

Blog 4 – PDF Version:

"Visual Impairment in Times of COVID-19"

May 2020

I am a young woman with a visual impairment, and I would like to tell you about my experiences in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon.

The coronavirus is the main problem, but I am doing what I can to wear my mask and wash my hands when at home with running water and soap.

I also have a hand sanitizer that I use when I am not at home.

I practice distance and avoid greetings with the hand.

I cough or sneeze with my elbow.

However, with my visual impairment, it is really difficult for me.

It is very hard to read any of the information about the COVID-19 virus and to keep up with the current events. I sometimes have to rely on friends to tell me what is happening in the news.

I am used to going out by myself. But that is more difficult now. If I go by myself, and reach somewhere, people will not want to help me because they do not want to come close to me like they used to. They will not want to give me assistance or directions.

If I reach a place that is really rough, I can find myself tumbling, falling down.

When I go somewhere now I need a personal guide, and that makes it very hard to have physical distancing. The person has to be very close to me.

Then, there are buckets with water and savon around the town, where we are supposed to go and wash our hands. It is difficult to assess the places and

understand how to use them. It is really difficult for me to use it. They have not placed things well, the bucket can be up and the savon in a different place. A sighted person would just see where they are. There is no explanation. It would be difficult for someone to guide me about how to use it without touching me.

So, now I just feel like always going with a guide, so my independence has gone down.

Then, if I go out and have to take a taxi, the opening of doors of vehicles, well, I really have to touch a lot of places on the car to find the door handle. It is really difficult for me.

I try to avoid touching my eyes and mouth. Then there is also the extra time and cost of just trying to manage all of these things.

I just pray to get through this.

Prepared and written by Ms. Banadzem Goodness:

Ms. Banadzem Goodness is a member of the North West Association of Women with Disabilities, and a recent graduate of the University of Bamenda in the Higher Teacher Training school, ENS Bambili, reading History. She is now working in a school in Magba, Cameroon. She comes from Nso, which has given her an understanding of the situation of rural people, and especially women with disabilities living in rural areas. As a woman with a visual impairment herself, who has overcome many obstacles, she is passionate about improving the situation for women and girls with disabilities in Africa. She has been an active member of the North West Women's Association group working on improving access to smartphones for people with visual impairments.