



Annual Letter
2020-2021
Memoir of a pandemic



Bangalore
Baptist
Hospital

Community
Health Division

Swirling Clouds and Minds

2020, a year of uncertainties.

Panic, anxiety, despair and hunger
intertwined the thread of life.

A new world with new norms emerged.





Grounded, with anticipation

We drove through bumpy roads to reach grasslands. We believe there's light while we are still reeling and rebuilding from one of the most devastating pandemics.

Some have begun to sprout along. To those who are still hanging on a thread of life, we said, *"Come, lean on us"*.

Solace whispers & joyful tidings

"All of them have shut shop; Government hospitals have become COVID centres. We have no one to turn to when there are health emergencies". This was a common refrain, oft-repeated in the villages and in the urban slums of Bengaluru during the pandemic. They were referring to the local clinics that they used to depend on before the onset of the pandemic. BBH Community Health and Palliative Care teams continued with their outreach work even through the troubled season. "I am grateful they even delivered my regular medications home". The community has been appreciative that Bangalore Baptist Hospital continued with its work in the community through the pandemic.

Camaraderie and cohesion demonstrated among the team members were noteworthy. Passionate commitment to the cause has been the hallmark of the division. Well done, team!

We are grateful for what has been achieved. Out there, in the disadvantaged community, we see real heroism. Facing difficulties with fortitude is an example to others. It has been an honour to partake in their struggles and share in their joys. Wiping one tear at a time has been our privilege. In this process, we have received more than what we have given. We believe that greater times are yet to come, and greater heights are yet to be reached. May God continue to empower.

Dr. Naveen Thomas
Director (CEO)



Rhythms of goodwill

Bangalore Baptist Hospital (BBH) is a not-for-profit multi-specialty healthcare organization and is governed by Christian Medical College, Vellore.

BBH stands tall in upholding its principles of Excellence & Equity by committing equal importance to the 'state of the art precision specialties' and to the 'core primary healthcare services', ranging from organ transplant services to preventive healthcare services in slums.







New games, new rules, timeless values

Each day, COVID threw new curveballs. Padded, helmeted, and protecting each other, we clung to our 'Timeless Values', to dribble the ball to the goal post. Sometimes, we missed the goal, sometimes, we got injured. Yet, with tearful hugs and countless blessings we are journeying to building a healthier community.

We played the game fervently with realistic optimism and congenial camaraderie.

We paused for a moment to relook, replenish and resume the game.

Leaning on each other, the infinite game continues.



Response with an eye to the future

The pandemic risk

Some people are invisible & crisis creates risks to further exclude and discriminate.

The weakest health systems have the narrowest room to maneuver, hence the consequences of a pandemic can be gross & grave.

Our pandemic response

Inclusive response, leaving no one behind.

Building back better, building together.



Access to essential healthcare during a pandemic

The raging pandemic pushed the already thin health infrastructure in vulnerable settings into the verge of collapse. Hence, we responded directly to COVID-19 while simultaneously maintaining essential health service delivery, mitigating the risk of system collapse.



Vaccine equity

Fierce competition in the context of limited supplies is a threat to vaccine equity. Hence, we provided vaccine access to difficult to reach communities & undertook strategic communication to dispel vaccine-related myths in low-income communities.



Right information

In a pandemic, we pay for ignorance and misinformation with our lives. Hence, we took the right information to low resource communities through informal & hidden trusted channels in the community.



Holistic & comprehensive approach

COVID-19 is not a mere health crisis, but is a humanitarian crisis of herculean magnitude. Hence our responses included hunger initiatives, income generation projects, post-COVID reintegration and fostering community-led response systems.



Responsible research

Though research is the key driver for progress, it is limited among the vulnerable. People in low resource settings are vulnerable for both exclusion & exploitation. We designed a research strategy to deliver care effectively & efficiently.

*Dusty grey to **Scarlet**
colour wheel*



2020 - Living, the vision of 'healing and wholeness in the spirit of Jesus Christ', has never been so challenging. The enormous scale and overwhelming speed of the pandemic brought an ever-escalating drumbeat of anxiety and fear. Physical distance, ventilation and sanitation –the prescribed antidotes for the virus – were impossible fantasies in many places where we delivered medical care. "Water comes once in three days; how is it possible to wash hands every time? Our quota is three buckets, and we have six people in our house"- Farida wonders. And at this point, continuing the medical services to the poor posed a grave threat to our lives. Therefore, we had to take 'big bets'- unfamiliar, high-stake decisions. "Will we die?" asked one of the health workers – "we hope not, we do what we can to protect ourselves, and the rest we leave it to God."

Our conversations were open, acknowledging our fears and being truthful about our knowledge limitations.

With all the uncertainties out there, one thing was obvious: the challenge we face is enormous, and the poor need us more than ever. "Taking care of each other, counting on God's faithfulness." – all of us echoed these values.

"More than 50,000 people live in a kilometer, no ventilation in clinics - how can we prevent the virus from spreading?" sighed one of the doctors in desperation. Though we did not have an answer, we comforted each other, that even if the outcome is not what we anticipated; the striving in itself will build our character.

When we look back, we can only count blessings. We touched many lives during the most desperate times. "You came home with medicines and food; no one was there, not even my relatives or friends", Mohan teared with gratitude. There were limitations in what we could do, yet our presence counted immensely. We also made great friendships along the journey. People whom we could *lean on*, who encouraged us with kind words and generous resources.

The path in front of us is not easy; the destruction caused by the pandemic among the poor will take years to mend. "Suresh passed away, leaving me and my 3-year-old. We have no one". Sunitha had a blank expression when she narrated her story. Every house has a story to tell, and it will be a challenge to deliver 'health' to these homes.

Amidst the pain, we continue to build the communities, *leaning on* to God and *leaning on* to each other.

Dr Carolin Elizabeth George
Head – Community Health Division

Mother Teresa Hospital (MTH)

No place to go to

"We are short of breath and short of life. Our village has lost its lustre," panicked an emotional Ramanna, one of the community leaders.

Mother Teresa Hospital stood resolute with the community by running fever clinics, treating people with COVID, referring patients for ICU care, and vaccinating the community.

From toothache to cancer, there is a place to **lean on** – with an assurance that you will get the right medical care.



A photograph of a man and a woman standing outdoors in a lush green setting. The man, on the left, is wearing a light grey polo shirt with dark horizontal stripes and is smiling warmly at the woman. The woman, on the right, is wearing a blue and white striped sleeveless top and is also smiling, looking towards the man. The background is filled with vibrant green foliage and trees, creating a bright and natural atmosphere.

Emotions, in portrait

Vishwanath and his daughter – Siri, who learned what it means to be cared for. They are in harmony and joy, resulting from the care at Mother Teresa Hospital.

6089 - People Treated

To step out or not?

"Are we safe? Will they take us away? What is happening?" Such questions were writ large on many faces.

Though many offered support during the pandemic, people hesitated to accept help from unfamiliar faces.

With a decade of trust built, they stepped into our clinic with health issues, questions about COVID and vaccinations.

We stepped into their homes with conversations, health tips, masks, sanitizers and groceries.

We stepped out, and they stepped in,

leaning on each other.



a TRUST bank in the slum

Our health centre at DJ Halli slum provides primary healthcare to the community. Our clinic is seen not only as a place where the sick are treated, but where they can also openly share their problems and feelings. We are a "Trust Bank" where the community can deposit questions, problems, and doubts. Withdrawals are solutions, care, and trusted information.

-  17348- People treated in slums
-  5944 - Slums home visits
-  806 - Awareness programmes



e-Mobile Health Clinics

People in the villages depend on us for their healthcare. Since we were caring for patients with COVID, we feared that we could carry the virus to their homes. Can we find a way to look after them? That's how the idea of our e-mobile clinic was born. The village health assistants perform BP measurements, GRBS tests and connect patients to the doctors through video calls. Medicines are distributed. This works well for chronic diseases and acts as an effective triaging system for hospital referrals.

They *lean on*, the digital way.





Neck, intact

"Nandish, my neck is paining. Please help me see one of your doctors," Suresh told our healthcare worker.

After recovering from cervical spondylitis, Suresh endlessly talks about the e-mobile clinic, his video time with the doctor, and the exercises which helped him recover.

Tossing the flowers, he demonstrated that his neck is intact.

 14 - Villages set ready to run e-mobile clinics

 1156 - e-mobile health consultations

A photograph of two men walking along a path covered in fallen leaves in a forest. The man on the left is older, with grey hair, wearing a red short-sleeved shirt and yellow shorts, with a white cloth draped over his shoulder. The man on the right is younger, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers. They are both smiling and looking towards each other. The background is a dense forest of tall trees.

Finding common ground

With each village detecting hundreds of active cases every day, it was impossible for any medical team to manage the infections.

Ramanna and Krishnappa of Jallige were part of the COVID Response Team—a team who became our soldiers on the COVID battlefield. They identified positive cases, made provisions for isolation, arranged doctor tele-consults, oxygen saturation monitoring, medicine kits, ration kits, facilitated transport to hospital if needed and rendered help in case of deaths.

COVID soldiers marched on, telling the community *“Lean on us.”*

-  21 - COVID response teams formed
-  458 - COVID patients monitored through doctor helpline and home visits
-  806 - Patients counselled in their homes

A man with a mustache, wearing a grey zip-up hoodie, is smiling broadly. He is holding a metal scale that has two fish on it. The background is a solid red wall. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

A call, care and now more fish

When we heard Harish was having suicidal thoughts, we rushed to his village. "I want to die. That's why I ran away from my home. Why have you come? Can you save me from COVID?" Harish cried in despair.

"Do you know I have just recovered from COVID?" our counsellor, Vijaya said. "Call our 24-hour Helpline and start the treatment immediately. I will come daily to see you," Nandish assured him. Harish then called the Helpline.

"I feel God spoke to me through you. Your treatment, your regular visits saved me," says Harish, ready to fish, *leaning on us*.

24-hour COVID Helpline

The complicated COVID cases were treated by our doctors and managed at their homes by our health teams.

The first cry

During COVID, giving birth was a nightmare for pregnant mothers. Many did not find a hospital; some could not reach on time and for those who reached, there was no place or they couldn't afford the facilities.

Rose came to us after countless failures to find a hospital. We were shocked to see her condition and immediately took her into our care.

When the first cry was heard, tears welled up on Rose's eyes. We said, "Thank you God." Holding the little finger, Rose whispered, "*Lean on me.*" And we could *lean on* our 'Precision Facilities' to treat more Roses.





A wise and bold step

The vaccine - passport for safety is not within everyone's reach. Vaccine shortage, lack of smartphones, internet facilities and missing documents taxed the poor. So, we journeyed to the villages with a vaccine drive.

Here's Rani walking boldly, blind to discouragement and myths. Her focus is to take the opportunity to protect herself, her family and her community.

Rani *leans on*, on our vaccination drive.

-  770 - Vaccinated in villages
-  735 - People with disabilities vaccinated
-  16,030 - Vaccinated at BBA

Brickyard magic

"My husband is regular in his work at a brickyard. He stayed sober during the lockdown—it's magical," said Narayanappa's wife when we met her recently.

Narayanappa attended our de-addiction camp in 2018. "My willpower is strong as a brick," says Narayanappa.

Restore - Community De-addiction Programme

Our de-addiction programme to both men and women in rural areas is a unique model. Access to a free de-addiction service and counselling at their doorstep help in their recovery process.

Livelihood support, e-consultation, doorstep medicine delivery and COVID care support during the lockdown helped them stay sober.



Her life, tightly knitted

"People in my village ask when is the next deaddiction camp? They tell me that I must be the teacher (she means counsellor)," says Lagamma, who has turned sober. With her life tightly knitted, Lagamma is helping other women *lean on* her.



11 Camps, 330 attended



57% Abstaining from alcohol



3625 Family visits



A photograph of a woman and a young girl laughing together outdoors. The woman is on the left, looking up and to the right, wearing a pink and white sari. The girl is on the right, looking up and to the left, wearing a yellow t-shirt with a cartoon character and yellow bangles. They are both smiling broadly. The background is dark with green foliage. A dark green circular graphic is overlaid on the top right, containing the text.

Empower

*Caring for people
with Disability*

We can even catch raindrops!

"She's catching rain-drops now," her mother exclaims. Bindusree is all smiles and giggles. She's six years old and suffers from a rare disorder - Sturge-weber syndrome (blood vessel malformation in the brain, skin, and eye).

When Bindusree came to the DDRC centre at the age of three, she was clinging to her mother. After three years, with physiotherapy, special education, speech and language therapies, Bindusree can walk, run a bit, and form a few sentences.

"We never missed a lesson during the lockdown. It was fun for Bindusree to see her teacher on the phone," shares her mother.

District Disability Rehabilitation Centre

A collaborative project with the Directorate of Empowerment of Senior Citizens and Differently-abled, Government of Karnataka, the District Disability Rehabilitation Centre helps an estimated 60,000 differently-abled and their families in Bangalore Rural District through a multi-sectoral approach that addresses health, education, livelihood, empowerment and social needs.

-  3788 - *Early intervention therapy sessions for children*
-  573 - *Assistive devices distributed*
-  84 - *Modified toilets built*

"Joy" is just here!

Now, everyday life for Rajesh is punctuated with laughter and friendly banter with his mother at his vegetable stall.

An accident left Rajesh without any sensation in his hands and legs.

Specialised therapy sessions and a vegetable stall that we helped Rajesh put up has parked joy right in front of him.

10 - *Livelihood initiatives*





Well blended

"When I lost my leg in an accident, it was difficult to let it go. It was like losing a part of me. But you substituted. Well, this leg is great too," said Narayanappa when we supported him with an artificial leg.

"Any work I can do – from cutting trees, watering plants to grazing goats with my new leg," saying so he grins, blending with nature.

He *leans on* us, for mobility.

96 - *People supported with prosthesis*

Cancer care in cities

Zephyr of comfort

First, he lost his right leg, then his right arm. Finally, cancer seeped into his lungs. Dilip is only 15-years old. He amazes you with his enthusiasm and zest for life.

With cancer in Dilip's lungs, he often gets breathless and tired. "We visit him, give medications to relieve his breathlessness. We will continue to journey with Dilip," assures the team.

Dilip lives well despite his cancer. He writes and uses his phone with his left hand and walks with the help of a prosthesis.

Dilip waits for the team's visit, which gives him a gentle and soothing comfort.



Palliative Care

Our multidisciplinary palliative care team (urban & rural) provides medical, nursing, psychological and spiritual support to people with terminal illnesses at the comfort of their homes. Clothed with sensitivity, empathy and competence, a team of doctors, nurses and counsellors work to improve the quality of life of patients in their last days of life.

-  1758 - *Patient consultations in hospital*
-  323 - *Home care visits*
-  11 - *Bereavement visits*

Care, nested

We love our grandmother. She has cancer. We are doing whatever we can to make her comfortable. But now she needs a place where she can be painless and comfortable in her last days. These are the cries that we hear from the community.

The idea of building a hospice was born.

The Kurian Foundation Trust is partnering with us to build the hospice.

Cancer care in villages

Love till the end...

Tears well up in the eyes of 75-year old Narasimhaiah. He is weary and weak. His eyes speak the gratitude he has for us. His petite wife, a spirited soul, is always on her toes to make him comfortable. She feeds him and cleans his wounds. In her heart, she knows that he will leave her soon, but "I want him to be clean so that he can sleep well. I learnt everything from you. You always give us a way to go through difficult times. We have no one, but you. Thank you," she says. Narasimhaiah smiles in agreement.

We leave their home, wishing both painless and peaceful days.



Smiling through pain

"I laugh a lot when you come," grins Narasamma and her granddaughter nods. Narasamma meets cervical cancer, however painful, with a smile. "Managing my husband who drinks every day is another agony in my life," she confesses.

We comfort her, administer a painkiller and listen to her stories. She knows these are temporary relief measures, but we're pillars that she can *lean*, for comfort.

3062 - *Patient home care visits*

284 - *Bereavement visits*

782 - *Awareness programmes*



A Sweet Income

Sugarcane brings income to 55-year-old Vasanthi. "It's hard work," but "it feeds my family," Vasanthi sums it up bravely. "Thank you for supporting me to start this small venture. At the end of the day, when we all sit together to eat, we are thankful there's food, and we look forward to another brighter and sweeter day," – her smile never diminishes.

We provide financial support to either start or spruce up existing small businesses. It's an opportunity, a chance to innovate, and hope for a better future for the poor.

 42- *Livelihood initiatives*



A 'Green' twist

"I have taken two acres of land on a lease; own a van; built a house, and my business is thriving. It's no filmy story. It's real," Mohan lets out a heroic laugh.

With markets shut during the lockdown, Mohan couldn't sell his vegetables. His family felt the touch of panic, fear and hunger.

"We asked many people for money; none gave and neither could they. Your loan of Rs.25,000 was a perfect green twist," he says with his eyes dazzling.



Hunger, winnowed

"We wait eagerly for our husbands to bring money to cook the meal in the evening. But COVID robbed us. There was no way my husband could step out to sell vegetables," said a woman in the slum.

"You stepped in at the right time. Thank you for the groceries. We are going to have a meal today."

She *leans on* us.

When COVID robs their livelihood, it brings the family to its knees.

We distributed grocery kits to COVID affected, economically poor, and differently-abled persons.

 1258 - Grocery kits distributed



"Joy" delivered and still counting

Little boys and girls eat only once a day, and 5-year-olds look three because of malnutrition. Subsequently, COVID scooped out their meals, challenging their nourishment further.

With food kits, protein bars and teaching mothers to cook nutritious meals, we are making a difference.

Now, vibrant and joyful children flavour the grey alley of the slum, while mothers are creating healthy habits, *leaning on* us.

806 - Awareness programmes

5944 - Slum home visits

9588 - Protein bars distributed



A photograph of a man and a woman smiling joyfully amidst a field of yellow flowers. The man, on the left, has a mustache and is wearing a light-colored shirt. The woman, on the right, is wearing a blue patterned sari. They are both looking upwards and smiling broadly. The background is a soft-focus green field of similar flowers. A large, semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text "Frames of joy".

Frames of joy

Hope. Joy. Optimism. Peace. These words dress and jewel Susheelamma while she's experiencing a world of transformation. "Do you know how you have shaped my life?" she questions us joyfully.

"You gave me a new life! You strengthened my will to fight cancer. My surgery, chemo, and radiation - it was a rough journey. Your words of comfort, a shoulder to cry, and your prayers pulled me through this emotional and challenging time. You also helped my husband to break his alcoholic habits and backed my son to continue his studies. You packed up a beautiful gift wrapped with care in different frames," continues Susheelamma, exuding gratitude.

"We want to frame these precious moments of our life. Here's the frame of joy dedicated for your care and financial support," says Susheelamma, poetically in her dialect.

The poor never see the warning signs of ill health as 'warning signs'. "Do we eat today or go to a hospital? How do we pay? So, most of the time, we ignore. When it becomes between life and death, we rush seeking care to save our loved ones. Sadly, sometimes, it is too late," says one woman philosophically.

Saving each life is our mission. When the poor reach our hospital with their loved ones, we treat them first, irrespective of their ability to pay. Our partners walk with us to help the poor in their greatest moment of need. Offering concessional facilities, whether during COVID or before and in the future is the mission that we hold close to our hearts.

Thank you!

This annual letter is a record of some of the beautiful stories you have made possible! You have a part in every smile and every new beginning.

- ◆ Accel Partners India
- ◆ Accenture
- ◆ Anand Mathew
- ◆ Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives
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- ◆ Send Relief
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- ◆ Tata Elxsi
- ◆ The Kurian Foundation Trust
- ◆ The staff of Bangalore Baptist Hospital
- ◆ Wings Brand Activation India
- ◆ Our anonymous well-wishers, friends who gave in-kind and our co-travellers who travelled with us during this crisis offering words of encouragement and words of wisdom.



*Research &
Academics*

Research

Research received a major stimulus during the pandemic year. Research projects that were taken up include: COVID-19 serosurvey in rural and urban slums, breakthrough infection and gene sequencing, COVID serosurvey in children, novel COVID-19 diagnostic modalities and vaccine hesitancy in low resource settings.

- ▶ Scientific protocols approved – **46**
- ▶ Final thesis analysis completed – **30**
- ▶ Publications in peer-reviewed journals – **19**
- ▶ Research methodology training – **2**

International Research Collaborations

- ▶ Baylor University, Dallas, Texas, **USA**
- ▶ University of Texas South Western, **USA**
- ▶ University of Sheffield, **UK**
- ▶ University of Nottingham, **UK**
- ▶ Maastricht University, **The Netherlands**
- ▶ Western Sydney University, **Australia**
- ▶ World Health Organization, **Geneva**
- ▶ Harvard University, Boston, **USA**
- ▶ University of Leicester, **UK**

Medical Training

- ▶ DNB in Family Medicine – Currently, **9** students are undergoing postgraduate training.
- ▶ National Fellowship in Palliative Medicine/Nursing(NFPM/N) & IAPC clinical posting – **12** completed.

Highlights

- ▶ Received the AHPI Excellence in Healthcare Awards 2021 in the category – ‘Excellence in Community Engagement’.
- ▶ We are part of VISION (Vaccine Immunology Studies: Indian Outbreak – response Network) consortium.
- ▶ Signed an MOU with National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) for research. We are sending clinical samples from COVID-19 patients to national biorepository for pandemic related research.
- ▶ Dr. Carolin co-signed an editorial “Next Breath” along with 20 prominent scientists (2 of them Nobel Laureates) around the world urging - 'Action to Clean the Air Children Breathe'- in Molecular Frontiers journal.
- ▶ Renewed CDSCO registration for IRB. Registered IRB with DHR (Directorate of Health Research).
- ▶ Received renewal of accreditation for 4 DNB Family Medicine seats from NBE.
- ▶ NBE Family Medicine national online webinar is coordinated by Dr. Srividhya.
- ▶ Started the Special Educator Course in a blended mode (mix of physical & virtual) with 10 candidates, and the first batch was successfully completed.
- ▶ Dr. Sapna Mathew received an award for her oral presentation in the virtual International Conference of the Indian Association of Palliative Care (IAPC), conducted from -19-21 March 2021.





Hearts & Minds that touch lives

"Will I take the virus home?" I asked this question every day. I wanted my family to be safe. But when I heard that Muniyappa needed his medicines and Rani gasped for breath, my heart told me, 'reach out to them immediately.' If not us, who will help them?" said a healthcare worker.

"I am scared too," echoed another nurse. But when I clasp a set of nervous fingers or brush fevered hair from a forehead, and in response, see the sprouting of gratitude from the eyes: my heart is filled with joy and peace," she shared her wave of experience.

These words shed light on the compassion and resilience our team demonstrated during the COVID crisis. Despite formidable challenges, the team stepped up with heroism and faith in God's healing power.

They moved forward, *leaning on* each other.

Snapshot

Health Care

| | | | |
|---|-------|--------------|---|
|  | ----- | 71548 | Patients cared for |
|  | ----- | 740 | COVID-19 patients treated |
|  | ----- | 72754 | People reached through health education |
|  | ----- | 25098 | Home visits |
|  | ----- | 125 | Surgeries |
|  | ----- | 7012 | Persons with disabilities served |

Research & Academics

| | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|----------------------------------|
|  | ----- | 46 | Scientific protocols facilitated |
|  | ----- | 30 | Academic research analysed |
|  | ----- | 19 | Scientific publications |

All data relate to the period April 2020 to March 2021.



Lives in 'Pinup' and Stories in 'Closeup'

Glimpses captured and stories covered over an unforgettable year. This year's Annual Letter is dedicated to our team for their remarkable role in the film that was staged in the 'Theatre of Life'.

Credits

★ **Concept, content writing and edits:**

Ranjini Victor
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★ **Photo credit:**

Shivananda. B

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★ **Layout & design:**

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All donations made are eligible for exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act. The Hospital is also registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act 1976 for all foreign contributions.