

# DON BOSCO Ashalayam

**Newsletter  
June 2020**

**158/18, Belilious Road, Howrah**

## Director's Message

Dear Friends,

We are living in strange times and I would say unprecedented since we have never encountered such a situation before atleast not in our lifetime. Though there have been warnings and dire predictions of such a situation but we never ever imagined we would really be in one. The sudden unplanned lockdown plunged India into crises; economic and humanitarian and we saw millions of desperate migrant workers trudging on the highways in the searing summer heat, desperate for the familiar place called home. With economic activity at a standstill millions have lost their livelihood. in our neighborhood itself we saw families struggling to survive and quickly organized ourselves to provide relief by way of food rations to the helpless families. I'll not go into the particulars as all our relief activities are detailed in this newsletter. I appreciate our staff members ably led by Rajib Goswami who worked day and night in first identifying the neediest families then ensuring that the food rations and other essentials like masks and soap reached them in the quickest possible time. I'm also grateful to our donors for their proactive approach that saved more than 1700 families from starvation.



Fr Mathew Parakonath  
Director

## RELEIF ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE

Food rations distributed	Nos
To needy families	1487
Families of NCLP children	250
Total families helped	1737

Cooked Food for children	Nos
In Kalyani	200
In Bhattanagar	480
Total Children helped	680

Cash & food	Estima ted	Given so far
For DBA Children's families	200	46
For Past Pupils	100	16
Total families helped	300	62

Masks & other items distributed	Nos
Masks	3500
Special masks for hospitals	120
Hygiene materials for adolescents	200
Soaps & Sanitizers	1700

## Covid-19 Relief Activities

In our neighborhood there are vulnerable communities needing help especially the daily wagers who have lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown. It was decided to constitute a Volunteer Force consisting of staff members and volunteers. This team identified needy families in Bhattanagar, Liluah and Kadamtala areas of Howrah city. All the identified families had lost their livelihoods and had no spare cash left to buy food for their families and if not helped immediately faced the prospect of starvation. Each family were given food rations consisting of rice, lentils, potatoes, masala powder and edible oil. The food rations were distributed in Kadamtala, Liluah and Bhattanagar. The distribution was carried out in coordination with the local police station who ensured that the food distribution was carried out in an orderly manner. We shall continue to help these families for the entire duration of the lockdown, in fact this week the **Food Security Assistance has helped 1472 families'** so far. This includes 215 families from our ASSP Centres. A further **250 families** under the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) of DBA are being given food rations every month since April.

**200 children** in Kalyani were given cooked food consisting of rice, dal, vegetable, chicken curry and papad. Another **60 children** are being served cooked food in Bhattanagar 4 times a week. These children are from families who have lost their livelihoods and have not received any assistance from the Government. We are trying to link them with other organizations so that they get food for the other three days. In Howrah Station **22 families** having infants were given baby food in addition to the food rations for each family. Social distancing norms were strictly maintained during the distribution programs our staff members with the help of the police ensured that there was no crowding at any point and people stood in the queue two meters apart from each other. Each recipient in the queue was given a coupon and he/she stepped up to the counter only when their coupon number was called out.



*Food packets being prepared prior to distribution*



*Police assist our staff in the food distribution program*



*Cooked food being distributed to children in Bhattanagar*

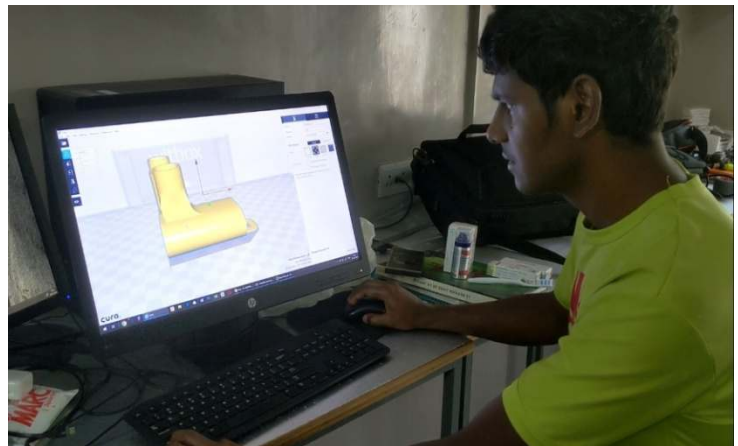


## Mask manufacturing and distribution & Sanitary Napkin distribution

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The VTC unit in Kalyani is busy making masks for the local community surrounding our campus. Masks are in short supply and wherever it is available the retailers are charging twice the original value. With the production in our VTC we could distribute the much needed masks, free of cost to the nearby communities and also in the slum areas

One of our boys **Munna Singh**, staying in our Bakrahat hostel and currently studying B-Tech electronics & telecommunications designed and printed a special mask on a 3D printer. The masks are for use by medical professionals. Basically a sport item, this mask, in the wake of Covid-19 has been converted for medical use and is known as *Easy Breath Ventilator Mask*. The prototype of the mask was given by **Consiglio Fondazione Decathlon Italia**. The masks were distributed in major hospitals like Institute of Neurosciences-Kolkata.



*Munna designs mask on his desktop*

*Below: Munna hands over the masks to doctors in Institute of Neurosciences*

*Left: Masks being made in Kalyani Vocational Training Centre*



## Cyclone Amphan wreaks havoc in West Bengal

Close on the heels of Covid-19 came Cyclone Amphan piling more misery and destitution on an already hapless population. Cyclone Amphan with torrential rains and wind speeds gusting at 185 Kilometers per hour made landfall in coastal West Bengal on the afternoon of 20 May and just a couple of hours later roared its way into Kolkata smashing into houses, uprooting trees and blowing away electric poles like pieces of matchsticks. It left a trail of destruction in its wake and disrupted normal life for days, it took more than a week for power to be restored in the city. Fortunately the Government of West Bengal had as a precautionary measure evacuated people living in temporary dwellings and hutments to safer places like school buildings so the death toll wasn't very high but the destruction to property and agricultural crops has been massive and the rebuilding damaged property is likely to take years.

The crops in our Kalyani campus has been wiped out and a couple of buildings damaged, many trees have also toppled over. In Ashalayam, Howrah the glass panes of the south facing windows have shattered and water entered the building and all the rooms on the ground floor. We also lost several trees and the kitchen garden was completely devastated. Many of our past pupils houses have been severely damaged in this cyclone Ashalayam is reaching out to them with a onetime financial help to repair/rebuild their houses.



### ***Aftermath of Cyclone Amphan***

*Boys wade through the flooded corridor in DBA*

*Right: The banana plantation in Kalyani is completely destroyed.*

*A past pupils house also in Kalyani.*





## Status of DBA Children

Following the Government directive to children's institutions to send children back to their parents, Ashalayam informed all the parents to come to DBA on 17 March 2020 to take their children back till such time the lockdown is in force. The Government had already shut down all educational institutions. All children have been provided with protective face masks and a hand sanitizer per family. DBA staff explained and demonstrated precautionary and hygiene practices. The children who have gone home are being followed up over phone on a weekly basis. The families are being advised to follow the aforementioned precautionary and hygiene measures and to observe the lockdown rules. Many guardians have appealed for food or financial help as they do not have any work and hence without any earnings. We are making arrangements to help the families that are possible to be reached. We plan to help the others after the lockdown is lifted. A sum of INR 2000 is being given to the families in distress. We estimate that around 180-200 families shall need this assistance.

Some children are still with us either because they have no place to go or their parents couldn't come from distant places due to travel difficulties/restrictions. There are 96 such children in various DBA units. The children staying with us are strictly confined within the compound of the respective units. The children have a daily routine of study, house duty, sports & games and TV time.

One of our past pupil Kapil Deb had secured a job after completing his Graphic Printing course from DB Delhi but unfortunately he had to resign and come back to Ashalayam as he had contracted TB. He was immediately admitted to a TB hospital where he recovered after undergoing treatment for four months. He was recuperating in Kalyani when he again suffered relapse. He's currently under treatment and recovering well. Another past pupil Tapashi Mondal working as a nurse developed a neurological cum spinal problem which became quite serious. On consultation with several specialist doctors she was advised to undergo surgery in order to regain normalcy. Tapashi was operated upon by neurosurgeons in PG Hospital Kolkata. Tapashi is better now and recuperating at home.



*Above: Fr. Jose hands over cash and food rations to Amrit Singh's mother.*

*Below: Akash & Raju with parents collect food rations and get cash assistance from DBA.*



## DBA Project activities during Lockdown

With the lockdown in force all our community outreach programs have been put on hold till the duration of the lockdown the exceptions being the Railway and District Childline as they are deemed as emergency services. Both projects are functioning with staff in rotation in coordination with the RPF and the District Administration. The children who have been rescued and restored back home are being followed up over phone. The Helpline is receiving calls from such families appealing for help especially regarding food and medicines. Childline is linking these families to the nearest Block/District offices for getting essential items like food or medicines. A follow up call is made to find out whether the family has actually received the requested help from the authorities. It has been observed that in 80% of the cases the families seeking help have been provided food/medicines by the State Administration. In case the family has not received the desired help, we have contacted the concerned officer with a request to reach the family in need on a priority basis. Our phone support also includes advise on precautionary measures regarding COVID-19 and the importance and necessity of strictly observing the lockdown protocols.

There has been a spike in child abuse cases during the lockdown. Distress calls to 1098 have increased by 50%. The response to distress calls is to inform the police station nearest to the distressed caller and simultaneously informing the District Child Protection Office and the Child Welfare Committee to take action to remove the child from the abusive environment and move him/her to a child care institution.

Also the confinement is giving rise to tension and stress regarding food and money issues as well as anxiety as to the uncertain future in the aftermath of the lockdown. Our counselors are helping the children and their families over phone by talking to them, motivating them to stay positive and soothing their anxiety about the future.

During the lockdown our staff were working from home or directly going to activity point; preventing child marriage, child rescue etc With the relaxation in lockdown norms from 1 June 2020, our staff members are on duty with a third of the staff being present on any given day.



*Baby food for infants and food rations  
for families in Howrah Station*



Online counseling support poster in Howrah station  
and other locations across the city

### **DBA welcomes the new Salesian members**

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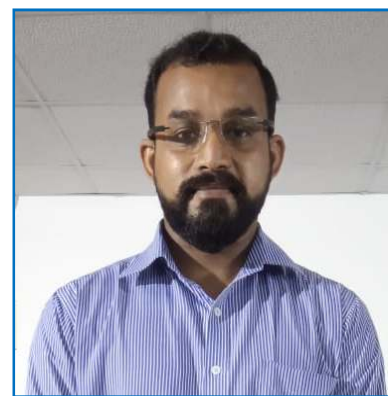
Fr. Siby Vadakel, Fr. P.V. Thomas and Fr. Cheriatt Jose joined the Ashalayam team this month. Fr. Siby has held positions of principal in Don Bosco Schools in Park Circus, Liluah, Bandel and Kalyani. Fr. P.V. Thomas was in charge of technical training in DB SERI. Fr. Cheriatt Jose has completed his Masters in Social Work and is enthusiastic about the new assignment in Ashalayam. Their rich experience in working with youngsters is sure to be a source of strength to DBA in these difficult times. Fr. Mathew Parakonath and Fr. Jose M.J. continue as Director and Administrator respectively.



**Fr. Siby Vadakel**



**Fr. P.V. Thomas**



**Fr. Cheriatt Jose**

### **Farewell for Fr. Saju and Bro. Polycarp**

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Fr. Saju and Bro. Polycarp have been with Don Bosco Ashalayam since the last three years as Assistant Directors. Fr. Saju is a member of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) Howrah. Both, now move on to take up their new assignments in Siliguri and Krishnaagar respectively. Ashalayam is grateful for their guidance during the last three years and we wish them all the best in their new assignments.



**Fr. Saju P.T.**



**Bro. Polycarp**



### Obituaries

We are enveloped in grief and sadness at the passing away of two of our past pupils. 23 year old **Deepa Mistry** died of multiple organ failure last month. She was under the care of Mother Teresa's Sisters for the last one year. As her condition deteriorated she was admitted to hospital where after a month she breathed her last.

**Bharati Mondal**; 30 years succumbed to cancer. She was under treatment for the last two years and at one point it seemed that the cancer was in remission and she would pull through but that was not to be, she succumbed to a relapse on 31 May 2020.

### An Appeal

*Ashalayam endeavors to provide all facilities required for the all round healthy development of a child. For this we need you and look to you for support. You can sponsor a child's medical and clothing requirements or nutrition and/or education for one month or a longer period per your convenience.*

	Expense Head (For 1 Child)	1 month INR	3 months INR	6 months INR	12 months INR
1	Food & Nutrition	2000	6000	12000	24000
2	Education	900	2700	5400	10800
3	Medical Expenses	For 1 year INR 2000			
4	Clothes, Uniform, shoes	For 1 year INR 3000			
5	Feeding Children during Covid-19 pandemic	INR 70.00 per meal per child			
6	Food Rations for needy families	INR 400.00 per family			

**Donors outside India may send their remittances to our bank, details given below;**

**Account No: 11960100048604**

**Federal Bank Ltd.**

**Howrah Branch**

**IFSC: FDRL0001196**

**DON BOSCO ASHALAYAM**

**158/18, Belilious Road, Howrah 71101, India**

**email: [mathewpara@gmail.com](mailto:mathewpara@gmail.com), [www.dbashakolkata.org](http://www.dbashakolkata.org)**

**Tel: +91 33 2643 9341, 2643 9296**

**WhatsApp No. +91 62890 51058**



### Thank You Helene

Don Bosco Ashalayam is grateful to ASA Volunteer Helene Teffaine for her dedication and hard work for Ashalayam. Her efforts resulted in several funding and project opportunities for DBA that provides education, nutrition, hygiene and medical support for a thousand plus children in Ashalayam as well as in the outreach projects. It's our greatest regret that we could not give her a proper send-off party due to Covid-19 restrictions in force. Helene developed a great rapport with the Ashalayam kids and comfortably slipped into a role of a supportive Ashalayam family member. During a year and half long stay here she also picked up basic Bengali...so Helene from all of us in DBA; *dhanyavad* and *bhalo thakbe, theek aache!*



## Thanks & Gratitude to our Friends for funding Covid-19 relief activities

★	ASA France & Frederic Boisset, France
★	Dr. Michael & Angela Jacobi Foundation, Germany
★	Raja Foundation, Netherlands
★	Don Bosco Mission, Bonn
★	Heidrun Abel & her team, Germany
★	Erika, Elizabeth & Team, Germany
★	Decathlon, India
★	David Gomes, Dubai
★	And all our other friends and benefactors

Grateful acknowledgements to all the staff who worked with zeal and dedication in the Homes and in the community during the crises and under risk of life threatening infection. Thanks to; The **Holy Family Sisters** in Kalyani and the staff for working tirelessly in caring for the children, preparing and distributing food for children from local communities and for the making and distribution of masks.

Home in Charges **Nabin Roy** and **Habil Panna** and ambulance driver **Linus Kandulna & Ashish Tirkey**, security guard **Prakash Barla** who have stayed put in DBA to care for the children since the beginning of the lockdown. They haven't seen their family's for the last three months. **Rajib Goswami** and his team for organizing with precision the food distribution programs in Howrah, Liluah and Bhattanagar. All other staff members who contributed to caring for our children as well as participated in community activities.

## THANK YOU