

Covid 19 - SCJM Initiatives & Responses

Sisters of Charity of Jesus & Mary, Delhi

21-A Ring Road, Lajpat Nagar IV, New Delhi-110 024, India

We are passing through probably one of the toughest times of our lives. The Covid-19 pandemic is keeping every one of us scared and concerned. We are hearing and watching the worldwide situation arising from the corona virus pandemic in the news and how even the most empowered nations have become helpless in the face of this pandemic. It has devoured the lives of people irrespective of age and social status. And it has shattered the economy nationally & globally.

The Corona virus pandemic has brought in fear, confusion, and uncertainty. Further, it has affected many people, especially the migrants, daily wage earners, and others who live hand to mouth every day. More than ever we have come to realize that our interdependence is not only with our fellow human beings but also with our fellow created beings. An invisible virus has driven us, in spite of social distancing, closer to one another and to the invisible but experience-able God. Many have been very magnanimous and philanthropic and have extended a helping hand to the poor, needy, sick, elderly, abandoned and the migrant workers. We have witnessed that human kindness is still alive, especially those who are on the frontline to keep the people safe and healthy.

Preventive mechanism in the form of complete lock down has created a concern of bread and butter to daily wage laborers. Stranded migrant laborer population struggled with the suspension of train and bus services. These restrictions have left them high and dry with no source of income and insufficient ration in their families.

We the Sisters of Charity of Jesus & Mary, New Delhi, extended our help to such families and individuals in the different parts of our country.

This bulletin presents a glimpse of our efforts to

respond to the challenges in reaching out to the poor and the marginalized.

The States that we extended our help are:

- Delhi
- Haryana
- Punjab
- Himachal Pradesh
- Uttar Pradesh
- Assam
- Kerala
- Tamil Nadu
- Jammu & Kashmir

The main target groups are:

- * Stranded Migrants
- * Daily wage earners
- * Economically poor families
- * Widows
- * Leprosy Patients
- * Food through Common Kitchen
- * People needing medical treatment



DELHI

SCJM Provincialate

Delhi, the capital of India shares the substantial population of economic migrants in it. Migrants are the backbone of Delhi's economy. When the lockdown was first imposed, scores of migrant workers began to leave Delhi. However, there were also a lot of people who had nowhere to go after the lockdown other than take shelter in the open areas. We reached out by providing dry ration kits to stranded migrant laborers and leprosy colony at Lajpat Nagar, poor families at Sant Nagar & Mayur Vihar by joining hands with the Adversary Panel on Hunger Relief, NCP Delhi. Also we sponsored five days' breakfast for Janta Meal at Shiv Vihar camp put up by Delhi government and provided ration at common kitchen at Lajpat Nagar which provided meals to the needy.



Aya Nagar

The nationwide lockdown due to Covid-19 has caused a lot of distress among people especially among the poor. So too here in Aya Nagar, the people are mostly from Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal who struggle to feed their families as they are daily wage labourers. Due to complete lockdown, they are unable to feed their families .

We the SCJMs here in Aya Nagar were inspired to help out these poor families and we have helped 23 families by providing them food items for a month. A person who needed financial help for the treatment was also helped financially. We could afford these from our earnings. We still would like to reach out to a few more deserving families and relieve them of their distress in these times.

GURUGRAM

HARYANA

Gurugram, Sector 9, the nearby area where we are residing is declared as containment zone. The number of multiple corona virus cases is on the increase in Gurugram. In the midst of this pandemic the poor are the ones who suffer the most. They are deprived of the essential goods such as raw ration, milk, grocery, medicine, vegetables, etc. as they have neither money nor job. Most of the people around the area are migrant workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, UP, etc. They work in the factories around and these factories have been closed down. As a result these poor people are without any work and are unable to pay their rent. So they are faced with enormous problems of all sorts. They are unable to go back to their states due to travel restrictions and many other constraints. Some of them expressed their needs to have some rations and we were able to give help to them in a small scale. We are also surrounded by people who are living in slums (shanty houses) who earn their livelihood by picking up rags and selling 'kapadies'. But we have not been able to help them out much as they are many in number. The district administration is providing food coupons to poor families especially to those in the slums and they get once a day cooked meal.

NUH

The unexpected lockdown placed people especially the most vulnerable of the society, into a state of uncertainty of their future and their very existence itself. Here in Nuh, the majority of the population is vulnerable and to add to that some outsiders entered the district bringing along with them Corona virus. In the initial stage of lockdown, Nuh did not have any COVID-19 cases. But with the arrival of outsiders, in spite of the lockdown, cases started increasing. At present Nuh has 65 cases tested positive, 8 active cases with no loss of life. The Health department and the Administration along with some volunteers and NGO staff like Chetanalaya, played a vital role in tracing out affected people, their contacts and placed them under quarantine, which was a herculean task, in a place like Nuh, where majority of the people are illiterate and non-cooperative.

At this juncture, the SCJM sisters came out to help some Assam families, whose earning is from collecting waste materials. 15 such families were helped with dry ration. We also got stitched about 65 masks and distributed among people. In the second phase, our sisters, with the help of local contribution helped 27 migrants from U.P. who are daily wage earners and beggars with ration kits. In the third phase through Chetanalaya, sisters helped 116 families, some of who are migrants from U.P., differently abled, and some very poor villagers.

In another round another 12 families were given help. They were also taught about the right way of hand wash, precautions to be taken while collecting waste materials and how to keep themselves and their children safe all through the day.

We are also trying to organize locally to help the affected needy people.

Amritsar

The first case of COVID -19 in Punjab was detected on 9 March, 2020 when an NRI who returned from Italy was tested positive. However, till the end of March there has been only sporadic increase in the number of positive cases reported in the state with just a handful of deaths. On 23rd March the Govt. imposed full curfew across Punjab without any relaxation and became the first state to impose total curfew because some people were defying to follow the lockdown seriously. Due to the curfew the farmers were unable to go to cities to sell their products, like vegetables, wheat, milk etc. The wheat harvest was badly affected due to bad weather, lack of labourers (the migrant workers left for their home states) and machines which put the economy of the state in uncertain and desperate situation. In rural areas there is unrest over issues of wheat harvesting, unemployment etc. Daily wage earners seem to be the most affected group in the state. Some of the private institutions seem to be in difficult situations to pay salaries to their employees. Since people had to remain at home, family bond is strengthened and parents spend more time with their children. Attitudes of saving, caring and sharing have developed. People have become more self-reliant and dignity of labour has increased. Due to ban on alcohol there are fewer quarrels in the families. People have become aware of the need for hygiene and its importance in life. The role of medical personnel, police and other civic bodies is much appreciated. Earth breathes fresh air and the sky has become clearer as a result of reduced air pollution in the state. People have stopped buying unnecessary things, elders in family are taken care of and life has become simpler and family-centered. Faith in God and family relationship seem to have improved. Both the communities together reached out to 121 families with ration kits. SHO of Amritsar was approached and was helpful in the distribution & maintaining social distancing.

**Lahorigate**

Lahorigate is a very closed set up area. Most of the people live in very congested and ill ventilated homes. Majority of them are daily wage earners. Only a few of them have good and government jobs. Some have private jobs who work in shops, offices and others are rickshaw pullers. The women work as domestic workers, where they earn Rs.400-500 hundred monthly. We are very grateful to the province for having made provision to help the most needy with whatever help they are in need of at this most difficult time of Covid 19. With the strict curfew imposed in Punjab, so far we have been able to help 11 families. Hope to help a few more families in the coming weeks. All the beneficiaries express their deepest gratitude .

CHOGAWAN



Chogawan is one of the backward villages of Amritsar district in Punjab where people mostly live on their daily wages. They work on others' land and houses to earn their living. Being in this area and visiting their families we came to know the struggles of the people here. When the lockdown started due to COVID-19 our hearts were moved by thinking of the poor of this locality. We came to know that they didn't have enough food for their survival, as they were not given anything either by Government or any concerned authorities. Therefore we decided to do something to help the poor of our area. So dry ration was distributed to 60 poor families.



KAULI

Ashadeep community at Kauli is surrounded by many villages where the majority are poor and live upon their daily earning. The lockdown from 22nd of March came as a shock to majority of them as they were totally unprepared for it. For us it was still harder as we were confused as to how to reach out to the people in this situation, as we were not able to go to the people directly due to strict curfew. With the help of our local animators we identified the most needy such as widows, the landless, the daily wage earners and a few migrants. They have not received any ration from the government too. It was a difficult task as the demand was more and many people came requesting for help. We were also helped by a few shopkeepers who packed and reached the materials to us as we were not able to go out much.

The people are still struggling as they don't have any work. They are also used to go for gleaning after the harvest by which they stock wheat for the whole year; this year this too was not possible for them and will have to purchase it which is their main food item. It was an opportunity to be with our needy people and extend them a little help through our charity.



SANGRUR

Corona virus pandemic has impacted people of the whole world on a massive scale. This pandemic has overshadowed the globe with pain and agony. Long time curfew and lockdown have left many people jobless and deprived them of the most basic necessities of life. The only way of lessening the suffering of our brothers and sisters around us is to share our mite and reach out to them in love and compassion. Hence, the Sangrur community, being guided by the Province, has tried to help out some of the most vulnerable in our neighborhood during this lockdown. Financial help was given to two persons : A poor vendor who is a sickly person with multiple health issues and needed financial aid for his huge medical expenses. And a young man, the only bread winner of the family, suffering from kidney dysfunction has to undergo dialysis twice a week. Due to his ill health, he has lost his job. Therefore, during this most difficult time, considering his poor financial condition, the community has offered him monetary help.

The timely little help that we have been able to offer has provided them a great relief from their agonizing experiences. We thank God for making us channels of His loving providence for his suffering children during this pandemic .

KARGAINA

UTTAR PRADESH

The nationwide lock down due to COVID 19 has caused a lot of misery and distress in the families of our surroundings, very specially the daily wage earners, rented families, those without having Ration Cards, widows, beggars who cannot afford to have a meal per day. They live in anxiety and helplessness, in a way forced to live inside the single room with the fear of "STAY AT HOME", only depending on God's providence, and people of good will.

In order to support these needy families, we Shanti Niketan community identified 30 poor families and distributed food items to them. One of the families said '**at least you thought of us and we are grateful to you**'.



"At least you thought of us
and we are grateful to you"

PARTASPUR

In our area most of them are daily wage earners, rickshaw pullers and auto drivers living on rent. These days due to lockdown they are not able to go for work and earn their living. Most of the poor are starving in our villages because of the callousness of the government authorities. They are not given basic necessity which is food and so many people come to our gate and cry for food. So far we have given food kits to 30 families from the community and to 548 families from Manos Project, of different villages. From some of the villages, men have gone to Delhi, Mumbai and South India to work as migrant labourers and their condition is the worst as we see in the news these days. Our fear is that the situation is going to become worse in the coming days. We all may have to learn to live with corona virus by keeping in mind and practicing the four norms like social distancing, wearing masks, washing hands and staying at home.



ASSAM

GOALPARA

In our village, we are surrounded by the people, majority of whom are daily wage earners and a few of them are very aged, sickly and mentally ill with no financial support from anyone. As the lock down due to Covid 19 was announced on March 23, our first thought was what would happen to our poor people? As a community we were inspired & urged us to act fast to identify the neediest people in our vicinity, and then to help them with ration. We went around nine villages to distribute ration to 120 widows sponsored by GGSS (Guwahati Gana Seva Society), the social work wing of the Archdiocese. During each trip proper permission was sought, and government official accompanied us.



EDAPPALLY

KERALA

In Kerala both rich and poor are equally affected by the spread of Covid 19. For the rich it cost heavily, due to closing down of all the income generating sources. But the poor are the genuine victims, since they live on their daily labor. The government, NGOs and likeminded people have become part and parcel of these poor by helping them with shelter, food material and medicine. Most of them are well taken care of. As a community we also helped a few needy families such as widows, dialysis patients etc. We sought out the genuine cases of our neighborhood with the help of our ward councilor. We feel good that we could help them with food materials and sanitizers. The ward councilor and the poor whom we helped are grateful to our service of love. We appreciate our government for the systematic way of taking care of the patients. We are prepared to handle it very effective way. They took the pain to go behind the affected ones and those who are associated with them. The health facilities provided is excellent. The people are instructed to keep the social distancing. The health tips are giving more information for the self-care. Kerala was a model for many countries to prevent the corona spread.



MATHUR

TAMIL NADU

Mathur by far is an area of low income group families depending on daily wages. Even in the normal times “hunger” is a constant companion to many of them. Like the Psalmist who lifted his eyes to the mountain looking for help from the Lord, they are also looking for help from all possible sources. Sacred Heart School being a prominent institution in the locality, the people were quick in approaching us. As we were looking for ways and means of reaching out to them in their need, low and behold, the announcement of allocation of funds from the province for COVID-19 Distress Relief made us swing into action. Rev. Fr. Amal Raj the parish priest who was also approached by the people volunteered to identify the real needy. He expressed his profound gratitude for the generosity of the S.C.J.M Congregation. The 100 families identified included daily wage workers, widows with children and old parents, old people with no substantial support etc. without any discrimination of caste or creed. A day later the Panchayat President having identified 900 very needy families, approached us for assistance. As our request for further help was also accepted, we gladly took upon ourselves to help another hundred families using the fund from school itself this time. The Panchayat officials were very grateful for our co-operation and generous contribution.



Seeing the recipients move away holding the packets close to their heart with a look of gratefulness in their eyes gave us some satisfaction of having been able to reach out to the needy and the vulnerable in the present situation. Yet we know that it was only “a drop in the ocean” and the ocean would need many, many more willing hands and hearts.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

SMAILPUR

Bari Brahmana is an area in the district of Samba in J&K and is inhabited by a large number of migrants who work in the local factories and also as daily wage earners for various works such as construction and other domestic works. Several of them gather at the chowk early morning daily and a few of them are hired (typical of the Gospel story) and the rest go back disappointed.



A week after the lock down started in March, it was found out that the people of Bari Brahmana area were facing problems in meeting their daily needs. So the School, Pastoral Centre, and our Convent decided that we would buy food items worth about one lakh rupees to begin with, to help out at least a hundred families. Rev. Fr. Jaimon Joseph, the manager of the school, took the initiative to procure the food items and get them packed. Each packet contained food items worth about a thousand rupees.

The J&K Govt. has also done its share through distribution of five kg rice per person and one kg of daal per ration card holder. Some ladies who had registered themselves for the scheme received Rs. 500/- into their account. The problem here is that the migrant workers do not have ration cards and hence are left out of the benefits.

The SDPO (DSP) of Bari Brahmana Mr. Sunil Kesar was informed of our plan. He was appreciative of the initiative taken and joined us in distribution. At the end of the distribution the police team was presented with a box of sanitizers too.



HIMACHAL PRADESH

UNA

Una is a small town in Himachal Pradesh. Besides the Govt. employees there are many petty shopkeepers, drivers of private vehicles, auto rickshaw drivers, daily wage earners, migrant laborers for construction works, teachers of private schools, domestic workers, tailors, people engaged in small scale industries for e.g. pickle making, jam, squash etc. doctors, nurses and other employees of private hospitals and nursing homes, farmers etc. who earn more or less enough money to meet their daily needs.

For our special school here it is difficult to conduct on line teaching and the therapy centre had to be closed which has affected the income of the school. Hence we face difficulty in continuing to pay the salary of the teaching as well as non-teaching staff.

We are strictly forbidden by the D.C. and the welfare department to allow any outsiders to visit the campus and our movements are also restricted since the special children are vulnerable. So we could reach out only to eight families with dry ration.

DHARAMSALA

Himachal Pradesh is not a victim of Covid -19 specially Kangra Dist., but the lock down affected the poor people specially the daily wage-workers. Since the lock down of Phase -1 was very strict we were not allowed to go out. The poor whom we knew we inquired over the phone and extended help. Atta Dal, rice, oil and other necessary ration items are given to a few families who are migrant workers. Apart from this, financial help is given to two families for their daily expenses. A widow was also given financial help who spent all her money for the medical care of her ward. There are a few families who could not pay fees & approached the principals of both the schools. The school management is very courteous to the parents and due to financial constraints if parents want to take T.C they are advised not to. Even for the students who cannot afford, the books are given free.



In a way people who are financially sound are coping with the situation much better but being at home, spending day & night within the four walls of the house is a terrible experience. For many people it is a mental tension. We pray fervently, and earnestly desire for a remedy and we are united with the migrants and less privileged of the society during this time when the whole world is fighting against Covid -19.



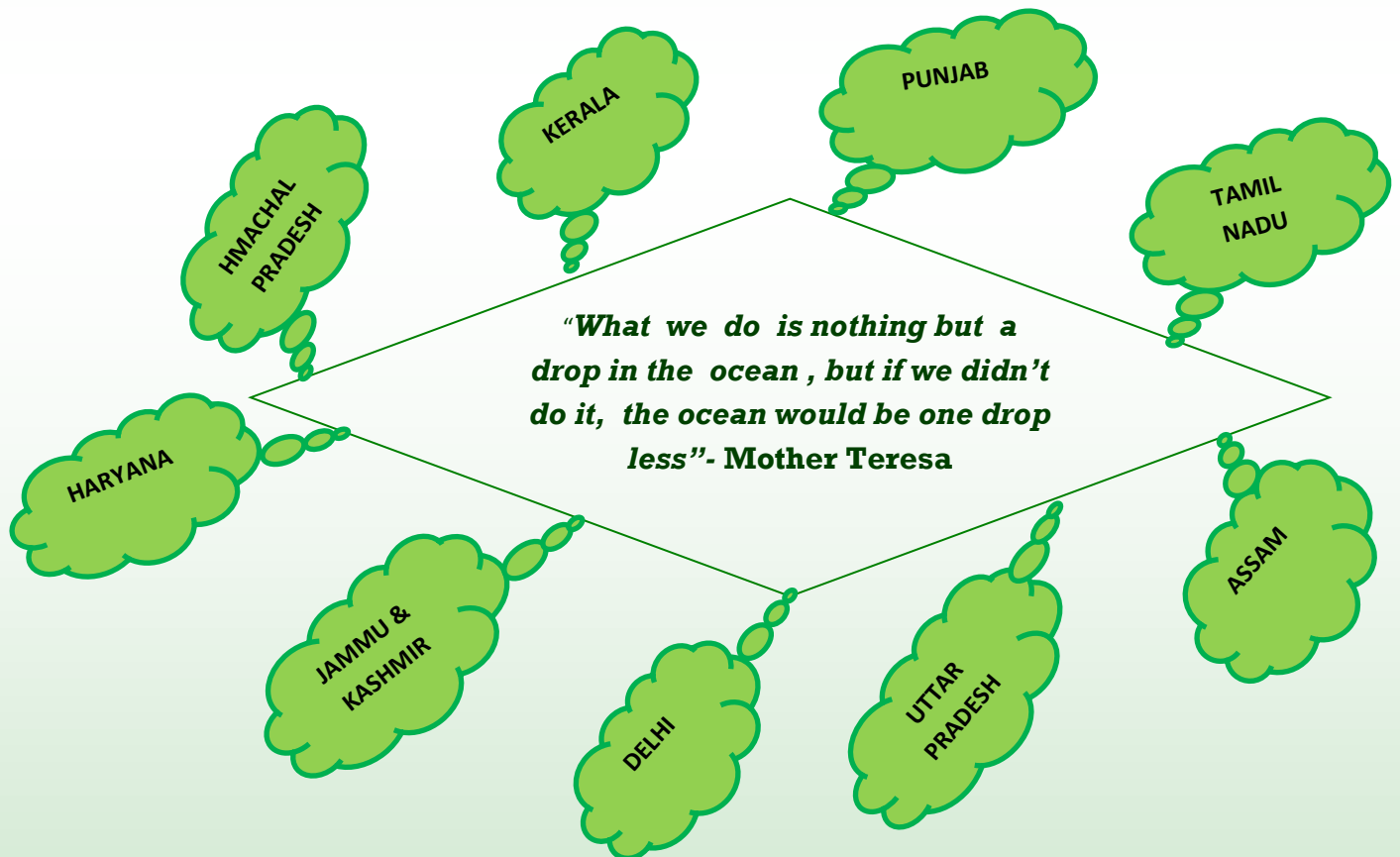
Dalhousie

The lush green Dalhousie was in green zone since the lockdown. But the tourist center is grimly affected in various ways. Hotels used to be the main source of income and they are totally shut down. As a result the owners are without business and the hotel workers are jobless. In this hill station quite a number of *coolies'* sustenance is disturbed. The *Dhobis* who earned their livelihood are struggling to meet their ends . There are old and sickly patients who do not get any support since the doctors of the Civil Hospital keep their distance and do not do any checkup, but only listen to their symptoms and prescribe some medicine. This wild life sanctuary is abundant with wild animals who have abandoned their home and trespass the people in the hills and the pedestrian's life is at stake. Since there is lockdown and also since the houses are far away in the villages, we have not been able to reach out to many. In nearby area we have been able to help 13 families with ration kits.

The pandemic has brought us to fall on our knees before God. May the Lord continue to bless us to serve those who may not be served by others. Let us pray that the Lord may save us from this peril and help us to extend a helping hand. We offer our prayers for those tested positive and those lives battling for life. We pray for all our medical personnel for their physical and mental wellbeing. Love of God help us to be compassionate and serviceable.

Poor Evangelizes us:
Fr. Joseph Triest, our Founder

Thank God and may He bless us all for the generous help we have given to the needy at this time in all our places. Wouldn't Fr. Triest smile at us from above?



Compiled By
Sr. Jessy Thomas SCJM