

BOSCONET

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Image courtesy: Reuters/Danish Siddiqui

LIVING OR BARELY SURVIVING?

A Tale of Unbroken Human Determination



**ADJUSTING TO THE
NEW NORMAL**



DON BOSCO
NETWORK SOUTH ASIA



EMPOWER LIFE! LIVE THE JOY OF TRUE GIVING

Message from the Director

Dear friends,

When one glances through the daily newspapers, there is not a single day without the news about COVID 19. Every day, we read about how many people died, new strains of the virus, the horrible conditions people have to go through, and what not!

In this issue of the Newsletter, we focus on the most vulnerable people - the migrants and the daily wage workers and how the ongoing global pandemic changed their lives. Thousands of these migrants still have to fight hard to afford a day's meal. Others go for days without shelter, food, and basic amenities, while swallowing the arrogant and violent bestiality from the government.

To help these vulnerable people, the Don Bosco Network has been involved ever since the national level lockdown was imposed. Through the Don Bosco Solidarity COVID 19 Relief campaign, the partners of Don Bosco Network have been actively involved in mobilizing resources, procuring essential supplies to the most vulnerable across India, touching 3.27 million lives through our 11 regional offices and their constituent local centres.

Looking beyond the emergency relief especially after the lockdowns were lifted, Don Bosco Network looked for ways to support migrant and daily wage workers to get back on their feet.

During this time, we distributed ration kits, food kits and health kits. We also integrated different programmes and skills training to equip them to find different ways to earn a living.

In this situation, for those engaged in humanitarian work, counting on the solidarity and the goodwill of people, it is a formidable task to spread a sense of solidarity and mobilize resources, to support vulnerable persons and communities in need. Don Bosco Network envisions a harmonious society where the unfortunate and marginalized have adequate access to opportunities for a sustainable and dignified life.

I am grateful to you on behalf of the whole team of Don Bosco Network. It is because of your active partnership with us, we were able to touch the lives of many of these helpless persons and their families. Your solidarity and support ensure that your wish to see change is being fulfilled by building a better world.

With best wishes,

Fr. Noel Maddhichetty SDB

Director, Don Bosco Network - South Asia

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THE DISCRIMINATORY PANDEMIC

Currently standing at over 16.3 Million* Covid 19 cases in India, one can only look back and wonder, “*What went wrong?*”

The COVID 19 pandemic turned lives upside down. Millions died, hundreds lost their jobs with no prospects of returning.

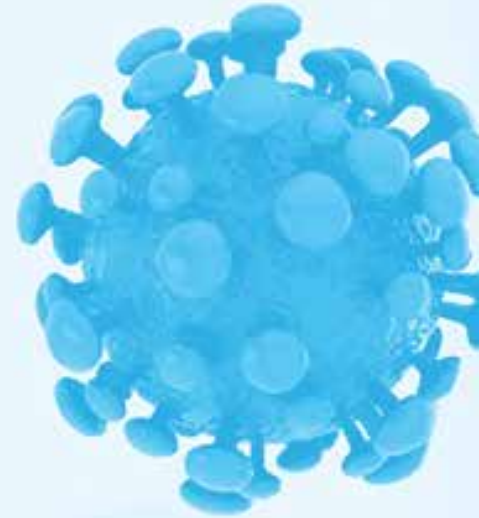
After the government imposed lockdown at brief notice, it forced the migrant workers from around the country to make a journey back home.

While dealing with the deaths of loved ones, scared for their own lives, everyone was in a state of horror. Things changed. Work shifted online. Schools got digitalized. We learned to cope up with the change and went on about our lives. The marginalized, however, didn't.

The COVID 19 crisis unmasked higher vulnerabilities and exposure among the marginalized. More than just a health crisis, this pandemic disrupted and affected every aspect of life, from education, to finances, to production.

The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on the most vulnerable populations of our society - migrant workers, the urban poor and daily wage earners, tribal communities, and agricultural men and women- was deep and far-reaching.

In the agricultural sector, 55% agricultural labourers depend on daily wages- who now had no sources of income. During the lockdown, these small migrants and farmers, engaged in their day to day earning, faced a major loss.



These poor and unequal living conditions are the consequences of deeper structural conditions that together fashion the way societies are organized - poor social policies and programmes, unfair economic arrangements, and dirty politics. This toxic combination of factors as they played out during this time of crisis, disproportionately affected the tribals and migrants the most.

Because the majority of them lack social protection and access to quality health care, these informal workers were vulnerable. Without the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many could not feed themselves and their families - leaving them even more helpless.





LIVING OR BARELY SURVIVING?

image courtesy: www.siasat.com

As per the Indian Census, 2011, Tribal people make up 8.6% of India's total population. This roughly translates to over 104 million people, making India the country with the largest tribal population in the world. The unplanned lockdown exposed the pathetic conditions and the extent of exploitation of tribals and interstate migrant workers in India. Despite umpteen laws, guidelines and departments, migrant workers were exploited because of the government's ignorance.

Migrant labourers, working in metropolitan cities across India, returned to their native states post-lockdown with no prospects of livelihood.

Tezpur, Assam saw a similar reverse migration. Rural and tribal households in Tezpur faced financial ruins since they could not sell their produce, because of arbitrary movement restrictions imposed by the state government. The loss of livelihood, of the earning migrant members of the family, worsened the precarious financial condition of these households.

Don Bosco Network steps in

To help these people exposed to the vulnerable situations, the Don Bosco Network implemented the livelihood project - it contributed to poverty alleviation and sustainable improvement & livelihood for farmers and migrant labourers during COVID 19 in Tezpur, Assam, India.

Targeting approximately 1250 family members of 250 households from Tezpur region of Assam, most of the families were tribal or from backward communities.

Various activities were conducted to generate awareness about health & hygiene while motivating the beneficiaries to follow COVID 19 prevention guidelines provided by state and central government.

To provide them the maximum support, the beneficiaries were provided with 40 kgs of high quality paddy seeds to help them start paddy cultivation in their farms, reducing their need to incur additional debt from informal sources.

FROM RESPONSE TO RECOVERY: INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE DON BOSCO NETWORK

Knowing the conditions that they live and work in, we knew one project wasn't enough. To provide maximum help and support to these marginalized and vulnerable people, the Don Bosco Network stepped up and took different initiatives-



1. Spreading SMiLEs

Migrant labourers are among the most vulnerable people in the country. With little to no education, they find it hard to get work.

To empower and educate these migrant labourers about their rights, Don Bosco Network initiated Sustained Migrants Livelihood and Empowerment (SMiLE) to educate, build their capacity through life skills and train 13,500 migrant workers so they could empower other labourers by sharing their knowledge and privileges and creating a system of support.

2. Driving Change

When it comes to personal health and hygiene, adolescents and young women living in slum areas, rural areas and economically poor households face multiple challenges. The COVID 19 crisis presented even more difficulties for women in accessing personal hygiene products.

To address this issue, Don Bosco Network distributed hygiene kits, while creating awareness about personal hygiene among women of poor vulnerable families in Goa, Karnataka, Hyderabad, and Shillong. A total of 2,502 poor women were benefited under this initiative.



3. Enlightening young minds

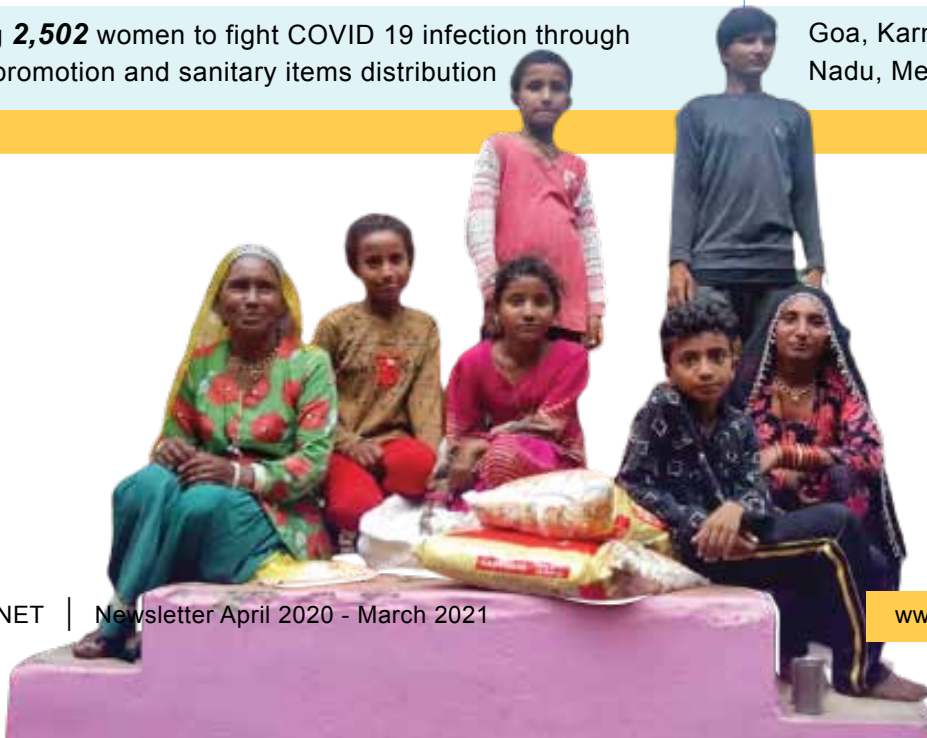
COVID 19 created a huge digital divide between the rich and the poor in accessing online coaching. While a lot of children enjoyed the privilege of sitting at home and attending online classes, the others were forced to drop out of schools because of the inaccessibility to smart phones.

To enable these vulnerable children the access to online education during the COVID lockdown, Don Bosco Network provided 163 children with mobile phones to access online classes, supported 6,909 students for school fee, provided education material, and equipped 17 schools with technology to provide distance education to rural students.



OUR RESPONSE AND ACTION FOR LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Programme Name	Location
EDUCATION	
Education support to 6,909 children affected by the COVID 19 pandemic	Karnataka, Kerala
Educational empowerment of 80 marginalized girls through scholarships	Telangana
SKILLING	
Gardening training of 40 tribal people	Tamil Nadu
Sustained 13,500 Migrants for Livelihood and Empowerment (SMiLE)	Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka
Skill training and job placement for 80 unemployed and unskilled youth	Tamil Nadu
LIVELIHOOD	
Livelihood activities & hygiene awareness for 1,250 farmers and migrant labourers	Assam
Sustainable Livelihood for 50 Underprivileged Members (SLUMs) through tailoring (bag & face mask-making)	Telangana
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT	
Empowering 2,502 women to fight COVID 19 infection through awareness promotion and sanitary items distribution	Goa, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya



TOUCHING 3.27 MILLION VULNERABLE LIVES - DON BOSCO NETWORK'S COVID 19 RELIEF IN INDIA

Ever since the virus triggered panic, and the lockdown was announced in March 2020, the disturbing images of desperate migrant and daily wage labourers trying to get home from cities could be seen all over the news. Having no income, jobs, or social safety net for protection, these poor people were 'invisible' in the government records, meaning they could not access free ration offered by the State - making them even more helpless

To streamline resource mobilisation and take action for COVID 19 relief in India, the Don Bosco Solidarity COVID 19 Relief campaign was implemented. Targeting the most vulnerable groups, we made sure they got the support they required.

Touching 3.27 million lives, different relief interventions were taken by Don Bosco Network.

Don Bosco Network and Partners: Collaborating against COVID-19

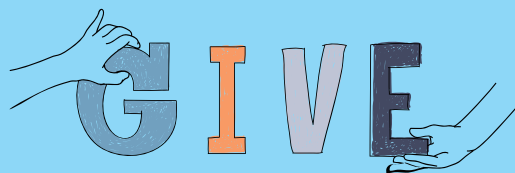
Essentials	Donors	Location
Cookies, NV bars, chips packets, cakes, cranberry packets, bottles of ketchup and packets of dried prunes	General Mills	Chennai, Karnataka, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Triuchy
Ration Kits/ Hygiene Kits	SBI Life, Macquarie, Mareli India, Give India-HSBC, JEW, EY Foundation, PwC, EClx, Noreen van Holstein, Ambit India	Guwahati, Shillong, Dimapur, Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, Goa, Triuchy, Kolkata
Cooked meals	EY Foundation	Mumbai
KinderJoy, Chips packets, Epigamia yogurt, sweets packets	Zomato Internet Pvt Ltd.	Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Karnataka, Guwahati, Hyderabad
PPE kits and other COVID 19 protection gear	PwC, JEW, Safeway, General Mills	Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, Delhi
Wheat, Rice, Dal	Zomato Internet Pvt Ltd., General Mills	Hyderabad, Karnataka, Chennai

We are happy to acknowledge our top donors



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