



# ANUPRERONA

N° 77 – From April to June 2025

Here is the French version of our Newsletter. If you need the English version, please send us an e-mail at [volunteer1@howrahsouthpoint.org](mailto:volunteer1@howrahsouthpoint.org).

---

"" The poor won't come to us, it's up to us to go to them."

---

DONATE



## Letter from Father Laurent

Dear friends,

Nearly 50 years ago, the Howrah South Point association was born. Under the inspiration and commission of Cardinal Picachy, Father François Laborde, then parish priest of the Nirmala Mata Maria parish, began, with the help of a few didis, services for the destitutes: a home for children with disabilities and a dispensary for the poorest. The rest is history.

In 2018, I was called by Father Laborde to succeed him. We then embarked on a period of reform and major changes to adapt HSP to the new realities of the world and poverty.

Today we want to announce a double change: a name change and, consequently, a logo change. This is a new transformation, but one that doesn't undermine the roots or spirit of HSP.

"Howrah South Point" became, as of 24th June, "Howrah Service to the Poor." We have kept the same acronym to reflect the continuity of this reality. Our logo now reflects the new name and highlights our founding date. The website address too will soon change in consequence.

Adopting this new name was a necessity; we want to turn it into an opportunity. The necessity was a threat to the very existence of HSP. The opportunity is the possibility today to signify our work through our very name. It is to reaffirm that the poor are at the center of our mission.

We therefore adopted this new name in a spirit of joy and celebration, looking ahead to the upcoming jubilee throughout 2026. We want to make this jubilee, the true reason for this change. To quote Tancredi in "The Leopard," "If we want everything to remain as it is, everything must change."

To oppose change is to die. Life itself is change; it pushes out its roots and develops its branches until it bears fruit. HSP's anniversaries and jubilees are there to remind us of this. Throughout the year, programs, the dates of which will be announced soon, will give thanks for all the lives changed, for all the friendships made, the support received and for all the fruits our labors accomplished.

Thank you for your faithful support, which allows us to move forward with God's grace.

**Fr. Laurent**



---

# Events



## Summer Vacation

It's summer vacation!

In mid-May, the children were able to return home for the summer holidays. As the holidays started much earlier this year due to a decision by the West Bengal state authorities in response to the extreme heat, the children attended two weeks of private tutoring provided by another NGO before leaving.

Before their departure, all the Homes organized meetings with the parents.

Our dadas and didis **raised awareness** among the families on the topic of child development in order to provide them with useful educational guidelines. The sessions focused on the hierarchy of needs (or Maslow's pyramid) to help parents understand how to meet their children's needs properly and how to set **educational priorities**.

There were also short plays to highlight the importance of parental vigilance regarding the dangers children face, particularly from malicious adults. Lastly, our staff once again warned about the risks of mobile phone addiction, a phenomenon that affects even the most underprivileged children. Once at home, children often enjoy more freedom, and the lack of awareness among parents about the dangers of **excessive screen** use has a direct impact on child development.

After the children left for the holidays, our didis and dadas also took the opportunity to **visit the homes of some of our beneficiaries** to assess the social situation of their families and continue raising awareness.



*Meeting about child development with the parents of the children of Ashaneer (left) and Bakuabari (right)*



## Third Round of Home Visit

Our Home Visit program is ongoing.

The third round was completed in April and provided us with a wealth of important information. As a reminder, the goals of the Home Visits are to:

- **Reach the most underprivileged** and map the areas of Howrah where poverty is highly concentrated
- **Identify new potential beneficiaries** and enroll them in HSP programs (SMCS, non-formal education, Homes, etc.)
- **Raise staff awareness** about the social situations of HSP beneficiaries
- **Strengthen HSP's** presence among the poorest populations

For this round, we chose to visit the slums of **Pilkhana, Dasnagar, and Ramraja**.

We visited 102 households, of which 52 were living in poverty. Only 2 households were found to be in a situation of extreme poverty.

This measurement is based on a scoring system that helps determine each household's socio-economic category.

In Kolkata, poverty is becoming less geographically concentrated and more scattered, making it harder to identify and requiring greater effort to remain connected with the most vulnerable populations.

It has indeed become more difficult for us to identify new beneficiaries, as shown by the decreasing number of children being admitted to our Homes.

In response to this evolving context, HSP is actively adapting to the new challenges.



# Celebration in West Bengal

Once again, this quarter was marked by many celebrations. Here is a list of the festivals we celebrated:

- **Pohela Boishakh** (April 15th) marks the Bengali New Year. We have now entered the year 1432 according to the solar calendar. This calendar was introduced by the Mughal emperor Akbar in the late 16th century in order to align the Islamic lunar fiscal year with the agricultural seasons based on the Hindu solar calendar. This festival is celebrated only in the state of West Bengal and in Bangladesh.
- **Good Friday** (April 17th) is a public holiday throughout India. However, the "Easter Monday" that we know in France and Switzerland does not exist here.



*Easter celebration in Bakuabari with Father Laurent*

- **Labour Day** (May 1st) was established by the Communist Party in 1923 and is now celebrated throughout India.
- **Rabindra Jayanti** (May 9th) celebrates the birthday of Rabindranath Tagore, who was born on the 25th day of the Bengali month of Boishakh. Born in 1861 (or 1268 in the Bengali calendar), he left a profound mark on Bengali culture through his poetry, musical compositions, philosophical reflections, and paintings. His work deeply transformed Bengali culture, which explains why he is still celebrated 84 years after his death. He was also the first non-Westerner to receive a Nobel Prize. This festival is celebrated only in the state of West Bengal and in Bangladesh.
- **Bakrid / Eid-ul-Adha** (June 7th) means “the Festival of Sacrifice.” It commemorates the act of faith of the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), who was ready to sacrifice his son Ishmael at God’s command. At the last moment, God replaced the child with a ram, thus marking a test of faith and obedience. On this occasion, an animal (sheep, goat, buffalo, or cow) is sacrificed, and the meat is divided into three parts: one for the family, one for relatives and friends, and the last part is reserved for the poor. The Muslim children of our homes return to their families for this special occasion, which is a moment of sharing and celebration.
- **Rath Yatra** (June 29th in Kolkata) celebrates the annual journey of the deities Jagannath (a form of Krishna), his brother Balabhadra, and his sister Subhadra from their main temple to the Gundicha Temple. For this celebration, we built a chariot and pulled it through the center during a festive procession. This festival is celebrated across India.



*Chariot build in Ashaneer (left) and in Lalkuthi (right) during Rath Yatra*

Through all these festivals, the three major religions are celebrated. This reflects the religious diversity of India, and particularly of the state of West Bengal (to recall: the population is composed of approximately 70% Hindus, 27% Muslims, and 1% Christians). These three religions were introduced over time in this region and layered upon one another to form this rich diversity.

Christianity was introduced by Portuguese missionaries in the 16th century. Islam was introduced in the 14th century with the first Bengal Sultanate, followed by the Mughal Empire from the 16th to the 18th century. Hinduism, on the other hand, has always been present, with traces of this religion in the region dating back to the 16th century BCE.

In addition to these three major religions, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism (notably with two synagogues in Kolkata) are also present, though in much smaller numbers.



## Parental Training for Disability

As every year, HSP organized a **parental training program** in the special school Manus Domini. We selected children with disabilities from outside our programs in order to train their parents in the daily care routines needed to properly support their children.

More specifically, this program is intended for children with global developmental delay, particularly in areas such as gross motor skills, communication, daily living activities, play, and more.

**A total of 17 children aged 3 to 7**, accompanied by their mothers, came to stay for four days at the Bakuabari Home to attend the training (the regular girl residents of Bakuabari had gone home for the summer holidays).

The main goal of the program was to **identify each child's specific needs and to establish an intervention plan**. We gathered background information on each child, assessed their development, and determined their needs. Most of them required physical management training. We demonstrated and explained how to adopt proper posture to promote better mobility for the child.



We also encouraged the mothers to continue basic physiotherapy and occupational therapy sessions at home. Some children require assistive devices or aids, while others need a walker or a standing bar to help them stand upright.

The training sessions were divided into three parts:

- the development of gross motor skills,
- feeding and recreational activities for the children,
- and dedicated programs for the mothers.

Each day after lunch, discussions, videos, and interactive games were offered to promote mental well-being. The children were encouraged to perform activities such as holding a toy or a doll, helping them develop various multisensory skills. We also explained how to protect both the mothers and their children from malicious individuals, using awareness videos.

The final day, focused on emotions, enabled most mothers to gain knowledge on how to care for their children with special needs and to participate in outdoor training sessions.

All participants from both the outdoor training and the Manus Domini program demonstrated their skills and took an active part. Several new didis also took part in HSP's internal training program.

The mothers expressed their gratitude and satisfaction with the training, and we were equally happy to support the children alongside their mothers.



# Interns in HSP

For one month, we hosted **Sister Aneto, a member of the Loreto congregation.** Like HSP, the Loreto sisters run social homes for underprivileged girls across India. Sister Aneto spent most of her time in Jalpaiguri, working in various centers. She came as an intern in psychological counselling.

Throughout her stay, she facilitated workshops for our staff and caregivers, focusing on key topics such as intersectionality, the importance of mental health and psychological support, self-care, stress management, emotional regulation, and the development of resilience—all crucial areas for those who care daily for vulnerable populations.

She also **held sessions** with the older girls in Bakuabari through a mental health awareness program. These sessions covered topics such as healthy eating habits, stress management, sleep hygiene, emotional regulation, bullying, and self-esteem. The goal was to help the girls better understand and manage their emotions.

## **Testimony from her time at HSP:**

*“One of the most impactful aspects of this internship was witnessing the compassion and dedication the staff showed every day towards the residents. Their unwavering commitment and patience were reflected in their relationships with the children. I experienced immense joy simply spending time with the kids in the evenings—playing, singing, and praying together.*

*Despite the many challenges and disabilities they face, they radiated a deep, contagious joy. Their innocence, resilience, and zest for life became for me a daily source of hope and inspiration.”*



*Sister Aneto with the resident Jeevan Path*

We were fortunate to welcome **three interns** from Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan who chose HSP for a month for their final internship as social workers. Their goal is to study HSP's impact on communities. They visited all of HSP's different departments to understand HSP's history. One of them was already familiar with it because she is **the daughter of Nabonita Chowdhury**, our home coordinator in Howrah.

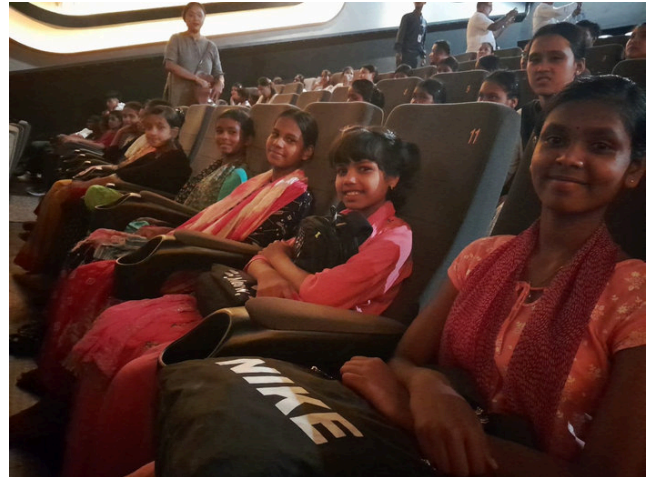


# News of the Quarter

- Just like last year, the Bakuabari girls were invited to the cinema by the Siliguri police commissionerate! They went to see the film "Anko Ki Kothin," about the story of three children from the slums. Girls from other social welfare homes were also invited.
- In Bakuabari, part of the compound wall collapsed due to wind and heavy rain. Quickly, makeshift repairs were made to fill the hole. As a reminder, the compound wall is essential because it prevents children with intellectual disabilities from escaping the home and any intrusion by outsiders. We are very grateful to TDHA, which immediately agreed to finance the wall repairs that are currently underway.
- Following the governing body at the end of June, **Father Julius Kujur**, a friend of Father Laborde and a member of the Governing Body, decided to step down as he is moving to Israel. **Lucy Yashoda**, our former coordinator of non formal education and formal teacher trainer who stepped down last November, was appointed to the Governing Body as his replacement. She warmly accepted the position. Her experience in education will enable HSP to better develop its educational program.
- On June 2, **Maya Rani Roy Chowdhury passed away at the age of 64**. She had been a resident of Maria Basti since 1982. We pray for the repose of her soul; the residents of Maria Basti will greatly miss her presence.
- A report from **Figaro Magazine** was published in mid-May. This report was made by two photographers who came to spend three weeks immersed in HSP in November 2024. This report is available by following this link: ["This city is horror and wonder at the same time": in Calcutta, Father Laurent works to save 400 children from the clutches of poverty](#)



Maya Rani Roy Chowdhury in orange dress



Bakuabari girls in cinema

Reportage



Calcutta  
L'ANGE GARDIEN  
DES  
BIDONVILLES

Dans cette ville indienne surpeuplée et marquée par une pauvreté extrême, l'histoire du père François Labarde, au service des plus indigents, avait bouleversé, il y a quarante ans, le cœur des Français. Dominique Lapiere s'en était alors inspiré pour écrire son roman *La Cité de la joie*. Aujourd'hui, le père Laurent lui a succédé. Un missionnaire, un messager de l'espoir, dans la lignée du nouveau pape Léon XIV.

De notre envoyé spécial Jérôme Gence (texte et photos)

Dans sa vie « d'avant », le père Laurent Bissara rêvait de fonder une famille. Aujourd'hui, dans le quartier déserté de Howrah, il cherche à sauver de la misère plus de 400 enfants.



## Portrait

### Arusi Bagdi

Arusi Bagdi is a deaf girl born in 2018. She is an only child and lives with her mother and grandmother. Her mother is a daily wage earner, so her family's income is low.

She joined Ashaneer's home at the age of 5. At that time, she was very weak, unable to eat alone or participate in activities. Furthermore, she didn't understand sign language or any other gestures, and reacted poorly to others.

She began attending the Proglanya Special School daily, where she learned social skills, such as communicating with other children. The didis also participated in her sign language training by providing daily support.

In just seven months, her social behavior has significantly improved: she has successfully learned gestures and sign language. She has learned the alphabet and numbers, and she even knows how to write her name in English!

Today she attends a formal school and her parents are very happy to see all her progress.



DONATE