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Life on Lockdown

In Kenya, we're just completing our 10th week on partial lockdown. The Government has been keen to keep things going while taking all measures to prevent an outbreak. And many individuals too have been keen to keep life going.

05/24/2020

I had the honour of working with Wajonah as a teacher in a local, public high school. Our school, I would dare say, is your typical public school in Nairobi. Our students come

from the low income areas of Kawangware, Gatina and Kangemi. None of our students were destitute, but they were far from well off. They struggled to pay fees, or keep their uniform repaired. But you would find them on social media posting pictures hanging out with their friends.

Wajonah has managed to keep in touch with a significant number of our alumni for various reasons. In this time of lockdown, he got in touch with Jeff who has a small business of making and selling bracelets.

Wajonah is trying to see if a small venture he works for would be interested in placing an order for 50 of those bracelets for their staff and patrons. That little income would be a much needed boost for Jeff who admits that business has really slowed down with the forced inactivity, making cash flow very tight and surviving in Kawangware

that much more difficult. With the slow business and more free time, Wajonah has also managed to get Jeff into reading short novels.

Evance is another of our alumni that Wajonah, with help from a couple of friends, has been sponsoring through a diploma in college. When learning institutions were shut down, Evance had to move out of the university hostels and quickly find a place he could reside. He pleaded with the day guard of the college to take him in. And take him in he did. They live in the suburbs of Nairobi, in a place called Uthiru, westwards from Nairobi. They eat one meal a day - dinner - and spend the day looking for some income-generating activities. Evance updated Wajonah on his plight and his desire to chip in for the rent or food the guard was quite selflessly sharing.

At the same time, Riziki was in a similar predicament. Wajonah had managed to get him a sponsor to pay for Riziki to begin an accountancy course in Strathmore University. Before they could begin, the lockdown happened. The little income Riziki was getting from odd jobs in and around Kawangware quickly dried up. This income was used on paying for rent in the little dwelling he managed to get, plus the occasional meal.. every-other-day type of occasional. He too had recourse to his former high-school teacher.

Wajonah made a small fundraising among his friends and work colleagues last week and the response was overwhelming both in kind and in cash. With that, both Evance and Riziki have more than enough to last them to the end of the lockdown. And what he had raised over and above those needs, he's

distributed among the manual labourers at his work place.

We may be on lockdown, but the generosity and charity of many Kenyans has not been locked down at all.

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