



# FEED THE HUNGRY: COVID-19 PROJECT

## - A REPORT



## Highlights

- ◆ On March 24, 2020, the Government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown for 21 days (which got extended and is still continuing in different forms in this month of August), limiting movement of the entire 1.3 billion population of India as a preventive measure against the coronavirus pandemic.
- ◆ The decision, though necessary, it did not take into account the plight of the daily wage labourers, the homeless population, the migrant workers, slum-dwellers, and many more. Unfortunately, the poor and the marginalized sections of the society are always an afterthought.
- ◆ Within a week, few SVD confreres (Society of the Divine Word - SVD) and SVD Lay Partners (Disciples of the Divine Word - DDW), from Andheri, Mumbai, initiated a plan to form a small volunteer group to ease the distress of helpless people during the lockdown.
- ◆ By August 2020, we have reached out to around 7000 families with essential food grains. Besides food essentials, we are now helping needy people with medical supplies.
- ◆ We are all in this pandemic together, and what affects one, affects us all.



## Strategic Objective

- ◆ Our strategic objective was to reach out to the few of the hundreds of millions of poor hit the hardest by this lockdown in and around Mumbai.
- ◆ We played on our strengths. This was an extraordinary calling to step up for the vulnerable, and we undoubtedly had a committed team willing to network and collaborate.

## Our Team



Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD, Fr. Tony Menezes, SVD, Fr. Innocent Fernandes, SVD, Fr. Sunil Soreng, SVD (Coordinator), Fr. Sundar Magimai, SVD, Fr. Donald D'Souza, SVD, Fr. Raja Reddy, SVD (Coordinator), Jayesh George - DDW, Anupama Subodhanan - DDW, Sandhya Dominic - DDW, Dominic Thomas - DDW, Juliana D'Costa - DDW and Susan Noronha - DDW (Coordinator).



## Our Top Concerns

- ◆ Tapping resources and piloting new efforts for receiving donations.
- ◆ Detailing sources to buy essential products for distribution.
- ◆ Finding place to store the grocery and delivering the food grains to the poor, while focusing on high-priority delivery to the needy beneficiaries.
- ◆ Following safety guidelines issued by the Government - social distancing, wearing a mask, hand gloves, sanitizers, etc., while repacking and distribution.

## Preparedness and Response

- ◆ Humanity needs efficient leadership and solidarity to defeat this pandemic and our plan got activated. SVD Institutions in the Andheri campus came together to work as one team.
- ◆ Atma-Darshan made available their Trust Account to receive donations. This helped the donors to make online bank transfer to Atma Darshan Trust Account.
- ◆ All India Soverdia Sangam Trust procured the local police permission.
- ◆ Soverdia House, Atma-Darshan, Sacred Heart Church, Institute of Indian Culture and St. Arnold's School linked up to support the social mission.
- ◆ Sacred Heart Parish not only opened the doors of their Community Centre Hall to store food essentials, but also networked with Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) members and Small Christian Community (SCC) coordinators to identify the needy in the parish and to receive donations from generous parishioners.
- ◆ Some DDW members networked from their homes to collect donations and to identify the needy families.
- ◆ Community Health Centre of Holy Spirit Hospital (Sr. Jessie Mary, SSpS, In-Charge) was able to connect with their team of women volunteers from the slums. They were able to identify the neediest of the hour - the domestic workers, daily-wage labourers, the migrants, the construction workers, TB and HIV patients and the physically challenged people and their families.
- ◆ Few Religious Institutions in the locality helped us to identify the poor in the neighbourhood slums.
- ◆ Centre for Social Action (CSA), Archdiocese of Bombay, Mumbai collaborated in identifying the needy people around our area. Our work was acknowledged by the Archdiocese of Bombay.





## Transformative Action

- ◆ Covid-19 does not see religion, colour, caste, creed, language or borders. What began as a simple idea of helping the poor with food grains pressed us to take “transformative action”.
- ◆ Since the lockdown brought all activities to a halt, people were struggling to find food. But, people also came together in the most extraordinary ways to go the extra mile to lend a helping hand.
- ◆ Together with this, we were able to reach out to around 7000 families with essential food grains (August 2020).
- ◆ Humanity is alive.

## Supply Chain for Food Essentials

- ◆ Without consistency of food essentials, we'd all go a little crazy! Initially, we partnered with a couple of neighbourhood retail grocery stores. When the demands grew bigger, we eventually strengthened our supply chain by liaising with wholesale vendors.
- ◆ Loading, unloading, packing and distribution of the food essentials was/is done by the SVD confreres and lay partners along with few volunteers, adhering to guidelines issued by the Indian government.





## Food Packet

- ◆ Each family grocery package has food essentials - 5 Kgs Rice, 5 Kgs Wheat Flour, Pulses, Cooking Oil, Sugar, Tea and some basic essential items enough for a family for about 15-20 days.
- ◆ Grocery package with food essentials was/is repeated (frequently/multiple times) to many families.

## Reaching out with Hot Lunch to the Hungry

In the months of March, April and May 2020, we also networked with Past Pupils/Ex-Students & volunteers from St. Dominic Savio High School, Andheri (Anthony Mascarenhas) with the distribution of daily hot lunch packets to the needy, especially with the migrant and daily wage workers and people from the slums.

## Generosity and Gratitude

- ◆ We are grateful to you for the life-changing generosity.
- ◆ Total donations received – August 2020 (cash/cheques/bank transfers/kind) is around INR - 32 lacs (3.2 million INR = approximate 36,000 Euros). We are thankful to all of you.
- ◆ Praja Foundation, NGO, Mumbai – 200 packets of food grains. We are grateful.

## Some of our Beneficiaries

A home in Mumbai slums is less than 100 square feet. Typically, 4-5 adults share space with another 3-4 children. There is hardly any social distancing. These areas also lack necessary amenities, clean drinking water and private toilets, making it easy for outbreaks to spread.

Here are some of our beneficiaries and those who helped us to identify the needy people, irrespective of cast, creed and religion.

- ◆ **Sacred Heart Parish PPC, SCC, Parish Association members and DDW volunteers** – needy parishioners and others in the neighbourhood. (frequently)
- ◆ **Community Health Centre of Holy Spirit Hospital - Andheri East slums:** Marol Pipe Line, Sundar Nagar, Sanjay Nagar, Goni Nagar, Munshi Colony, Achanak Colony, Malpa Dongri slums, Agadi Nagar, Subash Nagar 1, 2 & 3 slums, Masjid Galli, Mahakali Caves, Ramnath Yadav Chawl, Bindra Complex SRA and Powai slums – through Sr. Jessie Mary, SSpS and Community Clinic staff. (multiple times)



- ◆ **Community Health Centre of Holy Spirit Hospital - Jogeshwari East slums:** Durga Nagar slums, Shiv Tekri, slums near the Railway Station – through Sr. Jessie Mary, SSpS and Community Clinic staff. (multiple times)
- ◆ **Community Health Centre of Holy Spirit Hospital** – Patients suffering from Tuberculosis, HIV, physically challenged and sick/malnutrition people – through Sr. Jessie Mary, SSpS and community clinic staff. (multiple times)
- ◆ **Centre for Social Action, Archdiocese of Bombay** – through Mr. Prateek to daily wage workers at Pratap Nagar, Jogeshwari East.
- ◆ **Canossa Convent** – Slums in Powai and nearby areas – through Sr. Lavina (multiple times)
- ◆ **Ursuline Sisters** – Meghwadi, Subash Nagar and neighbouring slums, Andheri – through Sr. Divya (multiple times)
- ◆ **Shanti Ghar**, A home for destitute women – residents and the neighbouring slums – through Sr. Merlyn
- ◆ **Fatima Mata Sadan** – Poor and needy in the neighbourhood – through Sr. Ranjana/Sr. Arockia
- ◆ **St. Arnold's School** – Poor school children's families and neighbours – through Fr. Jossie (multiple times)
- ◆ **Sarva Seva Sangh, Mumbai** – Nearby slums and poor people - through Fr. Jose Arayathil
- ◆ **Bastiwalla Compound slums** – Mahakali Caves, Andheri – through Social Worker, Amrit
- ◆ **Trombay slums** - Sector A, Masjid Road, Cheeta Camp – through Social Worker, Rama Swami Varganti (multiple times)
- ◆ **Mankhurd slums** - Babasaheb Ambedkar Nagar– through Social Worker, Laxmi Rama Varganti (multiple times)
- ◆ **Madh Island, Borivali East slums** – through Social Worker, Swami (multiple times)
- ◆ **Kurla – Gautam Nagar slums** – through Social Worker, Prashant
- ◆ **Ghatkopar slums** – daily wage workers, domestic workers – through Social Worker, Ms. Goretti.



- ◆ **Infant Jesus Church, Jogeshwari** – through Fr. Henry and PPC members from Infant Jesus Church (two times)
- ◆ **Indian National Church, Prem Nagar (Meghwadi), Jogeshwari** – through Church's pastor, Mr. Roney and Mr. Luther Michael Nirmal.
- ◆ **JVLR slums and Marol pipeline slums** (behind Sun City Hotel, Marol) - mostly construction workers and daily labourers. (multiple times)
- ◆ And many more **deserving people/families** through SVD Institutions and volunteers.



### We are Grateful to our Benefactors

- ◆ Parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish who donated generously
- ◆ Members/family/friends of Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) – SVD Lay Partners
- ◆ SVD Institutions in Andheri campus – Sacred Heart Church, Atma-Darshan, Soverdia House, AISS, St. Arnold's School and Institute of Indian Culture.
- ◆ Fatima Mata Sadan (Fatima sisters), Andheri
- ◆ Well-wishers and friends



## Responding together

- ◆ Covid-19 Pandemic remains a tough challenge, but it is also a perfectly designed learning experience to all of us. As the world copes with the pandemic, let us count our blessings.
- ◆ Perhaps each time I put on my mask or wash my hands, I remember to say a word of thanks for the people who continue to work to make this world a better place to live.

In his July 2020 reflection on *Mission in a Post Covid-19 World*, Fr. Antonio M. Pernia, SVD Dean, of Studies, DWIMS (Philippines), has spoken profoundly on our missionary role as Arnoldus Family members. Let us together help to create a world built on tenderness, compassion, solidarity and sharing.

- Susan Noronha, SVD Lay Partner (DDW), INM

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