



Contents:

22 villages within the 'Dry Zone' of the districts of Ahmednagar and Beed in Maharashtra were turned into green oases through the work of Bosco Gram Vikas Kendra, under the guidance of Bro. Alex Gonsalves sdb.

Fast development in Gujarat attracts child workers to its cities. They need help to restart their childhood and education.

Don Bosco Snehalaya, Guwahati, celebrates the weddings of two of the girls who grew up under its care since their childhood.

Editorial

INDIA AND BHARAT

A series of interviews of middle class families by Hindustan Times has revealed that 68% of them accept that their life is better today than it was five years ago. Economist Surjit Bhalla says what we are seeing is 'a massive change within one generation'.

There is no doubt that we are living at a very exciting period in the history of our country.

In 2012, 21 million children were newly admitted into English medium schools. In 2003, they were 7 million.

The Indian branded clothes market is worth Rs 20,000 crore today. It was Rs 4000 crore in 2004 and 10,000 crore in 2008.

851 million Indians made a holiday trip in 2012. In 2004 only 366 million could afford this.

There are 11.3 million two-wheelers in India today. There were 6.5 million of them in 2004 and 8.4 million in 2009.

The super-rich in India have grown enormously. The Knight Frank Wealth Report of 2013 says India has the fifth largest number of billionaires (net assets over 500 crore) in the world – 122 of them. It is expected that by 2022 we will have 225 billionaires. The number of people with assets above 150 crore is expected to double within the next decade.

The poor continue to face their daily struggles. There ARE exceptions. Read in this issue about Pandrinath Ghorpude who used to work as a coolie during the dry months of the year. Today he has a tractor of his own; and about Sambhaji Langde, who served as a salesman in an agro-medical shop and today cultivates several acres of oranges and pomegranates; and about Jaya Pavshre whose elder son works in Germany and whose second son has completed M.B.A.

All of these, and thousands more like them, achieved this as the result of the vision of one man, Bro. Alex Gonsalves sdb, the founder of Bosco Gramin Vikas Kendra (BGVK) in Ahmednagar. From this centre we reach out to the people of 22 villages in two districts, an area declared as 'Dry Zone' by the government of Maharashtra.

Through watershed techniques, community mobilisation, savings through Self-Help Groups, etc., an area that was a deserted wasteland become a green paradise, and the lives of people have been totally transformed.

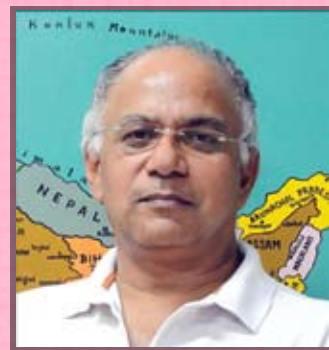
Every 'province' of the Salesians of Don Bosco has a 'provincial development office' that concentrates on programmes of this sort. It guides the work of our individual institutions, to take the benefits of the latest technologies to the poorest in their neighbourhood.

A donation to Bosconet may not only educate a child; it could be helping to change the lives of people in entire villages through hundreds of programmes in the nature of BGVK. Thank you for being our partners in bringing the benefits of India's growth to the most neglected.

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Bosco Snehalaya, Baroda



Every child at Snehalaya receives individual, personal attention from a team of dedicated staff.

“Welcome, Sir, welcome. How are you, Sir? What is your name, Sir?” I feel overwhelmed. Go to an ordinary boarding school, and the children tend to shy away from you till you introduce yourself. But here at this centre, you do not need to be introduced. The boys run out to meet you. They cling to you. The children are happy to have somebody in their midst. Your name will be ringing on their lips all the time.

‘Live Life lovingly’ are the words inscribed on the gate of Don Bosco Snehalaya, Vishwamitri, Baroda. It is indeed ‘a house of love’. Unwanted children from the streets find love here and learn to love. It is about 15 – 20 minutes’ drive from the Vadodara Railway Station.

The children receive academic education. Every day, two batches of boys go in two different directions. One group of 35 goes every morning to municipal schools for classes up to Class VII. The other, a group of 17, go to private schools in the afternoon for classes VIII and above. “It is not possible to send all of them to private schools though we would like to. There is always a shortage of resources for that,” rues Fr. Steve Rodrigues, the Director of the Centre. Everyone attends municipal schools till they

complete their 7th standard and then continue in private schools.

The rest of the boys are studying through NIOS. These are boys who cannot cope with the demands of a regular school. They receive intensive tuitions to prepare them for NIOS exams. The NIOS package is tailored to suit the capacities of each individual. Those who are not academically bright write only two subjects at a time. This strategy was started last year and 5 students completed all the papers of their 10th standard examinations. It was a huge morale booster for the children. A 10th standard certificate opens up for them innumerable possibilities.

Though the centre is managed and run by Don Bosco Society, it does not impose a particular faith on the boys. In fact, the holy books of all major religions are displayed and venerated with equal devotion.

Shaping up the lives of street boys is a process of THREE stages. First, they come into contact with Snehalaya through drop-in centres (DIC) in different parts of Gujarat. Children come to the DIC and enjoy its facilities of recreation, toilets, a bath, and a locker.



“Sometimes a child arrives in a very weak and serious condition. With medical assistance, love and care, they pull through. Seeing them doing well rejuvenates my life each time.” **Kanti B. Chauhan, Medical Attendant**



“I used to work on an oil rig. Some of my former colleagues have now reached high managerial posts. Yet, even they feel that what I do now for these children is far more important than their managerial jobs.” **Fr. Nestor Fernandes, Administrator**



“The Children come and cling to me, calling me ‘didi’. It is genuine love. The children need sisterly care and affection. Giving them the love they need is the satisfaction I get every day.” **Shelly Parmar, Computer instructor and Personal Assistant to the Director**



“Here the children receive everything they need. Food, shelter, education, clothing... everything. Though from different places and backgrounds, there is an amazing spirit of cooperation and unity among them.” **Suman P. Verma and Puja Sikligar, Social Work Trainees from J. M. Patel Institute, Anand, Baroda, Gujarat.**



Tugging their innate sense of responsibility to a positive direction is the key to our success,” says **Fr. Steve Rodrigues**, with a smile on his face. “The street children are responsible for their life while on the street. Don Bosco Snehalya uses this to mould the street children into socially responsible persons.”



Programmes, activities and experiences of various sorts ensure an all round formation.

“My only possession was a water bottle and I had nowhere to go,” recounts Fakruddin Sheikh. He never thought that he would land up in the street.

Fakruddin was brought to Gujarat from Malchapur, Karnataka, by a family friend to work on contract.

He worked for a year. One day, on the pretext of taking him to another place, the person left him in the train station with a water bottle.

He was brought to Snehalya by the outreach staff. He studied till 6th standard. He was sent for a

vocational training at Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh. He learnt welding and is now a welder in a Company named Technique Q, Baroda, Gujarat. He had lost all contact with his family. Don Bosco Snehalaya helped him locate his family through its home placement programme. He regularly sends money to his family.

Fakruddin is 20 years old now. “All the goods things you find in me are because of Snehalaya and I am ready to repay back in whatever ways I can,” he adds. This is not the end of the story for the young man. He is applying for his passport to work abroad. Don Bosco Snehalaya is helping him for this. The journey from a lost person to a dream of working abroad is made possible through Don Bosco Snehalaya.



Games, sports and music are at the heart of Don Bosco's education

“The only Hindi words I knew were paanchrupia and dusrupia”, says Marudhu Pandhia, age 21. He shudders at the memories of his nights on the railway platform. He had run away from his uncle in Bangalore at the age of 12 as he was forced to go to work. He had lost his parents and siblings in a bus accident.

He landed up at the Surat Railway platform. After two days there, the staff of Snehalaya took him in. Even after 7 months at Snehalaya, he could not cope. He did not know the language of the other boys and could not adjust to the life style at the centre. He went back to the railway platform selling newspapers. He used to make a good amount of money.

As he grew older he came to realize that this was not what he wanted in the long-term. He went back to Snehalaya and completed his 6th standard. He then opted for vocational training at Don Bosco, Narukot, Gujarat.

Now he works as a supervisor in Danke Control Private Limited. Don Bosco Snehalaya had taught him the most valuable lesson in life – follow your dreams and kick out all the obstacles in your way though it is not always so easy to do so. He plans to have a business of his own one day. Now he speaks fluently not only Hindi, but also Gujarati and English.

At the second stage, those boys who are interested in a more stable way of life move to the rehabilitation centre. The rehab centre prepares them for life in an institution. This takes three to four months.

The third stage comes after completing their stint in the rehab centre. They are then taken into Snehalaya and given academic education.

The centre offers the following services:

- 1.Registration of Children with the Child Welfare Board
2. Education
3. Home Placement
4. Vocational Placement

5. Room Placement
6. Job Placement
7. Medical Care – Daily care, Infirmary Care, Hospital Care and Treatment
8. English Speaking Classes
9. Computer Course

There used to be Drop - In - Centers at Valsad, Baroda, Anand and Surat. These which links the centre and the street children, had to be closed down due to sheer lack of funds. The intake of new boys is coming down as a result. The centre has the capacity to accommodate 100 boys, but now houses only 60.

In the evening, you suddenly hear a blast of music and you wonder where it is coming from. Within no time the children are all around talking animatedly. The children from the street, who had to worry about

their daily bread, feel secure, and produce heavenly music during their evening recreation.

Future plans:

1. Settling of the boys in Industries
2. Greater interaction with the police and other care groups
3. Research and documentation wing to disseminate the experience
4. To procure and provide more locker services
5. To restart drop-in centres again in Surat as it is the hub of street children in Gujarat.

These are two special needs that we have.

1. New Lockers for the boys 1.50 Lac.
 2. 5 Computers with accessories 1.50 Lac.
- The cost of maintaining one child for one month is about Rs.5,000/-



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Marriages are Made in Heaven

and in Snehalaya - Home of Love (Guwahati)



The children of Snehalaya, Guwahati, join Naina and Ganesh to celebrate their wedding

We cannot always trace the family of children who get 'lost' and are found by Don Bosco. Those who grow up with us from their early childhood face an issue when they grow up and become young adults. They need a suitable partner, and find the resources to start a family of their own.

In our Indian culture, it is extra hard for girls to handle this issue.

Recently we conducted the marriage of Naina and Ganesh at Don Bosco Snehalaya, Guwahati, Assam. The generosity of a donor in Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala enabled us to help this couple to start their family. They now have a place to live in and a means to support



Fr. Lukose Cheruvalel, Director of Snehalaya, shares out the wedding Cake

themselves.

The number of girls that run away from home is much smaller than the number of boys who do so. Nevertheless, there are, indeed, numerous girls on our streets and railway platforms, living on their own for one reason or another.

Out of the 25 centres for street children run by Don Bosco in Kolkata-Howrah, 4 are exclusively for girls. Several of the 92 towns in India, where we work for street children and child workers, have separate institutions dedicated exclusively to the care of girls. Preparations are under way at Snehalaya for

the wedding of a second girl, helped by the same donor Thiruvananthapuram.

FROM WASTELAND TO A GREEN PARADISE



“Earlier people had to flock to the town in the dry season, looking for work. Now the larger land-owners find it difficult to get people to work in their farms as all are busy in their own farms,” says Shankar Rao Shirsath of Dongargan.

The dramatic change in the village was made possible by Bosco Gramin Vikas Kendra (BGVK), founded by Bro. Alex Gonsalves SDB.

All the 14 blocks of Ahmednagar except one are within the ‘water scarce’ zone.

A majority of the villagers had bitter experiences of government grants and schemes gone waste. So, the programme was carried out on an experimental basis on the farms of a few willing individuals of Dongargaon village.

A year later, not only the wells in those treated farms, but the wells in the adjacent farms too, were recharged! 50 acres of the village were gradually covered. A watershed committee was formed with members comprising of the villagers themselves.

The programme has now transformed the lives of people in 22 villages within the districts of Ahmednagar and Beed in Maharashtra state.

Convincing the people to give up a portion of the land for the watershed structures was a big task.

After mapping Dongargan for the Water Shed work, a spot was identified for a check dam. The owner, who was not on good terms with his neighbour, would not allow it.

“I do not want HIM benefitting from the check dam,” was his reasoning.

A village meeting (Gram Sabha) was called and the benefit of building the check dam in the particular place was explained to him. But he did not budge.

A respected elder stood up and said, *“If you stand against the village’s benefit, none of the villagers will ever attend any of your family functions, be it a wedding or a funeral.”* These strong words gave the owner of the land a change of heart.

Such instances happened occasionally. But the strength of the community always prevailed.

The total number of units of different works in 22 villages is below:

Sl. No	Watershed Structures	Quantity/ Areas covered
1	Continuous Contour Trenches	2396 hectares
2	Gully Control Structures	9973
3	Farm Bunding	4800 hectares
4	Nullah bunds	382
5	Check Dams	118
6	Gabion Dams	23

Monetary Returns

The watershed structures conserve water and facilitate its seepage into the ground. It also prevents and controls erosion. Crop productivity increases, resulting in more monetary returns.

The table shows the changes and increase in crop areas before and after the implementation of the watershed projects at Dongargan, the first village to have the project implemented:

Crop		Bajara	Onion	Sun-flower	Wheat	Gram	Jowar	Total Cultivation	Increase in Area
Cultivation in hectares (Kharif Season)	Before Watershed	30	2	5	-	-	-	37	75
	After Watershed	90	10	12	-	-	-	112	
Cultivation in hectares (Rabi Season)	Before Watershed	-	4	-	28	20	25	77	128
	After Watershed	-	13	-	69	48	75	205	

Sl. No	Village	Annual Monetary Returns		
		Before	After	Percentage Increase
1	Dongargan	51.28	143.15	179
2	Ratadgaon	20.63	57.97	180
3	Agadgaon	61.53	186.22	202
4	Mathani	31.03	98.11	216
5	Manjar Sumba, Ghat-Deolgaon	47.77	151.72	217
6	Pimpalgaon (U)	76.84	144.76	88
7	Khandke	40.07	94.65	136
8	Kaudgaon	47.64	124.31	160
9	Parewadi	45.77	105.21	129
10	Sonewadi	35.36	75.88	114
11	Kolhewadi	32.85	74.00	125
12	Sasewadi	70.77	155.53	119
13	Jamb	50.1	120.3	240

14	Marathwadi	52.1	95	182
15	Hariwadi	29.1	70	240
16	Bhairwadi	55.1	80.1	145.3
17	Pimpalgaon (L)	56.1	79.6	141.88
18	Baliwadi	60.1	88.3	146.92
19	Pimpal Gaonghat	65.9	86.3	130.95
20	Ranjani	69.3	85.4	123.32
21	Deogaon	70.3	99.5	141.53
22	Kaudgaon	65.9	100.9	153.11

Comprehensive Package

The watershed programme is designed as a comprehensive package inclusive of health facilities, income generation activities, women empowerment, etc.

- With the increase in agricultural production, villagers are encouraged to rear milch animals

instead of the unproductive cattle they had earlier.

- Introduction of hygienic and clean fuel from bio gas plants. This also reduces deforestation.
- Poultry, goat rearing and mushroom cultivation to supplement income
- Multiple cropping and horticulture, using drip irrigation and sprinklers
- Self-help groups to empower women and also to increase their health seeking behaviour. It also facilitates availing of government funds, subsidies and loans.

Awards to Bro. Alex and BGVK



1. Maharashtra Rajya Vanashree Purashkar
2. Cardinal Simon Pimenta Award
3. Samaj Bhushan Purashkar 2003
4. Gram Vikash Bhushan 2003
5. Maharashtra Association of NGOs 2006

6. Rashtriya Shree Pradarshan Vashprada Award 2003
7. Savdaganda Sahitya Samilaan 2008
8. Bharat Vikas Bhushan Purashkar
9. Indira Priyadarshini Award 2002
10. Maharashtra Social Forum Award



With the support of BGVK **Jaya Pavshe** formed a Self Help Group of 23 women in Agadgaon, called Kranti Mahila Mandal. Over a span of time, they purchased a plot of land and built a poultry shed with bank loans and a percentage of their savings. The total value of these is estimated to be about 10 lakhs.

“Though we are housewives, we are also able to contribute to the income of the family through our SHG income generation activities. My eldest son was able to go for higher studies and he did his M.Sc in biotechnology. Now he works in Berlin, Germany. My younger son just finished his M.B.A. All these are possible because of BGVK’s watershed programme,” says Jaya Pavshe.

“I am grateful to Don Bosco for the education I received. I appreciate their efforts to educate the children of the poor in our country.” **Vishwanathan Anand, World Chess Champion**





Gobar gas plants.

BGVK got me trained and then commissioned me to build about 600 Gobar gas plants. Seeing their affordability and efficiency, even individuals wanted to have the plants built for their family. By now I must have built around 1000 gobar gas plants', says **Kishan Shirsad** with a sense of achievement.



Sambhaji Langde, who used to go to the town every dry season to work in an agro-medical shop is now cultivating oranges and pomegranates using sprinklers to water his orchard. **Pandrinath Ghorpude** worked formerly as a coolie; now he is the proud owner of a Tractor to cultivate his farm with. **Kanu Marathi** owned almost only 'wasteland'. Now he is a large-scale horticulturist.



Suman Gaekwad formed about 90 SHGs in Ahmednagar District.

“BGVK gave me opportunities to attend numerous trainings and seminars related to women’s rights, income generation activities, government schemes, etc. That is the secret of my success in mobilizing women to form Self Help Groups,” says Suman Gaekwad. She is frequently invited to speak to women by NGOs and Government agencies.

“Earlier, people did not support the idea of women forming an organization. Now it is always a pride to see thousands of women coming together every year for the Mahila Mela. It is all because of BGVK,” she adds.



In Ratadgao village of Ahmednagar Taluka, an aged member of a women’s self-help group lived in a dilapidated house. The members of the group made individual contributions and put some money from the groups’s savings to help her build a new house. They provided their free labour too.



Bro. Alex Gonsalves sdb. Born on 3rd November, 1953, in a small village called Akashi in Basin Taluka, Thane district, Brother Alex Gonsalves SDB is the fourth child in his family. His parents were farmers, cultivating their small farm.

As a young boy, he saw Don Bosco fathers playing with children. Right from that moment he knew he wanted to be one of them, a Salesian. He joined the Salesian Society in 1972.

“A conversation with Bro. P.M. Thomas sdb, made me decide on becoming a brother to do something for the farmers in particular. He was my inspiration. I saw something extraordinary in him,” he relates.

“During my MSW days, I used to visit the villages around. I understood people’s style of living and their basic problems - to get water even for their daily use,” he recalls.



People’s struggle for water inspired Bro. Alex

FROM MY PERSONAL DIARY Fr. M.C. George Menamparampil sdb

I got a call from a donor, one day.

“You wrote to us that you would be willing to visit our family, pray with us and bless us. Could you come to our house?” asked the lady.

“Certainly. Just let me know how to reach your place,” I replied.

“If you come here, you must visit two houses – here where I am and my own house.”

“No problem. I will be glad to do that.”

My cousin drove me to the place following the directions they gave us. I found, to my surprise, that the one who had called me was the maid who serves the family she called me from. She had called at the request of her master.

After a chat, a prayer and a donation, she asked, “Shall we now go to my house?”

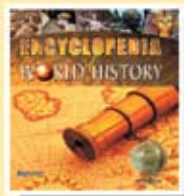
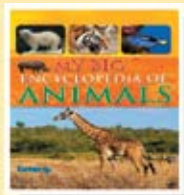
The four of us walked along a narrow pathway between other houses leading to her place – a small little home, all neat and clean – built for her by her master. We chatted some more, prayed and blessed her. And then she gave me Rs.500/=.

My cousin said, on our way back, “By all human reasoning, she should have been asking you for a donation instead of her making a donation to you!”

It is, indeed, true that most of those who donate to the needy are those who have experienced what it means not to have enough!

You may make your contributions through our website (www.bosconetindia.org) using your credit card or your debit card, even if you do not have net-banking facility. Just click on the **“Donate”** button on the top right corner of the home page and follow the few easy steps.





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The children of Don Bosco Snehalaya, Baroda, entertain a crowd with a dance.

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