

Amarok Society Annual Report 2020



AMAROK SOCIETY

**TEACH MOTHERS TO
TEACH THE WORLD**

2020

Thank You

COVID-19 has made this year a challenge, both for our organization and for the communities we operate in. We're grateful to all the individuals and Rotary Clubs that supported this work, even as many on this side of the world faced their own financial challenges.

In our operations, we cut anything we could without compromising the quality of education being delivered. Paid staff (teachers, coordinators) took a voluntary pay cut of 18% at a time when in-country food and rental prices increased.

Here are some of the Rotary clubs who've donated and, along with many individuals across North America, helping to empower some of the poorest mothers in the world to provide education to thousands of extremely poor children.



Thanks to the Rotary Clubs of ...

Steveston
Weston
Cambria
Toronto West
Edmonton Sunrise
Vancouver Yaletown
Powell River
Redondo Beach
Kitchener Conestoga
Niagara Falls Sunrise
Kelowna Ogoopo
Whitby
St. Albert
Hinton
Grand Prairie
Spruce Grove
St. Albert St. City
Stony Plain
Parkland After Dark
Yorba Linda
Powell River Interact

We need all the names of the consolidated schools

We also want to thank those individuals who made a donation on our Facebook food drive, allowing us to buy some food for some of those in the direst need.

2020 – An Extraordinary Year

The impacts of COVID-19 have linked people across the world, however, every country handled the emergency differently. Bangladesh and Pakistan enforced strict lockdowns.

In the slums where we work, families were confined to their tiny one-room tin houses all day with baton-wielding police on guard.

For 4 months, our schools were closed. Instead of regular classes, our teachers prepared and delivered lesson plans that mothers could conduct with children. In August, we reopened our schools. Classes resumed in shifts of small groups of women attending at a time. Mothers, too, have divided their micro-schools – teaching 2 or 3 children at a time, rather than 5 at once.

Life in the slums has always been difficult, but with COVID-19, our mothers and their families were living on a razor's edge. This was for two reasons:

1. When 6 families share one clay cooking stove and hundreds of people share a latrine and single water pump with shower, social distancing is simply not a possibility.
2. The lockdown created its own crisis. Families saw jobs evaporate before their eyes. Rickshaw wallahs were no longer needed; nor were cleaning maids, construction workers, tea stalls operators, or wagon pullers. Suddenly, almost all of the jobs occupied by these fathers and mothers were gone. Without an income, these families were in serious trouble.

Famine loomed. But, in the face of that crisis, our mothers drew upon all their skills, leadership, and social capital they'd developed in their time with Amarok Society. They were determined that not one single person in their community would die of starvation.

This report will share some of the extraordinary mothers and children who overcame these significant challenges, helping others on their way.

Nazma Turns Garbage to Vegetables

Nazma's corrugated tin row-hut backed onto a huge garbage pile. It had been there for years; one of these unquestioned mounds that takes up random residence in the slums. It was Nazma (on the left) who saw an opportunity.

Day by day, she cleared away the garbage. Underneath, the soil had grown rich from decomposition. That's where she planted her vegetable garden.



During the lockdown, Nazma has been giving vegetables to those in the slum who can't afford food, and selling the rest on the roadside to support her family.



Rotating Soup Kitchens

Early in the lockdown, Johorna heard a child wailing just a few doors away from her. She stepped out to see what was happening and found a young girl crying in her doorway, her distraught mother watching from within. They hadn't eaten in 3 days.

Johorna got her husband and together, they took all the food they could spare and cooked a meal for the grateful family.

Over the next few days, Johorna and her school-mates discussed what they could do to help the desperate children they'd all seen scrounging garbage piles for scraps of food, or crying themselves to sleep.

None of them had much, but, if they pooled their resources, they could make lunches for the children. They'd never heard of a soup kitchen before, but that's essentially what they started operating.

They serve lunch daily, rotating from house to house between the mothers. Soon all the mothers were participating in any way they could – planning, cooking, donating food, seeking food donations at markets, or cleaning. The idea was so inspiring that the story travelled through our schools, and now many of our Amarok Society mothers are operating soup kitchens in their slums. Johorna's stand for the children in her community has spread like wildfire, and now countless children have been saved from famine.

Suchitra's Food Bank

Johorna wasn't the only mother with a good idea. In another school, Suchitra also saw famine spreading through her community, and she was also going to do something about it. Her idea was a little different: centralizing and redistributing the food in her community, so that no one would starve. Her 'sisters' at school helped to organize this and brought in what they could afford every day – cups of rice, lentils, potatoes, and onions.

Soon, though, they were out of food to share. So, with the other mothers from her AS school, Suchitra devised a new plan.



Every day, groups of mothers from the school visited marginally better-off slum neighbourhoods to ask for food donations. Other mothers set criteria to determine which families were the poorest, and others organized distribution.

Through these activities, the mothers of this school are feeding 20 - 28 of the poorest families every month, and have distributed hundreds of pounds of food throughout the community.

Several schools are operating similar food banks now.

Nursing to Health

In another school, several mothers had small children – under the age of 2 and nursing. When food is scarce, their lives are at real risk. Some of these mothers were not able to feed their babies enough – they weren't producing enough milk.

Shahida has twins. Eating only once a day, Shahida saw her babies losing weight and she was terrified. The other young mothers in her class had similar fears. So, they formed a **Nursing Club** including many mothers of babies from the neighborhood.

Every day, the new mothers gather, and any mothers who are producing enough milk help to nurse the children of those who aren't.



It's a desperate tactic, but has made the difference between life and death for these children. Besides the mothers in the school, 18 other mothers in the community are also participating, and all the neighborhood's babies are getting the nutrition they need.

The Amarok mothers are doing so much more than teaching children who then go on to graduate from secondary school, with many graduating from college and university. These mothers continue to be a powerful force for change in the most challenging circumstances. They're making a positive difference to thousands of lives.

Through their sense of ownership of and investment in these communities, these mothers have risen as heroes in the face of incredible obstacles, and are starting to create a world worthy of all the world's children.

