Dear friends,

As our global community confronts the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)—a challenge like no other—we are all faced with widespread disruption, uncertainty, and concern for our loved ones. As a valued member of the Amazon Promise community, I want to share with you how things are unfolding in Perú and how we are responding to support those most vulnerable.

Peru is in a state of emergency. In an attempt to contain the virus from spreading, people are only allowed out to quickly purchase food or medicines, borders have been closed, all incoming and outgoing air, road, and river traffic has been halted, and we are under a military-enforced 8pm curfew.

Here in Iquitos, COVID-19 was first reported on March 17th. New cases are on the rise. Like in many parts of the world, no one knows when it actually arrived or how many people have the virus. This is a poor region in a developing country, where health systems are already under-resourced and under tremendous stress. Safeguards for health professionals are almost non-existent, and there is a dangerous lack of infrastructure, equipment, supplies, and staffing resources to manage this crisis. What’s more, the hospitals are already collapsing from an epidemic outbreak of Dengue Fever and severe respiratory infections, leaving little or no capacity to effectively support an influx of COVID-19 patients.

In response, Amazon Promise has been providing protective gear, medicines, and infant formula to local hospitals and to our local partners at AHF, a team of HIV-positive health educators. When we delivered masks to a group of nurses working in the pediatric ward of the Iquitos Hospital the other day, you could see the look of relief on their faces. We are continuing to provide the medical supplies we can, while also ensuring the health, safety, and well-being of our ongoing patients, staff, and partners.

As I write to you from Iquitos, where I will be for the foreseeable future as we confront this unprecedented challenge, I am grateful to be part of a compassionate, generous, and resilient community. Many of you are medical professionals working on the frontlines in your own communities, helping to bring comfort, health, and healing to patients and their families. Others are finding additional ways to engage and support those in need. Thank you for all that you do.

I wish you and your families good health and reassurance during this time of uncertainty.

Best wishes,

Patty Webster  
Founder and President, Amazon Promise