On 8 April 2020, Sr. Stella Nwoye told us about the realities faced by MMMs and staff as they continue to provide health services in urban Viana, one of the 7 municipalities that make up the province of Luanda.

‘The great fear of the unknown and the tension brought about by COVID-19 is part of the global talk. Every television channel carries the headline “COVID-19”.

In Angola the current statistics show 16 confirmed cases, of which there are 2 recorded deaths and 2 recoveries. Many people are in quarantine. The country has been on its toes trying to curtail the spread of the disease. A 2-week state of emergency was declared by the Angolan government on 21 March. This has minimized movement in the country. The use of gloves and face masks, a distance of one meter between persons, frequent hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer are encouraged.

The Mother Mary Martin Health Centre (Centro Medico Madre Mary Martin Mulenvos de Cima) adopted the measures issued by the Angolan Ministry of Health. The health centre staff are practicing frequent hand washing, using locally-made hand sanitizer (99% spirit, hydrogen peroxide, and water – produced in the health centre), and wearing gloves and face masks. Water from 25-liter drums and soap, along with hand sanitizer, are provided for patients. They are directed to wash their hands at the health centre entrance as they come in. We are creating awareness among the patients through daily health talks.

To minimize contact, only a few patients are allowed inside the main building at a time. Others are asked to stay in the waiting hall (jango) and under the trees where there is more air. Thank God for the spaciousness of the health center. Before patients go to any consultation room they pass through triage for assessment to help to rule out COVID-19. The poor health system and economic situation in the country are making it very difficult for the health centre to put in all the appropriate measures, leaving many staff in fear.’