

# BOSCONET

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## COPING WITH COVID

THE PANDEMIC VS AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE- THE YOUTH



# EMPOWER LIFE! LIVE THE JOY OF TRUE GIVING

## Message from the Director

**Dear friends,**

The COVID outbreak continues to drive unprecedented challenges across the world. While the government of India took necessary measures to prevent the spread of the virus, the outbreak of the second wave left underprivileged communities even more vulnerable than before.

Young people, especially women, are highly vulnerable since most of them are employed in the informal economy and often have low-paid, less secure, and less protected jobs than their male counterparts.

*“The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic hit India in February and affected the informal economy hard, resulting in over 10 million Indians losing their jobs”. (Mahesh Vyas, CMIE)*

However, even before the second wave, tens of millions of workers had barely managed to recover from the adverse economic effects of the nationwide lockdown imposed in 2020.

‘The Youth’, are one of the most powerful community assets we have to help us create a better society. They renew, refresh and maintain the status of our society, including leadership, innovations, skills, while also maintaining a sense of the culture, all good values in the communities, development projects, etc.

To ensure that this doesn’t become a crisis in the long term, we’ve created a resilience & recovery plan for underprivileged youth that focuses on their pandemic preparedness and management, health and nutrition, safety and education.

Thanks to your support, the 11 nodal Don Bosco Network partners of the Don Bosco Network-Bosconet, were able to launch into action. They ensured that the communities we serve stay safe by distributing medical, hygiene kits and dry rations in addition to operating Tele-Counseling, opening COVID Care Centers and spreading awareness on preventative measures and available medical facilities across every state in India.

Your smallest contribution makes a big difference to the lives of the underprivileged. We count on the generosity of people like you to be able to create real change for India’s youth!

*With best wishes,*

**Fr. Noel Maddhichetty SDB**

Director, Don Bosco Network - South Asia

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# Coping with Covid 19 - Pandemic Preparedness and Management

Youth are the unseen victims of this crisis, and their struggles are the invisible cost this disastrous second wave will claim. The 11 nodal Don Bosco Network partners of the Don Bosco Network came together with Bosconet to fight against the lasting impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on India's underprivileged and help contribute to the larger solution towards a brighter future.

The change-making program conducted by the 11 nodal Don Bosco Network partners for the youth are:

## 1. A Home Away from Home for the Affected

The Don Bosco Youth Centre, Shillong, turned into a Corona Care Centre to provide essential services to those infected by Covid-19.

The District Administration assigned 1 doctor to look after the patients and provided the following:

- Oxygen Cylinders
- Sanitisers
- A well-ventilated 40-bed-facility
- 3 fresh and healthy meals at scheduled times to patients.

In addition, the Health Department gave a day of training to the six nurses working in the Centre to ensure that they had adequate knowledge and skill to monitor and provide treatment to the patients.



## 2. Standing Together in Crisis

50 Covid Warriors, trained by a medical team, were deployed at hospitals in Bangalore to provide support to nurses and other staff.

They assisted in preparing and distributing food and medicine to the Covid patients in the ICUs and wards, assisted them in washrooms, and supported the nurses by procuring reports and medicine.

## 3. Creating support functions at a national level

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was complex, diverse and wide-ranging, affecting the vulnerable group of migrant workers the worst. Apart from financial aid most Nodal Partners set up "Migrants Desks" and launched various initiatives to address the plight of migrant workers.

One such initiative, **Don Bosco for Migrants (DB4M)**, was set up in different languages to collaborate and network for the efforts to reach out to migrant workers in the South Asia Region, allowing them to engage with 15 callers at once.

### Services attempted through the helpline

- Providing Legal Aid
- Advocacy to get minimum wages
- Assistance in procuring documents like Aadhaar, PDS, Health Insurance.
- Stood as a "watch" against child labour, bonded labour and human trafficking.

### 4. Bringing life back into the land

Sixty years ago, it was almost impossible to grow rice in the region around Curtorim Maina, Goa. The area's terrain made it difficult for farmers to irrigate and water their paddy crops.

Due to the cost of cultivation and scarcity of labourers, many had abandoned their land. As a result, patches of fallow land were left vacant with no agricultural activity.

Through the initiative of the Don Bosco Loutolim Society, the 'Goa Paddy' project began five years ago by convincing community farmers to come together as part of collective farming.

Planting paddy saplings over 1.15 lac sq. metres in 12 hours using the machinery, in Curtorim Maina, South Goa, Don Bosco Loutolim Society initiated a modern-day agriculture revolution in Goa. The fallow land has now turned into a land of a bountiful harvest.



### 5. Creativity and Resilience despite the pandemic

As the world grappled with unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth stepped up to showcase their adaptability and resilience during these challenging times.

The final year Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering students at Don Bosco College of Engineering (DBCE) Goa, successfully developed a sanitizing Robot prototype, to work remotely and sanitize closed offices, open markets, public areas, hospitals and other places without the intervention of any frontline workers.

This was done under the guidance of Asst. Professors at DBCE, Mohini Naik Gadekar and Michelle Viegas. The students also received appreciation and encouragement from the Health Minister of Goa.





# Going the Extra Mile

Over and above our direct relief measures, Don Bosco Network's partners and volunteers, mobilized communities and authorities alike, to take action for youth at every level and ensure that relief packages reached the most marginalized.

## Livelihood Support for the vulnerable



Migrants, widows and women were amongst the largest groups to have been affected by the Covid Pandemic.

To aid them, the Don Bosco group set up large networks across India providing over 9 lac migrants food for their journeys home as well as supplementing rent, livelihood, providing skills training and cash assistance to over 3000 people. We also provided training in disaster management for women in disaster-prone areas.

## Hygiene & Healthcare



Don Bosco stood at the forefront of the spread of the Covid virus by taking on the job of ensuring that health and hygiene were maintained. We distributed over 4 lac face-masks, hygiene and preventive kits, PPE and medical kits

across the country and to frontline healthcare workers.

## COVID Solidarity



Don Bosco assisted and vaccinated over a 1000 people with COVID-19 Treatment. We ran free Covid Medical Camps, contributed 1 Mobile Clinic for doctors, 1 Oxygen Plant in Hospitals, 1 Mobile oxygen Unit and 60 hospital mattresses.

Blood donation drives, hand sanitizers, medical kits and masks were among other activities and amenities provided to citizens. Facilities for vaccination and quarantine were set up and oxygen concentrators and cylinders provided to 30 people.

## Awareness Outreach



In a country fraught with differing opinions on the pros & cons of vaccinations, Don Bosco ran vaccine awareness campaigns for over 2 lac people and counselled over 10000 about COVID-19 safety precautions. Myths associated with infections, tests, available vital medicines, oxygen supply and vaccinations were bust and people were shown that it was the only way to fight the second wave. Over 8000 people were given vaccination assistance or referred to covid services.

Material on IEC was developed and circulated in regional languages across villages. Tele-counselling and voice messaging were set up via 1,775 help desks to spread information on Coronavirus and mental health.

## Nutrition and Care



For the vulnerable parts of society that succumbed to the virus in various ways, Don Bosco provided cooked food and distributed dry rations to over 90,000 people. We also provided other, regular vaccinations to ensure that susceptibility to other deadly diseases were not deprioritized during the second wave.

## Education



In a bid to stave off the virus amongst the most vulnerable, education about the infection and its prevention was given priority. Over 9000 students in Don Bosco schools who could not pay fees due to loss of income, were supported. Rural schools were enabled with technology and teacher training, to organize online classes, benefitting 13,930 rural students. Students were provided smart devices to access online classes and ensure continued education.

# Testimonials

“

You youngsters are doing an excellent job. You are COVID Warriors. Try to help people as far as possible because you have energy. This energy will keep elderly people moving and their blessings will not go to waste. Take care, enjoy life, take care of yourself and your life and family. At the same time, keep moving, keep helping!

- An elderly patient

”

“

This has been a tough time. Excellent work, you are doing, Fr Anil and team. It means a lot, how you come around sharing the very presence of God. I would ask many more volunteers to come forward at this time of crisis, to support during this physical, mental, spiritual feebleness we (patients) are going through. May you be protected from all dangers, enjoy good health and peace of mind!

- A patient in treatment for COVID and pneumonia

”

## The experiences of COVID Warriors

“

It was a personal healing, just to be there and find myself being useful. I always tell my friends now; we're not doing something extraordinary; we're doing something we are called to do. I am going back as a different person definitely. I've been able to reach out to a lot more people inside and outside the hospital through my blog about my experiences. Our experience directly helps the patients but if our experience can indirectly help so many other people, I think it's twice-thrice more impactful.

- Melisha

”

“

Don't hesitate to serve people, wherever you are. I think I found my life by serving them. You don't have to come to hospitals to literally help. You can do it in your own home, in your neighbourhood or society and you can save one life. Don't be afraid. Be responsible for your own life. Do take care but at the same time, be also responsible for others' lives.

- Aishwarya

”

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