

Reaching The Unreached

G. Kallupatti, Near Batlagundu, Theni Dt. 625203, South India

Happenings of May 2020

Dear Well-wishers,

Greetings from RTU. We hope you are well and keeping safe at this time. In our state of Tamil Nadu, we have the second highest incidence of Coronavirus in India, with the worst affected area in the state capital of Chennai. We have some cases in our area, but the biggest impact has been with the continuation of the lockdown and Lockdown 5 was announced recently for the whole month of June. We would normally be celebrating the beginning of the new academic year after the long hot summer holidays on 1st June, but our classrooms remain closed.

Sad news about two of our older children



Matheswaran, one of our professional students was in his native village during the lockdown. He went for a swim with his friends in an open well where he drowned. He was in the final year of his studies. Having raised this young man from a little boy, we are all deeply saddened by his death.

Dharani, a 15-year-old HIV+ girl was in her native village during the lockdown. There she developed jaundice. Once we got the news, our ambulance rushed to her home to bring her to the hospital. Our own children, who are nurses there in the same hospital, took care of her extremely well and our student nurses, sat with her throughout. Suddenly, jaundice spread to her brain and she fell into a coma and died of liver failure. She was with us a month ago and is now dead and it is devastating for everyone at RTU.



Our contact with the children in their native places



As the lockdown continues, we remain connected with our children who we have had to send to their relatives in their native villages. Our childcare staff are doing a meticulous job on this. During this month we provided additional support to 32 children based on their family circumstances especially those who are HIV+, and those whose income is from agricultural labouring work, hairdressing, those with a physical disability, those with their grandparents, and migrated families. Our special attention goes to our HIV+ children whom we ensuring are taking their ART drugs regularly.

News of our work in the community to support those affected by the lockdown

We continue to provide two meals a day to 22 health workers and sanitary staff in G. Kallupatti village for which they are very thankful. Even one said, “Sir! I have gained some weight over the past two months, because of your food, thank you for your generosity.” Normally outcast by everyone and living on the margins of society because of their caste, they are the watch gods of our villages. Our central kitchens are also open to the elderly and those struggling to provide for their daily meals.



As the number of infected cases increases in our area, we are continuing to stitch masks for our children as well as others and have stitched almost 1,000 as per the Government’s guidelines.



The penury continues to haunt the poor of our area because they are unable to work. We have continued to provide emergency grocery rations to 1,500 families in our target areas.

The following people form our target group during these Coronavirus relief works. They are from Devathanapatti, Genguvarpatti and G.Kallupatti villages. Among them, 308 families have children who would normally attend our schools and balwadies.



1. Physically challenged
2. Widows
3. Deserted families
4. Sick people (heart problems, cancer, TB, HIV+, leprosy, diabetes and those with high blood pressure etc)
5. Orphan children staying with relatives (from the rural village)
6. Transgender
7. Differently abled and mentally challenged
8. Building workers
9. Potters
10. Elderly people
11. Poor people (daily labourers, agriculture labourers, coconut husk peelers, and vendors 239).
12. Dhobi families (washermen)

News from RTU's campus and Children's Villages

Safely returned to our Children's Villages

Some of our children and foster mothers, who went home during the lockdown have come back to RTU and they have been allowed back by the Government authorities. All of them underwent medical check-ups by our medical team. We also asked them about how they had been able to protect themselves in their native places. Luckily, all of them are very safe and healthy as of now. As per the Government rules, they are under compulsory quarantine in our Children's Villages/hostels for 14 days away from the other children. We only pray and hope that they are not asymptomatic patients.

Celebration of the 95th birthday of our Brother James Kimpton



On 23rd May, we celebrated Brother James's birthday by his grave in the JK meditation hall. All assembled with masks and practiced social distancing. We organized a short prayer for half an hour followed by tea. Our student counsellor, Ms Meena, prepared three short videos on Brother which were shown.



Prior to that, we organised some art competitions and the winners received the prizes on that day. We are also busy preparing a book titled 'Lockdown 3' which is a collection of 50 short stories that can be used by the teachers and students. 25 of these are already on YUGAN YouTube channel. This has given us some experience to have our own channel to telecast our stories in the near future. Ms Meena is spearheading the initiative with some help from Brother Doss.

Schools, education and training

As I mentioned earlier, our schools were due to reopen on 1st June, but it now looks unlikely that the schools will open again until August. Although the 12th standard exams (equivalent to A-levels) were able to take place before the lockdown, the 10th standard exams (equivalent to GCSE's) were not so we have just heard that these have now been rescheduled for the middle of June. We are getting all our 10th standard children back to RTU as soon as possible to give them some intensive coaching as they have not been at school for over two months.

During the exam period, we will be required to give the children medical check-ups twice a day and to disinfect the exam hall once a day. Sadly, the local children in our schools are not allowed to come back to school before they sit their exams, so our teachers are finding extra ways to help them. Children from more wealthy families in private schools have been able to continue their lessons online. Those from poor rural communities are going to suffer from this extra disadvantage.



Some regular maintenance works like whitewashing, carpentry works, purchasing of uniforms, notebooks and writing materials is taking place in our school campus. When the students come, we will be ready to receive them. We have also been preparing educational videos that are being published online to be used during this coming academic year.

As the pandemic continues to create more distress to the poorest people in our area, we only hope that this ends soon. Reaching out to the unreached during this crisis, with necessary groceries gives us great satisfaction. We take great pride in our mission and our accomplishments. We are very grateful to you for joining your helping hands with us in ensuring support to these poor people. Thank you again for your compassionate support.

May God bless you, all!

Yours fraternally

Fr J Antony Paulsamy, OFM Cap
Secretary and Director