INITIAL OBSERVATIONS OF MISSION AGENCY RESPONSES TO CORONAVIRUS

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This initial analysis reveals a weakness in the online presence of a number of mission agencies. A number of websites had news sections which had not been updated recently; in one case the latest item of news dated back to 2016.

Category: Short-Term Mission

The web pages of 133 British mission agencies were searched for references to coronavirus and its impact on their work. At this stage, the actual responses were not analysed in any detail, though some brief notes were made which are discussed below.

	Number	Percentage of total
Mention coronavirus on their home page	68	51.1%
Mention coronavirus elsewhere on the website	6	4.5%
Mention coronavirus in a newsletter or on social media	5	3.8%
Financial appeal linked to coronavirus mentioned on the website home page	18	13.5%
No apparent impact of coronavirus	52	39.1%

Overall, approximately sixty percent of agencies make some mention of coronavirus on their web page or social media fees, while forty percent do not. The actual mentions of coronavirus varied greatly. In some cases there was simply an acknowledgement that a meeting had been cancelled due to the virus, whereas other agencies gave detailed information about the impact of the virus on their home offices, their field work and about the communities that they serve. Among the agencies which make no mention of the virus were two which exist to serve the church in China and one whose purpose is primarily medical work; it was surprising to see this. That being said, it is possible that for these agencies, actually getting to grips with the impact of the virus was a higher priority than updating their website â€“ though, I am not convinced that this is the case.

If there is a demand or a need for a more detailed analysis, I could look in detail at the responses from the various agencies who mention coronavirus.

This initial analysis reveals a weakness in the online presence of a number of mission agencies. A number of websites had news sections which had not been updated recently; in one case the latest item of news dated back to 2016. Two agency sites had menus which indicated that there was a news feed, but when this was followed, no news had ever been entered into the section. In the midst of a fast-moving event such as the coronavirus outbreak, it would seem sensible for agencies to maintain an up-to-date system for sharing information. It could be that some of these agencies no longer use their websites for news updates, but have switched to social media for this purpose, but that was not clear to me.

Of more concern was the fact that a number of agencies are still advertising short-term mission trips

for this summer which will almost certainly not be able to take place. While not wishing to downplay the importance of vision and faith, it is important for agencies to be wise in their dealings. Given the current situation, the state of the transport industry and the difficulty of getting comprehensive travel insurance which will cover covid-related incidents, it seems highly unlikely that any short-term mission trips will take place this summer.

It should be highlighted that these observations and comments are personal and do not reflect anyone elseâ€™ point of view.