

CONGREGATION OF JESUS PATNA PROVINCE

WOMEN - THE CHANGE MAKERS

by Sr. Ancy CJ

Covid 19 has engulfed the whole world in its hungry and thirsty mouth. Everyone is affected young or old, poor or rich in one way or the other. In our country, India, the worst affected ones are those who had a hand to mouth existence, depending on their daily wage as they worked either in an organized or unorganized sector.

Due to lockdown all the industries and factories are shut down and the markets are closed. They have nowhere to go to earn their daily bread for themselves and their families. Sr. Kiran CJ, my provincial sent a message to all the communities, "ensure that no one dies of hunger in your area".

Accordingly, all the sisters in their own level, initiated activities to reach out to the neediest. Initially we distributed dry rations on an emergency level among the most vulnerable ones, the Mahadalits, Musahars, transgenders, nomads, gypsies, widows and the differently able ones and those who have no ration cards, no rations.



Once emergency needs were met, there was the realization that people have started to go back to work through various agents, making it easy for them to become victims of trafficking, hence we were challenged to explore the possibility of initiating livelihood programs among the most vulnerable through the existing SHGs, SHG Federations as well as Women's Bank. Concerted effort was made to maximize the use of savings among the needy.

All 1500 women associated with our center 'Mary Ward Development Center Gulni,' were exhorted to render help and support to anyone found in need. All our women pooled their requirements from the SHG savings and were freed from the clutches of money lenders who charge a great amount of interest even after mortgaging the valuables they have.

Highly motivated and convinced of the providential care of the Lord we began work in promoting livelihood options with scarce resources. To our surprise, a few generous persons came forward to support our efforts. Today I can say that "there is life and life in abundance" among our people.

More than 250 women have so far initiated the Income Generating Activities towards livelihood promotion. These include goat rearing, animal husbandry, poultry farming, tent housing, tent items, marginal farming, small business, grocery shops, taxis, carpentry, petty shops, readymade shops, tailoring, mobile shops etc. Thus I can say that many women have emerged as major contributors to their families during this time of Covid 19 as the menfolk lost jobs due to lockdown. Hats off to all those women 'the change makers.

Thus, we were able to live up to the definite choice of the Lord to be part of those who are left behind. Covid 19 lockdown is a landmark for those seeking to make a difference in our world today, a call to 'being and action', a time to make personal and communal commitment to activism based on our spirituality.

It was indeed a time for us / for me to respond to our spirituality with vital, real and dynamic energy to combat the interlinked human and ecological crisis that we face during Covid 19. "Wake up or perish" is the spiritual call of our times." - Adyashanti

