



Fr Rubin Mathew sdb
Executive Director,
BREADS

Director's Message

At this critical time in our lives, when humanity continues to battle disease and death, we are witnessing the power of human kindness and courage. We see it in individual gestures, institutional stances and decisions—in small ways and large. Nowhere is reality starker and humanness more treasured, than on the actual battleground—the hospitals. It is here, that young individuals and institutions are uniting in the battle against COVID.

BREADS supported 100-plus COVID Care volunteers serving in Bangalore hospitals. In this Slice, we share some of their stirring experiences. Their individual responses to people and society in suffering, both inspire and challenge us to make choices that matter; wherever we are, whatever our capacity. As one beneficiary exhorts, “keep moving, keep helping!”

COVID Care Volunteers: Angels and Instruments of God

That is how a patient described the young volunteers led by Fr Anil D'Sa, a Salesian of Don Bosco, Bangalore province; and the Director of the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM), Bangalore. He banded together young volunteers from various walks of life, in collaboration with the Salesians and Camellian brothers, to serve as COVID Warriors in 4 hospitals—St. Philomena's, St. Martha's, St. John's, and Covid Care Centre, Chamrajpet. BREADS provided financial support for this initiative: food, accommodation, training, transport, and protective equipment for the volunteers.

Over 100 volunteers worked in different batches in the hospitals after being trained by medical experts. They assisted the nurses and doctors in the ICUs and the wards, by caring for the COVID patients—assisting with food, toilette, medicines, errands—and importantly, instilling hope and courage by being available to listen and console. These frontline warriors were a vital support to the beleaguered medical staff and a source of consoling accompaniment to the patients on their journeys through the infection.

Aishwarya, a volunteer, narrates the situation of a patient Rashi (name changed), whose family had been affected with COVID. She had been in St Philomena's for about a month. Her husband was in the ICU in another hospital, and her son had also been affected. Rashi felt a lack of support from the extend-

ed family because of the COVID stigma, which further disturbed her. Rashi could only speak Bengali, which nobody else knew, and so, Rashi found it difficult to convey her situation to the medical staff. Fortunately, one doctor could converse with her. Besides her physical isolation from the outside world and her family, Rashi felt severely isolated by the communication barrier. She felt a great need to talk. So, even though none of them could converse, the volunteers took turns to listen to her emotions, problems, and helplessness. Just a yes or no, and the listening presence, brought huge comfort to her, and she progressed well. Communication of humaneness and compassion needs no language, after all. Happily, Rashi made a strong recovery, and she was tearfully grateful to the volunteers for their support when she left.

As part of their daily routine, the volunteers shared their experiences and prayed for their patients' well-being. They clearly believed that caring and compassionate presence, and listening, were important factors in the speedy recovery of the patients. Being on the battlefield, exposed to the frailty of life, is always an intense experience and this is no exception. People feel privileged by the experience and are impacted for life. The following individual experiences are powerful endorsements of the value of this initiative, making the COVID Care Volunteers, an initiative that BREADS is more than happy to support.



Melisha, a volunteer says, “It was a personal healing, just to be there and find myself being useful. I will always remember what I learned in the hospital wards. I always tell my friends now; we’re not doing something extraordinary; we’re doing something we are called to do. I am going back as a different person definitely. I’ve been able to reach out to a lot more people inside and outside the hospital through my blog about my experiences. I am very excited to think of ways in which interested people can help. Our experience directly helps the patients but if our experience can indirectly help so many other people, I think it’s twice-thrice more impactful.”

In their Words:



An inspired young volunteer, Aishwarya, says after her stint, “Don’t hesitate to serve people, wherever you are. I think I found my life by serving them. You don’t have to come to hospitals to literally help. You can do it in your own home, in your neighborhood or society and you can save one life. Don’t be afraid. Be responsible for your own life. Do take care but at the same time, be also responsible for others’ lives.”



Society owes a huge debt of gratitude to the nurses and doctors for their tireless efforts during the pandemic. A clearly fatigued nurse says, “When we were going through a time of difficulty, your helping hand really supported us, especially when looking after geriatric patients. You did not mind feeding, taking them to the toilet, or bathing them. Whenever we were in need and we called, you were there, ready for any type of help. Thank you very much and God bless you all for your helping hand.”



Fr Anil D'Sa SDB says, "I am grateful to all the volunteers who came forward daringly to serve COVID patients, risking their own lives. We are here alleviating their pain or lessening the burdens of so many nurses. Ours is a tiny contribution, but I'm sure, it counts. The patients are so grateful, the nurses are so grateful. Today, we need lot of prayers. We are strengthened by the prayers of so many people. Let us surrender the whole world to the Lord."

An elderly patient says, "You youngsters are doing an excellent job. You are COVID Warriors. Try to help people as far as possible because you have energy. This energy will keep elderly people moving and their blessings will not go waste. Take care, enjoy life, take care of yourself and your life and family. At the same time, keep moving, keep helping!"

A patient in treatment for COVID and pneumonia says, "This has been a tough time. Excellent work, you are doing, Fr Anil and team. It means a lot, how you come around sharing the very presence of God. I would ask many more volunteers to come forward at this time of crisis, to support during this physical, mental, spiritual feebleness we (patients) are going through. You are angels of God for us. Fantastic warriors. May you be protected from all dangers, enjoy good health and peace of mind, and God's choicest blessings be upon you!"

Redeemer Cares: A free COVID Care Centre supported by BREADS



The Redemptorists and the local community, supported by BREADS, set up *Redeemer Cares* – a COVID Care Centre (CCC) in the premises of Nava Spoothi Kendra, Richards town, Bangalore. Opened on 19 May 2021, Redeemer Cares provides free post-COVID treatment for the poor and underprivileged in the community. It is used by St. Philomena’s Hospital as their step-down centre because during the second wave of COVID, there was both a shortage of hospital beds for the critically ill, and a need to monitor and support patients recovering from COVID, who were unable to quarantine at home.

The 40-bed facility has four trained doctors, six nurses, four nursing aides, a medical supervisor and administrative staff in line with BBMP regulations. Patients with mild infections of COVID 19 can also quarantine at the centre, where they are provided holistic treatment, psychological and physiotherapy support. They are provided with free accommodation in self-sustained rooms, nutritious meals, oxygen support, medication, and testing.

BREADS supports the daily functioning of the facility—nutritious meals for patients and medical staff, oxygen concentrators, essentials such as bed linen, blankets, toiletries, sanitizing equipment and consumables etc., for patients and healthcare professionals at the centre. BREADS also plays a very important role in the protection of the staff and patients



by providing protective gear—gloves, face shields, sanitisers, N95 masks, and PPE kits.

With the decline in the number of active cases, the number of patients arriving at the CCC has reduced and the centre will be closed on 15 July 2021. However, this highly-valued initiative will be kept in a state of readiness, to serve the community in case of need in the near future.

COVID-19 Emergency Relief Coordinated by BREADS

BREADS, which coordinates the developmental work of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Karnataka and Kerala, has once again responded actively to help people during the second wave of COVID-19, in the following ways:

COVID 19 Emergency Response - BREADS Bangalore

As on 21 June 2021

Type of Relief Activity	Unit	Outreach
Distribution of cooked food	Persons	22236
Medicine/Nutrition kits (for COVID-infected)	Kits	6690
Hygiene + Preventive kits (for all)	Kits	4470
Dry ration kits	Kits	6109
COVID-19 Care Helpdesk	Desks	18
Counselling (online / in-person)	Persons	3256
Assistance for COVID-19 testing	Persons	2680
Assistance for vaccination	Persons	4122
Awareness on vaccination / prevention / etc.	Persons	3000
Blood donation drives	Drives	8
Infrastructure provided for quarantine	Beds	150
Infrastructure provided for vaccination	Structures	2
Financial assistance for COVID treatment, bereaved families	Persons	60
COVID Warriors' support	Volunteers	112
Ambulance service	Structures	1
Oxygen concentrators support	Persons	50
Mobile oxygen unit	Structures	1
Establishment of oxygen plant in hospital	Units	1
Mobile clinic for doctors	Structures	1

Calendar

June

- COVID Relief Initiatives by BREADS and Don Bosco institutions across Karnataka and Kerala
- *Food To Your Doorstep* initiative discontinues after providing 22, 236 meals in 55 days
- BREADS partners with the FWF for the Substance Abuse Free Environment (SAFE) programme in 4 districts of Kerala

July

- COVID Relief Initiatives by BREADS and Don Bosco institutions across Karnataka and Kerala
- Initiation of the 15th Skill Training batch in DB Best Academy
- Visit of all the Don Bosco houses in the province by the Executive Director, BREADS and the Provincial team

BREADS NEWS



[Karnataka's First Corona Care Unit for Tribals at BR Hills](#)

The First Covid Care Centre (CCC) in Karnataka for Tribals has been set up in a tribal school in the thick forest best of BR Hills. To ensure that the tribals too get the treatment, this first-of-a-kind care unit was inaugurated by Corona Care Bengaluru, a consortium [...more...](#)



[KISMAT Bangalore helps interstate migrants](#)

Several unskilled/semi-skilled migrants come to Bangalore from various parts of India in search of jobs. Most of the migrant population work as helpers, security personnel, grocery sellers, and construction workers...[more...](#)



[CREAM II Impact Report presented to Minister for Primary & Secondary](#)

Fr Rubin Mathew, Executive Director, BREADS Bangalore handed over the Child Rights Education and Action Movement (CREAM II) Impact...[more...](#)



[BREADS hands over oxygen concentrator to Minister](#)

BREADS, along with its partners in CORONA CARE Bengaluru, handed over oxygen concentrators and medical kits to Mr. S. Suresh Kumar, Minister In-charge of Chamarajnagar...[more...](#)