



EXPERIENCING THE COVID19 CRISIS

**LIVING THROUGH A PANDEMIC:
PERSPECTIVES FROM ALL OVER THE
WORLD**



As the world is slowly getting its head out of water after the Corona Crisis, UID has gathered accounts of life during the crisis from all over the world.

The following testimonies are that of Allison from Boston, Deborah from Aba, Juliana from the Netherlands, Talia from Israel and Tobi from Australia. These perspectives are personal and most of them were shared in April, so it may not reflect the situation in each city or country as a whole.

It is still interesting to observe how the different governments dealt with the crisis and how it was experienced.

For many, it was and still is a challenging period, causing high stress whether it is study or job-related. But it also brought people to realize what is truly important; spending time in family, resting, enjoying simple pleasures like nature or reading, but also to not take anything for granted.

JULIANA, THE HAGUE, THE NETHERLANDS - 05/06/20

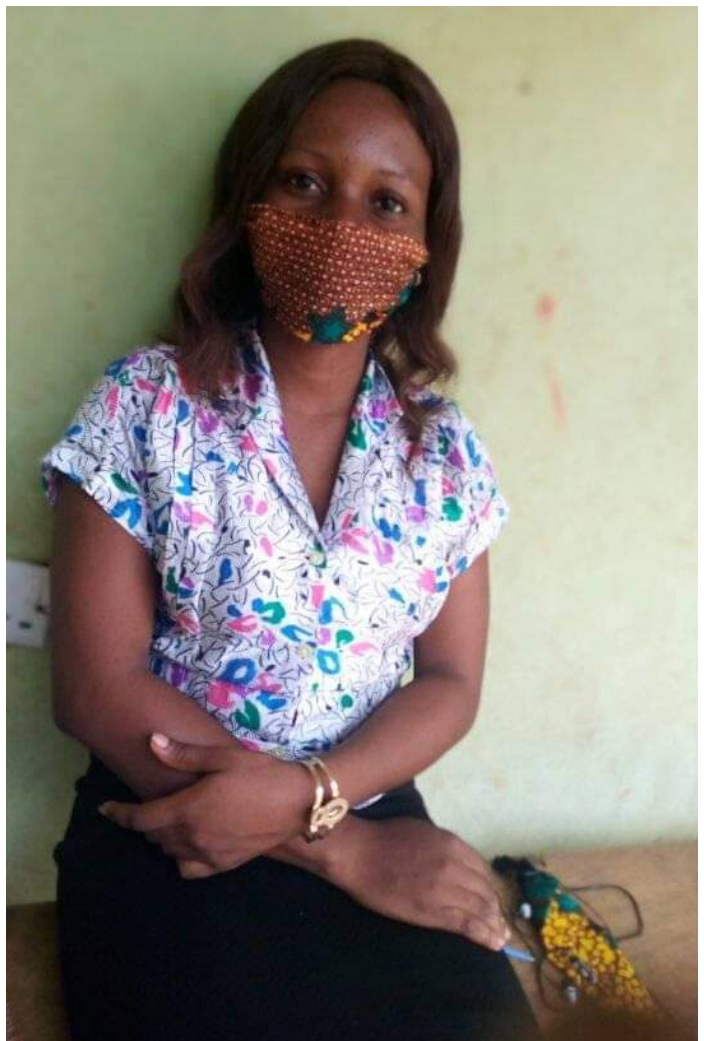
“Covid-19 has affected all areas of life in the Netherlands. Over the past few weeks, the Netherlands has managed to keep their Covid-19 deaths to single figures, which is a step in the right direction. The country has started to open back up, driving many people to cafes, restaurants, parks, and beaches. Students have been largely affected, as all schools and universities closed in accordance with the regulations imposed by the Dutch government. This heavily impacted the lives of international students, who were either forced to stay in the country alone or return home and risk being exposed during their travels. Summer graduations have been cancelled and all classes remain online for university students. Younger children in the Netherlands were able to return to school in mid-May which has allowed parents to focus better on working from home. Small business owners continue to be devastated by the effects of Covid-19, which is why it is always important to support local businesses, especially during times like these. As the country begins to reopen, while still putting in place social distancing, we see people starting to go outdoors again. People are definitely still cautious here for the most part, however you will also see large groups of people flocking to parks and beaches to enjoy the warm weather, which we only get for a few months a year in the Netherlands.

Overall, Covid-19 has changed much of the ways we operate as a society and it can be expected that some aspects, positive and negative, will remain even after we have gotten the pandemic under control”.

DEBORAH, ABA, SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA - 21/04/2020

“The COVID-19 situation has not been palatable in any way. The outbreak suspended every activity in school. As final year students preparing for exams, seminar, project, etc. We are not happy at all. Coming home for two weeks break has finally escalated to one month and if care is not taken more of it. The whole issue is becoming so tiring but we can't help it. For now, we will all keep to the safety measures given to curb the menace. The country has experienced an increase in the number of persons who have been infected by this virus. Staying at home is a very good measure in preventing the spread of the virus but people are really battling with hunger. Imagine some less privileged people (precisely in Bata, Aba, Abia State) crying over food items shared by a good Samaritan which couldn't get to them. The Government has really tried in managing the whole situation.

Relief items have been given to people; but we have not received any yet. The Government of Abia state have mandated every citizen to make use of the nose mask, everyone is allowed to produce for his/herself. As a family, the situation has really changed things. Coming from a family where we make ends meet through hand work, you discover that everything has seized. No income, rather you keep spending the little one reserved to ensure everyone survives”.



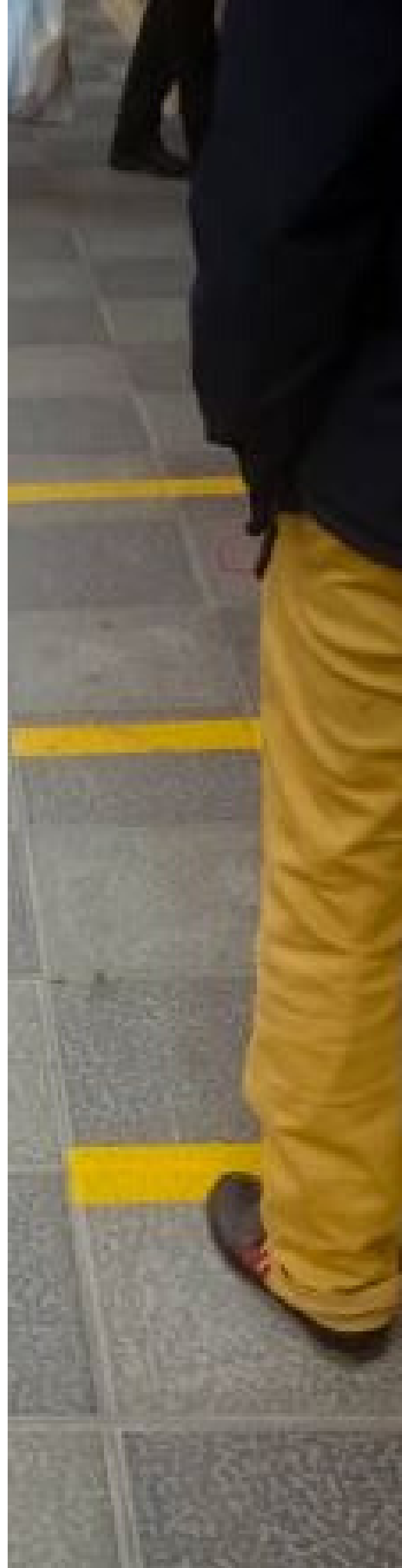
ALLISON, BOSTON, USA - 27/04/2020

“In the last month I have gone from living on campus in an apartment with my 4 best friends and walking to class every morning, to being confined to my bedroom back home. After leaving my university for spring break, I was told that my spring break

would be extended for an additional week and that all classes would go online. As a junior in college I still have one year of school left. However, for many of my friends that are seniors, they will never be returning to my university’s campus. The seniors have lost their chance to walk at graduation, they have lost the chance for their final formal dance with their sororities and fraternities, and they will no longer be going on the epic celebratory trip to the Bahamas with their entire class. Although the loss of these celebratory activities do not compare to the importance of staying healthy, the whole school remains devastated for our senior class.

Living in Massachusetts, our governor has ordered all non-essential business to be closed until May 4th and has most recently shut down all public schools for the remainder of the school year. The only stores that remain open in my town are grocery stores, pharmacies, gas stations, and doctors offices (although many of those are closed too). When going to a grocery store there is tape on the ground showing that each customer must remain 6 ft apart. There is also a line outside the door that only lets a certain amount of customers in at a time. You will not find any customers or employees working without gloves and a mask. Even when leaving the house to go on a walk, everyone’s face is covered with a mask.

My summer internship in New York City has also been moved to an online platform and the hours have been greatly decreased. I know many of my friends seeking full time employment are struggling as well. What has been most difficult about this time has not been the adjustment to online classes, or the ending of different events and activities, but, it has been staying separated from friends and family. I can not remember a time in my life when I have gone this long without seeing my best friends. Although things are difficult, there are many signs of positivity and strength that are shining through in my small town. From parades with policemen and fire trucks, to signs and posters of encouragements hanging in people's windows, hope and love is not lost”.



TALIA, JERUSALEM, ISRAEL - 21/04/2020

“For the past five weeks, Israel at large has been under quarantine. The severity of the restrictions has ebbed and flowed although the constant focus has been flattening the curve and preventing the spread of COVID-19. Since the beginning, I was wary of going to work, as I am a research assistant in a laboratory that is located in a hospital. Before restrictions began, I elected to work remotely since I did not want to put my health at risk. However, the following week I was put on unpaid leave. This was very nerve wracking for me as it added an extra level of uncertainty to the situation we are all currently facing. I am lucky that I teach remotely on the side, and that I have been able to continue that job. That has also been a great way to maintain a routine and optimize productivity. This new found free time has helped me focus on many layers of my health. I have been practicing yoga for more years than I can recall, but during this time I have had the privilege of practicing more regularly. My favorite resource is the Yoga with Adrienne channel on YouTube.

In addition, I have started practicing the Wim Hof breathing technique which is a breathing practice that is thought to increase lung capacity, suppress an overactive immune system and challenge practitioners; I have really enjoyed it and recommend it as well. I love walking, it is essential to my mental and physical health and it has personally been very difficult for me to stomach the 100 meter restriction that the Israeli government has enacted. Luckily, this does not include supermarkets so grocery shopping has become very important to me. What’s particularly difficult for me is that I was previously accustomed to shopping at the Jerusalem shuk- the open air market. I have close relationships with my fruit and vegetable vendors. For obvious reasons the shuk is closed, and I feel badly for them as this is their first time not working in nearly 40 years. They are currently out of work and I have needed to make adjustments to my diet as different food items are currently available to me. I am a new citizen to Israel and the rest of my family lives in the United States. I planned on returning to my childhood home in New Jersey for the Passover holiday, but I was not able to and there is no way to know when I will be able return. This time has been tenuous, stressful, suffocating at times and very lonely at others. While I feel privileged to have a roof over my head, some semblance of income and endless online resources for learning and maintaining my health, I don’t have the words to adequately and accurately describe exactly how I’m feeling. This experience is unprecedented for most people, and I certainly hope the health of the world will be restored very soon”.



TOBI, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA - 20/04/2020

“Now two thirds of the way through April, things in Australia seem to be going well in comparison to other countries around the world. Thanks to strict lockdown laws and their enforcement it looks like we have flattened the curve. But the numbers do not convey the reality of living through this time. Whilst it seems we have been incredibly lucky in containing the virus, the personal experience of so many Australians mirrors that of individuals in isolation around the world. In the state of Victoria there are only four reasons to leave your house; to shop for essentials, to access medical services or provide care to another person, to attend work or education commitments, and to exercise. Our police have issued almost 1,700 fines since the Public Health Orders were introduced in late March, and I like many others are concerned at the increasing autonomy and discretion police they have in enforcing laws which so significantly limit our freedom of movement.

Whilst our Federal Government has provided a stimulus package to help small businesses and those facing unemployment, the economic consequences of the virus are widespread. Moreover, there is significant fear as a result of the economic emergency we will see increased levels of domestic violence.

I count myself incredibly lucky in these circumstances – I have a roof over my head and my family to keep me company. I can complete my university studies online, and I have lovely parks nearby to visit on my walks. There is no doubt adapting to this ‘new normal’ has been challenging and at times overwhelming, however I cannot help but feel selfish when I complain.

But it is important to remember that everyone’s suffering is valid where it is impacting their lives. In my case, my anxiety levels have increased, and I have had more days with low mood than I was experiencing prior to the crisis. My motivation levels are low, I struggle concentrating for long periods of time, and getting myself to exercise is more difficult than ever. I have been unemployed for three and a half months and given the current economic situation I do not see that changing anytime soon. Like many others, I’m taking comfort in indulging in those not-so-positive habits like binge watching tv, eating too much junk food, and sleeping in too late. The challenge isolation poses to all people with mental health issues is immense, but our State and Federal Governments have taken this very seriously and are working hard to provide more support to those in need.

While the time for criticising political decisions will come on the other end of this crisis, I would argue the general feeling amongst Australians is that we are managing well and pulling together as a community like we are known to do. But as we wave goodbye to summer and the nights get darker earlier, there seems to be a fear of the unknown looming over us, a constant reminder of the unforeseen challenges still to come”.

