The COVID-19 pandemic and global lockdown represents an unprecedented challenge for the humanity. Lockdown is having an immediate impact on the world economy, which varies dramatically across sectors and regions. Many sectors have nearly stopped operating and others are facing shortage of skilled workers. The impact of confinement is bound to be most severe for vulnerable workers, especially poor, informal-sector workers hampering daily earnings and no savings, raising concerns for their survival. As it is said that more people would die of hunger than Covid pandemic. Disruption of the routine, social isolation and the pandemic itself is undoubtedly taking a toll on the well-being and mental health of people. In some contexts, there are emergence of health hazards, and increase in exposure to and experiences of violence, particularly impacting women. As the country is seeing a surge in positive cases of Covid-19 and the Coronavirus pandemic continues to affect the population, Caritas India along with her partners have prominently made some realistic relief efforts to support as many as vulnerable people possible through effective mechanisms and processes in place.
During the time of distress and crisis, the marginalised section of the society is most vulnerable to cope up with the deteriorating socio-economic situation. Caritas India discerning the emergency situation prioritising the support to the most vulnerable groups particularly children, women, elderly people, indigenous people, dalits, people with disabilities, migrants, and labourers.

Target Groups

Most Rev. Dr Alex Vadakumthala
Kerala

Most Rev. Ignatius D’Souza
Uttar Pradesh

Most Rev. Dr Anil Joseph Thomas Couto
Delhi

Most Rev. Mar James Athikalamm
Madhya Pradesh

Major Actions

Dry ration and Ready to Eat Food

In the wake of the novel coronavirus pandemic, Caritas India has distributed dry ration to the underprivileged. The partner dioceses have been providing free food to the needy at the time of the global crisis. Community kitchens have been made nodal points for the distribution of free food to the poor and underprivileged. The distribution has been done across the country and social distancing and hygiene norms are being adhered to while delivering the food to needy persons. While some partners distributed relief kits for cancer patients, others extended medical and financial support to the most needed patients. Some of the partners have started distribution of family farming related materials for the household such as seedling, seeds, grow bags etc., as another area of intervention.

Hygiene kits and Awareness sessions

Since the pandemic affects poor people the most, who live in crowded and lack basic hygiene knowledge, they are the most susceptible to diseases like COVID-19. Awareness sessions have conducted, where each session ended with the distribution of hygiene kits that included face mask, sanitizers, and alcohol-based soap, sufficient for 1 family of 5 members. Partners are also focusing on providing PPE kits to the Private & Govt. Hospitals and Health Department. The Church infrastructures are being extended for isolation and quarantine services. Some partners have provided Ambulance services for patients and commuting stranded people to safer locations.
Psychosocial Support

Caritas India and partners have initiated the psychosocial support to provide basic counselling as well as link them to professional state/center helplines. More than 69,000 people including migrant workers were provided psychosocial support who reached out to seek assistance telephonically. People are suffering from fear of falling ill or getting infected, losing livelihood, being socially excluded, helplessness, and fear of losing loved ones, etc. Caritas India continues to add more counsellors in partnership with various organizations to consistently increase its efforts towards providing mental health support.

Volunteer Engagement

Caritas India and her partners in the field are supported by more than 44,898 volunteers across the country to provide relief materials to the needy. Volunteers are extending their services in awareness building, beneficiary assessment, packing, and distribution of relief materials to the most affected people. They are assisting partners in ensuring Government advisories during distribution through proper physical distancing. Caritas India along with her 181 partner organizations and strong volunteer networks continue to tirelessly work for providing relief and the required help to the vulnerable sections in this fight against Covid-19. Along with Caritas organisations, Religious communities have ventured to reach out to the suffering population through their voluntary efforts.
Church in Solidarity with the Poor

The Church at the National, Regional, Diocesan and Parish levels and the various Apostolates, Commissions, Religious Congregations demonstrated inexplicable prudence and dynamism to effectively communicate, connect and reach out to the people in need in this very unprecedented time of Covid 19. Catholic Bishops Conference of India, Caritas India, the social apostolate of the Church at the National level, Regional Bishops Conferences are round the clock at the coordination of efforts at various levels. Around 837 Church agencies worked in close coordination with the Government Authorities to provide early relief. Some of the organisations through grassroot structures started producing face masks and sanitisers for the poor migrant community. Organisation, institutions, ministries, parishes, and individuals are helping the poor families through awareness building, financial support, food support, community kitchen, mask distribution, blood donation, medical support, psychosocial support and even giving Church infrastructure for quarantine facilities. The Church Managed health care institutions and personnel are actively engaged in providing health care to the affected population and involved in the prevention activities. Catholic Church as a collective has reached out to the millions of populations of all faith. We could mobilise and collate some information of our response, though not complete. We are setting up a research and documentation team to mobilise the data of the Church Response to Covid Pandemic. “The entire Church is a field hospital after the battle of Corona, healing the wounds of the people”. We gratefully acknowledge and appreciate the leadership and commitment of all our Bishops for being at the frontline in the response to covid pandemic.
Way Forward

Catholic Church is unified in responding to the call of human suffering and Caritas India under the guidance of the leadership of the Church is dialoguing with Civil authorities, Inter-faith leaders, Regional Forums, Partner Organisations, NGOs, civil society organisations, and other men of goodwill to determine the need and respond accordingly. Caritas is engaged in conducting Rapid Researches to identify the problem and design future course of action to meaningfully respond to the long-term needs of the suffering lot. Caritas India largely plan to focus on the migrants, marginal farmers, unorganised workers, and people suffering from other morbidities.

The magnitude of crisis required a concentric focus of the collaborative effort. Hence, Caritas India apart from the short-term relief efforts is planning for the long-term response keeping in mind the needs of the populations, local factors such as access to affected communities, and the capacity of local partners. The efforts will focus on health, education, livelihood, and skill-building of the marginalised population affected by Covid19.

Caritas India & Partners Reach

78,75,204
(7.87 Million)
Total Population Supported

837
Church agencies in action at Covid-19 relief works

267
Community kitchens started by Church institutions

63,68,677
(6.36 Million)
Food supplies

256 Million
Spent by Catholic Church for Covid-19 response so far

5,84,072
(0.58 Million)
Sanitizers Distributed

23,68,131
(2.36 Million)
Masks Distributed

4,03,949
Migrants Supported

44,898
Volunteers Engaged