

2020

# MONTHLY REPORT OF APRIL

**Department of  
Social Work:  
NSS & UBA**

COVID-19 Relief work was organized by St. Xavier's College (Autonomous) Kolkata from the main as well as the rural campus. The College Principal Rev. Dr. Dominic Savio, SJ, organized the relief operations within the city as well as in the villages. At the Park Street Campus, Fr. Principal along with the Vice Principals distributed relief materials on 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> April to about 500 families consisting of rickshaw pullers, families from the nearby slums and to the families of the evening and night school children. About 300 PPE kits were distributed to the doctors and health workers of a charity hospital with support from the College Alumni Association.

In our adopted villages, COVID-19 Relief operation work was organized through the rural campus at Raghobpur. In all, 1920 families, spreading across ten villages, including the UBA villages, were sponsored by the College. The distributions began from 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020. On 7<sup>th</sup> April, UBA Coordinator, Prof. Cheryl Francis along with UBA Cell member (invitee) Mr. Bobby Biswas, visited two adopted villages - Debipur and Shalpur and distributed relief materials to about 100 families. The 6 days long relief work was carried out by about 40 volunteers from the villages around the rural campus for packing and distributing relief materials. The Nepalgunj Police Force helped the initiatives and supported with all the necessary logistics. The relief operation greatly helped the villagers who were struggling to make ends meet. Hemanta Lobo, village contact person of Bolorampur village, said, ***“the relief came as a blessing to the most marginalized families in Bolorampur village and we all want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the college administration”***. On the other hand, Jayati Nath, village contact person of Nurshikdarchowk village, ensured that all the children who attend the Sunday Village Education Programme got the ration beside other families who are always on the periphery as they do not have political allegiance.

A core team consisting of Rev. Dr. Dominic Savio, SJ, College Principal, Rev. Fr. Johnson Padiyara, S.J., Vice Principal of Raghobpur campus, Prof. Cheryl Francis, UBA Coordinator, Mr. Sanjib Koner, the Secretary of Alumni Association, Mr. Dilip Mondol, MLA – Bishnupur Block I, Mr. Bobby Biswas, UBA Cell member (invitee), Mr. Bholanath Sardar, Panchayat Pradhan, Panakua GP, and Mrs. Rita Naskar, Panchayat Pradhan, Kulerdari GP were responsible to plan and implement the relief operations maintaining social distancing protocol.



**Figure 1: Awareness on social distancing and personal hygiene before distribution**



**Figure 2: Relief Distribution in Shalpokur village**





**Figure 3: Villagers maintain social distancing norms while waiting in queue**



**Figure 4: Villagers patiently wait for their turn**

The whole world is under Lockdown trying to slowdown the COVID 19 pandemic spread, and the government and other social sectors, NGOs, Educational Institutions are attending to the fallout on a war footing. Known as the COVID warriors, doctors, nurses, medical staff, people supplying essential goods and commodities, our municipal workers, and some volunteers are battling it out and we salute all of them. The race for a vaccine is on and we hope for the best to happen soon.

We, the NSS family of St. Xavier's College Kolkata, decided to reach out to one another. Since the young are affected in a big way with lot of uncertainties about their future, we felt that we should also do our small bit to strengthen them. During normal circumstances, this NSS group is engaged in social activities spread across five to six villages per week, apart from coordinating in house activities and programmes throughout the year. This NSS group consists of students belonging to various social and economic structures. We have students from the very rich communities to the rural students whose families depend on daily wages. In fact some of these students were prospective bread winners for their families post their graduation. We understood their plight.

So we began our outreach with the NSS Board members and the NSS active volunteers, a small core group of about 28 who form the inner circle, from both the NSS Units. We first formed a WhatsApp group on 4<sup>th</sup> April and soon we realised that students were being very formal and not opening up much. Then we decided that we would call them up individually and then see how it works. It worked! We started on 13<sup>th</sup> April and we are continuing the same.

Some students shared how their families were in doldrums with no income, leaving them with no means to buy their groceries or basic necessities. Some students whose family members were closely working in the frontlines were worried about the safety of their entire family. All the students expressed their fears about their examinations and not having enough books to refer for preparing notes. Some of the outgoing third year students were anxious about their future studies, admissions and job scenario. The students did share that their faculty members circulated notes etc. but few also expressed that they did not have online facilities at home and they shared their phone facilities with other members of their family too. We were told that some students, who had business related to essential commodities, were helping their parents to run their shops as they didn't have their workers. All of them were helping their mothers at home in the kitchen and taking care of general cleanliness.

Most of the students were pleasantly surprised to receive calls from us. It made them feel good and connected and also strengthened. Now they themselves call us and share about their feelings with us. In this way we have been able to connect with our small group and we hope to keep this going. In the process we have also updated the birthday list of all these 28 people on board and we have decided to celebrate them together over phone.

Apart from this, the NSS department has been coordinating with the Rural Campus for distribution of essential provisions to our adopted and nearby villages. We have also connected with the village contact persons through whom we coordinate all our rural outreach programmes. We have connected with some of our partner NGOs with whom we work and send our students for service.

The Department of Social Work & NSS started working from home since 13<sup>th</sup> April from 10.00 a.m. to 12. noon formally from Monday to Friday. The day begins with Staff meeting

on conference for an hour where we share about our experiences not forgetting to keep confidentiality and then we assign our tasks. However, we are available to our students throughout the day. We have also taken our support staff on board and they become part of our meetings once a week. Alongside, we have been working on the department reports.

We all have our roles to play in times of crisis. No matter how big or small it is, it makes a difference and that's what matters. We are trying to make a difference to as many persons as possible. We are trying to burn one candle in one room which can provide some light to the entire room. We hope that this too will pass and that we continue sharing our light with others. Of course post COVID 19, lots of candles will be required. So let's prepare ourselves.

### Future Plan

We are planning out strategies on how to keep this outreach alive and how to train the NSS volunteers who could be actively involved post Covid 19. We are guiding them as to how they could take the awareness campaign of personal hygiene and other COVID 19 related precautionary measures in their immediate neighbourhood, their grocery shops and also digitally. The decision to formulate and implement further Action Plan for UBA related activities would be undertaken based on the recommendations and guidelines of the Government and after College resumes. However, the UBA Cell members are in constant touch with the village representatives and village contact persons and all other stakeholders to be updated with the latest happenings in their respective areas.

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