.
- [Plan B1](#) is raising funds through the sale of facemasks with 5GHC donated for every mask sold. Funds raised will be 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](#) is raising funds 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 a Accra-based skin and hair care company that has committed to producing sanitizer during the COVID-19 crisis.

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

- 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 or funds, provides masks, visits with KYA and co-led menstrual cup workshop
- Yvette Tetteh, CEO, [Yvaya Farm](#): transports food and sanitizers, participates in food delivery
- Lauren Goodwin, Founder, [Lavender Ghana](#): donated bulk sanitizers and cleaning agents
- 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 such market 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.

Now with the lockdown lifted at least temporarily, many Kayayei are demanding 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 intend to remain in Accra are demanding 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 has declared that water services will be subsidized for the next month, the Kayayei have not seen the benefit of this as they are still forced to pay vendors for water given the lack of clean water and sanitation infrastructure in Old Fadama and the informal distribution networks that provide essential services outside of the realm of government regulation.

The OR Foundation supports 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.

**Moving Forward:** The partial lockdown was lifted on April 20th, but kayayei remain vulnerable. Many are unable to find work and return from the markets by 7am, with little hope for their survival. The government has not followed through on providing free water to residents of Old Fadama, so kayayei are still paying for showers and toilet. In addition, the cost of food has been driven up by the pandemic. The Kayayei Youth Association is in need of continued food and sanitizer.

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.

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.