



THE JOY OF FATIGUE¹!

“When the going gets tough, the tough get going”!

In these days of the pandemic, while we are faced with many challenges and serious suffering, there is cause for joy and gratitude.

We recognize many of those faces hidden behind masks as they reach out with help and support to the needy! It brought a sense of pride to recognize in those photos and videos, our confreres, and our collaborators.

On many social media networks, we have been expressing our pride and joy to see confreres and lay collaborators putting their lives at risk to reach out with help and support to the most needy and vulnerable.

While each and every one who is doing various types of relief work is involved in it for the sake of the needy with no desire for personal gain, I thought it good to share some data on our outreach, because, every one of us are involved. It is our collective identity and resources that reach out to people through our members.

With gratitude to everyone in our international community led by the Rector Major, the Economer General and his team, Fr George Menampampil and the hosts of benefactors, funding agencies, BoscoNet, PDOs, Communities, and individual confreres and lay collaborators, I am happy to present the following data on our outreach. This data is not exhaustive. Kindly share data that might be missed out here. Please send them to the directors of our Province Development Offices (PDOs) or to the Bosco Communications (BOSCOM) delegates of each Province.

Response from South Asia to Covid Relief

Our confreres and collaborators have adopted a multi-pronged approach to tackle the physical, spiritual and psychological needs of the people. While our schools and colleges have continued to serve their pupils and their families through adapting to online education to tide over the crisis, others have been engaged in working with the migrant populations that have been most affected. Our PDOs have been coordinating relief work among the rural and urban poor. Cementing all these together is the ministry of prayer and spiritual accompaniment provided by teams of confreres both in person and online. Experts have been engaged also in providing psychological counselling to the needy. The horrible situation of many young workers is evidenced from the small survey done by our Bosco Migrant Services which found that as high as 84% of those interviewed in a particular State had less

¹ Pope Francis speaks of “happy tiredness” in *Evangelii Gaudium*, 82.

than Rs. 100/- (US\$ 1.5) with them as they faced the onslaught of the pandemic situation.

Our PDOs, coordinated by BoscoNet have been distributing dry ration, cooked and parcelled food, snack packs, face masks (produced at our centres or procured) through coordination with various agencies and people of good will.

Interventions	TOTAL
Dry ration kits distributed (No. of kits)	1,45,822
No. of beneficiary family members (ration kits)	6,45,741
Sanitary kits (Family & Individual)	47,883
Cooked food distributed (individuals)	4,36,705
Masks distributed (No.)	4,10,375
Donation to Govt. Relief Fund (INR)	25,14,000
Counselling (No. of persons)	2,867
Drinking water (Ltrs)	2,65,000
Nutrition kit (No. of kits)	880
Ayurvedic medicine to improve immunity	450
Children / baby kits	7,853
Special baby food (No. of kits)	200
Cookies & cakes (No. of people/kids)	22,124
Direct cash transfer (No. of families)	135
Cash for work (No. of people)	24

**data as on 14 May 2020, collected by BoscoNet from PDOs*

The pandemic has refreshed our consciousness that we are a union of body, mind and soul. We can fight a physical virus with our individual and collective behavioural choices of social distance and other measures. Many of our fellow men and women of faith were deprived of the spiritual nourishment they were used to in the celebration of the sacraments and the sharing of the Word of God in community. The great job of education to feed the minds and prepare honest citizens and good Christians for our society was seriously affected by the closing of educational institutions. Our confreres and collaborators have risen to address these situations in many creative ways. The table below illustrates a list of such interventions on behalf of the people.

	Online Masses Daily Average	Weekly/Spiritual Events viewership	Videos/Albums/Talks/Posters Other Services
INB – Mumbai	1,500	92,520	14,658 via multi-lingual Online & 79 Print, Promos, Quiz online, Counselling/Therapy: 915 clients

INC – Kolkata	1100	4980	Online Lessons to 400 students/Counselling, Radio Edu Pods for 1,13,000 college students from Radio Salesian
IND – Dimapur	1,299	1,555	11 (songs/publications), Migrant services
ING – Guwahati	NA	3,000	17,000 (Sermons, Songs) produced, Online Classes, Multimedia services
INH – Hyderabad	700	3,670	Albums, Online Classes, Video conferences
INK - Bangalore	5,900	216	3000 (videos), Counselling, Online classes, Cartoons
INM – Chennai	1,500	30,000	45,000 views, Counselling 320, Online Platform Services
INN – New Delhi	NA	NA	Online masses, Videos, Online Counselling/lessons, Migrant services
INP – Panjim	1,610	160	5900, Online Classes, Albums/Video, Multimedia Productions, Migrant services
INS – Shillong	14,600	12,000	47,000 views, Rosary Chat online, Publications, Online Classes
INT - Tiruchy	300	8,000	2000 social media posts/2 Video songs, Multimedia Services
LKC – Sri Lanka	200	1800	Video reports of Covid, Online publications
Total	27,409	1,51,121	

*data as on 14 May 2020, collected by BOSCOM

Despite the many laudable interventions made by us and a lot of people of good will, we are fully aware that the help that has been offered meets only a fraction of what is desperately needed immediately. The future needs are even more challenging. The plans of our relief services definitely would be grossly short-sighted if we do not have a long-term vision to what's coming up ahead.

The dreams of our young people have taken a beating!

In the post lock-down scenario, we will be faced with many challenges – not the least among them, rekindling the dreams of the young. (Pope Francis advised us at our 28th General Chapter to help others dream and achieve dreams).

Some of the serious challenges curtailing the dreams of our young people to march out of poverty with their families can be anticipated. Many of our confreres have gathered in Provinces and networks to brainstorm possible ideas to help our young people in the unwelcome but expected context of:

- Increase in chronic poverty
- Increase in malnutrition
- Increase in child-labour
- Joblessness (urban and rural)
- Dropouts from schools and colleges (loss for the young people, their families, and consequent effects on our own self-financing institutions to simultaneously support payment of teachers and poor students)
- Absence of skilled labour in cities (due to migrant workers returning home)
- Rural poverty (due to returned migrant workers who used to economically support their families)
- Psychological suffering caused by failure, incapacity to provide for family and dear ones, and the danger of despair and hopelessness

While we take pride in the contribution we have made to reach out to the poor, and continue to do so, we need to be ever more inventive to come out of this situation, to help our young people to rise from the ashes to live in dignity. As always, we depend on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our confreres and collaborators, on the maternal protection of our Blessed Mother and the never failing providence of God our Father through the intercession of Jesus Our Lord and Master. May Don Bosco the father and friend of youth help us to be truly friends and fathers to the young.




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