



Piali Ashar Alo

Piali Ashar Alo School

May - August 2020

In August, five months have passed since we were quarantined. The first month of quarantine was experienced as a somewhat early summer vacation. Our girls had a lot of free time to play, the teachers were able to take a break from riding the train in the summer heat, and our family and I were like scouts discovering the joys of life in the village.

1. Food distribution

After the first month, however, problems began. Because the train, which is our main means of transportation, does not run, the villagers cannot go to work in the city. The families of our children, who already live modestly, do not have significant savings. Our main concern is to make sure our children's families have enough food first. So we distribute rice, potatoes, lentils and onions. We also add hygiene items, toothpaste, soap and shampoo. Since the garden grows well, we can also distribute some fresh vegetables.



2. Organization of distance learning and other activities for children



The next big challenge we face is the organization of distance learning. Most of our parents, of course, do not have smart phones. However, with the teachers' team, we were acutely aware of how important it is for girls to remain learning active, as this strengthens their inner motivation, curiosity and creativity. In an environment where the prevailing view is that girls' education is not important, we feel all the more responsible to encourage our students to read, explore



and learn independently. These are high goals, which are far from easy to achieve



even in normal conditions, let alone in quarantine when our personal contacts with children are so limited. Nevertheless with the help of some of our children's parents, relatives and neighbors who are kindly willing to share their phones, there are currently about 100 children involved in our distance learning. Teachers make regular contact with other children through telephone calls.



3. India, the land of festivals

No matter what happens, in India we will always find an





opportunity to celebrate. On the anniversary of the birth of the great writer Rabindranath Tagore and on Independence Day, our girls prepared individual dance and recitation presentations in their homes and shared them with others in the study group.



On Independence Day, we raised the flag at the

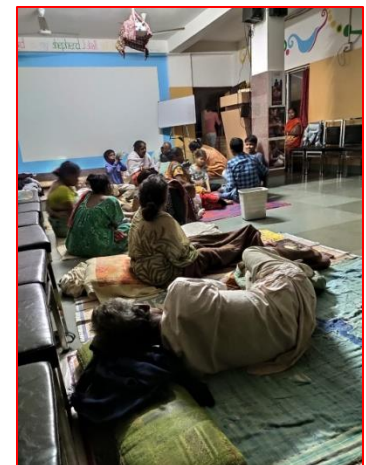


school premises with the oldest students and even cooked lunch together. During the quarantine, Sara and Mojca celebrated their birthdays and treated the girls with some tasty and sweet treats, who in return showered them with lovely gifts.

4. Devastation after the super cyclone storm Amphan



Once it seemed that we had somehow found a balance and at least a temporary solution to the challenges posed by quarantine, we were hit hard by the super cyclone storm Amphan. It was a powerful and deadly tropical cyclone that caused extensive damage in eastern India and Bangladesh on 21 May. The damage is



enormous, but we are grateful to have stayed alive and healthy, all our children are safe. All night, our school was a haven for many villagers whose houses were too damaged

to stay at home. God protected our solar panels so we had light through the storm, a precious



gift when everything around us was in complete darkness. It is not easy to put the pieces together again after such a catastrophe, but we are determined to continue to offer help as much as we can.



While we are helping to rebuild some of the damaged houses in



Piali, we have decided to help those who have been hit even harder by the devastating cyclone Amphan. We visited the villages of Sitolia and Basanti in Sundorbon and brought food, clothes and plastic covers for the houses to almost a hundred families, with the promise that we would stand by their side in these extremely difficult times.



5. Thank You!



In these very challenging times, we would like to thank you especially for your help. We are aware that this year is not only difficult for us, but that it has brought many challenges to you and your families. That is why we respect your decision to help us even more. We try to offer help during these times to everyone who needs it and who knocks on our door, regardless of whether their children are also our students. Of course, this is not easy, so your help is all the more welcome. We thank Luc Upanja and CED, as well as the initiative of Irish artists #postcardsforpiali, local sponsors Second Vivekananda Bridge Tollway Company Private Limited

and many individuals, volunteers, well-wishers who continuously support our work. Thank you!

Your Piali Ashar Alo Family

www.pialiasharalo.org