Dear Friends,

I hope this message continues to find you and your loved ones in good health and safe. As our communities, nation, and world further the fight against COVID-19, I am writing to share an update on Amazon Promise's ongoing work in Peru to support vulnerable families in need.

Before diving into the details below, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for the generous support from alumni, partners, and friends during this difficult time. I remain inspired and impassioned by how much we have been able to accomplish together so far -- and the lives we have been able to touch and improve.

Thanks to these contributions, we have been able to make a tangible difference in peoples' lives at a moment when it couldn’t be more urgent. We simply could not do this work without you.

In gratitude,
Patty Webster

COVID-19 in Peru

Going into its 100th day of the country's shutdown, which has now been extended through June 30, Peru has the second highest number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Latin America, after Brazil, and the sixth highest globally. The official national numbers are 257,447 total confirmed cases, and 8,223 confirmed deaths, but as in many countries, these numbers are likely much higher. In Loreto, where Iquitos is the capital, the central government of Lima is only recognizing 308 deaths due to COVID-19; however, the Ministry of Health of Iquitos is reporting 2,034 deaths (as of June 22), which does not include those who have died at home in the city or jungle communities, and were buried without ever being reported. New cases have declined considerably in the urban areas of Iquitos but are rapidly rising in the outer
jungle towns and especially in indigenous communities where medical posts have been abandoned.

Over 90 percent of Iquitos healthcare workers have been sick and/or are in quarantine with COVID-19. Twenty of the 330 physicians in Iquitos have now died, as well as countless other healthcare professionals. The majority of these deaths have been due to a continuous lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and oxygen, largely caused by corrupt government officials colluding with price gougers. The Iquitos Ministry of Health continues to contract physicians and other healthcare workers from other cities, and they are arriving little by little and then being sent to remote jungle medical centers. It's not fast enough.

Fortunately, the Catholic Church has stepped in and taken on a leadership role by providing care to thousands of patients at their Kanatari clinic, and also fundraising enough money to purchase three oxygen plants that have brought great relief to thousands of families desperately looking for help for sick family members. With such a large portion of the population of Iquitos already infected, only time will tell if there will be a second wave. Compounding this situation is the threat of another outbreak of dengue fever, which would place even further strain on the health care system.

As in so many places, the economic situation is especially dire. The pandemic has exposed -- and in some cases exacerbated -- many of the socio-economic fault lines that have always existed. Many of Peru's poor have no choice but to venture outside their homes for work, food, and financial transactions, leading to crowding in markets and long lines at banks. The outdoor markets have been torn down due to the spread of COVID-19, so many people are setting up makeshift stalls in unsanitary environments just to try to make ends meet. Every night, scores of people are sleeping on the street in front of the Amazon Promise house with the hope of getting one of the few appointments offered at the bank next door in the morning. The police and military are arresting people, shooting off tear gas and even using rubber bullets to chase people away, but they quickly return.

Providing aid to communities in need
Our small but stealth team on the ground in Iquitos continues its hard work. We are providing medicines to patients who have no access to hard to find prescribed treatments, while also delivering food aid to approximately 1,100 families living in 670 homes in the lower zone of Belen and other neighbourhoods in need. Our food packages provide enough provisions to last a family of five for 10-12 days, and the families we are
helping have expressed their profound appreciation. Here is a [link to a regularly updated photo album] of our ongoing food distributions.

We've also begun transporting food and medicines to remote jungle communities along the Yarapa, lower Ucayali, and Maranon Rivers, where we have worked for many years. Our first truckload went out June 11 to the port town of Nauta, where representatives of 16 villages (over 868 families) met us in their boats at the river's edge. With the current lockdown and military enforced curfew, it is difficult to travel anywhere, but we have obtained special police permission to travel by road and river. Here's a [link to a photo album] from the June 11 jungle relief distribution.

We are also seeing just how vulnerable many of the communities we serve really are and how much our aid has made a difference. In the Jose Julian Cespedes neighbourhood of Belen (Participacion), for example, where we distributed large food packages on June 9th, the community told us of how the local municipal government representatives visited families and had them sign documents that were supposed to help them receive their government stimulus funds and food. In the end, according to those we spoke with, the documents they signed actually stated they had already received their food, which they never had, and so they feel their food has been stolen from them.

It's heartbreaking to know that so many are suffering, and we are trying to bring them as much relief as possible. We want to thank Devon Graham of Project Amazonas, Paul Opp of People of Peru, Vance Cook of Treehouse Lodge, and the TAMSHI Cacao Company for their contributions and collaboration, which has helped us reach many more people in need. People

Our team on the ground in Iquitos has been absolutely heroic! Office Manager Adriana Calizaya, Food Aid Manager Milagros Valcarcel, and our other staff members have been a dedicated and well-protected and organized team from the start. It's been an incredible and inspiring experience to see organizations and local companies come together for the benefit of all.
In Memory

In our last update, we mentioned that one of our co-workers, Adelaida Shupingahua, had been hospitalized with COVID-19 and put on oxygen. We are heartbroken to report that Adelaida passed away May 8 due to complications of COVID-19, one week after being released from the hospital. Adelaida was a dear friend, an integral part of our Soy Capaz health education team in Peru, and she regularly accompanied us on our medical outreach trips into the jungle. She was an excellent HIV educator, part of our cervical cancer screen and treat team, and completely dedicated her life to educating and helping others in need. Although soft-spoken and a very gentle soul, she was fearless and would go house to house to talk to people in some of the poorest and most dangerous neighbourhoods. If we needed anything done, Adelaida would make sure it happened. She also dedicated her life to caring for her elderly parents, but tragically her mother passed away on May 7, likely from COVID-19, the day before Adelaida.

Adelaida’s brother, Dr. Eleodoro Shupingahua, also passed away from COVID-19 on June 1. He was a doctor of the barrio -- a doctor to the poor of Belen and to anyone in need. He liked working with our Amazon Promise medical teams, and we loved working with him. Whenever we had a patient arrive into the city from the jungle who didn't have an ID and couldn't get medical aid, we'd go to Eleodoro and he'd write up a temporary insurance document so they could then be seen at the hospital. Whenever we needed health education supplies, Adelaida would go to Eleodoro and he'd lend us what we needed.

It's impossible to contemplate and understand the massive loss this family has endured. We are so grateful for their friendship and contributions to Amazon Promise’s mission. In addition, two other staff members have lost their fathers -- a fact that resonates with us all having just celebrated Father’s Day.

Thank You

We are fortunate to be part of a generous, resilient, and caring community of alumni and friends. Now more than ever, thanks to community members like you, we are working to fulfill our promise to provide desperately needed medical care and health education for those most vulnerable in Peru.

For more information about our work or ways to help, please visit our website at www.amazonpromise.org or www.amazonpromise.org/donate.
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