



New Hopes **New Horizons**

Catholic Church Response to COVID-19 in India

 **Caritas[®]**
INDIA
The Joy of Service...

New Hopes **New Horizons**

Catholic Church Response to COVID-19 in India

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“

We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other.

Pope Francis ”

Caritas India was founded in 1962 as the official development arm of the Catholic Church in India. Propelled by the commitment to preserve the dignity and sacredness of human personality, Caritas India has served the underprivileged sections of the society, hailing from socially excluded communities, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes by exercising preferential actions for the most marginalized. Resultantly, with a large spectrum of development interventions across the country, Caritas India is recognized as a leading NGO in poverty alleviation through Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction and Natural Resource Management.

Vision

Formation of a just and sustaining social order by upholding values of love, equality and peace.

Mission

Restoration of human dignity of the poor and marginalized by partnering with intermediary organizations in extending support and facilitation and advocating for the rights of the people.



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Foreword



Fostering a momentum of humanity

Pope Francis has been challenging for a prophetic preparation to “put into practice a new way of being the church”. A simplified church, a church that goes to the people, loves the poor and is close to nature.

The Church has continuously observed with deep concern the developments around the spread and dire effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This virus was clearly determined, and it continues to ravage human life while creating fear, hopelessness and uncertainty. God has been using His People as the Church in a new way. This moment rather movement of humanity is an occasion to discern about our life and what defines us.

The current pandemic has in many ways ignited new breakthroughs and redrawn the lines of commune in our society. It remains crucial for us development actors; to scale up solutions co-produced by our local communities and focus on strengthening new alliances. Community led solutions are necessary but insufficient. Building alliances, networking and collaboration can direct new transformative plans to evolve from within our community institutions in fostering social justice.

Prompted by the values and principles of compassion and human dignity, under the able guidance and leadership of the Catholic Church, Caritas India led the Humanitarian Response from the front. Taking inspiration from the one to one conversation with His Excellency Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India and the continuous engagement of His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias, the President of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), Catholic Church in the country reached out to 22.07 million population in collaboration with all the 174 Catholic Dioceses, 14 Regional Forums, Religious Institutions, Catholic Religious of India(CRI), Religious congregations, Catholic Hospitals Association of India (CHAI) and other social work institutions managed by the Church.

Caritas India is intentional about communicating her intervention plans to the people and to the outside world. She has played a critical role in times of crisis and has brought forth the creative and collective emergency responses by our community-based organizations and grassroots groups towards addressing the rising hunger.

This National Report is a culmination of the concerted efforts that the Catholic Church has taken towards alleviating marginalization and witnessing the sharing attitude of the people, wherein many volunteered to share their resources, service time and labour to overcome the impact of the pandemic.

Covid pandemic has inspired us to think differently for a new normal. Imbibing the lessons, Caritas India is coming forward with the new initiatives like CIDAL (Caritas Institute for Development Action and Learning) for collective learning and action and 'Be CALM', a platform for mental health.

No words to express my sincere appreciation for my management and staff colleagues without whom this unprecedented humanitarian response would not have been possible.

We hope that this report shall strengthen and amplify the strength of our community and gives a pathway for a more inclusive, evolving and diverse understanding of solidarity and hope. May this report inspire all the stakeholders to foster humanity.



Fr. Paul Moonely
Executive Director

Message



COVID 19 had spawned a new humanitarian crisis, cramming various parts of the country. Our brothers and sisters from the unorganized sector were rendered homeless and jobless. Many lost their lives in their pursuit to be back-home. The lockdown had reduced their access to food as they had lost their source of daily income and with the prices on the rise; desperation, chaos and fear was making this sector go frantic.

Go out to the peripheries! our Pope Francis' call throughout his papacy and his concern to "Welcome, Protect, Promote and Integrate" migrants led the Church in India under the aegis of CBCI and with the facilitation of Caritas India, to play a vital yet critical role in this distressful moment, bringing forth creative and collective emergency responses and addressing gaps towards the rising hunger proliferated through community support.

The Church in its spirit led ministry has not forgotten the internally displaced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Multiple initiatives have been taken to keep our communities, volunteers, staff and partners aware of this deadly situation and the herculean task of conducting nation-wide relief operations. The church has been committed to serve and tend those on the peripheries as well

as on the front line of the crisis. Thousands of volunteers of good-will have generously extended their efforts, time and resources to be the arms in action in our endeavor to alleviate the despondency induced.

I am happy to be part of this unparalleled response from the Church fraternity to reach out to the strained and stranded population that had been dispossessed and isolated. The generosity and support garnered from the Laity of our Church has helped meet the needs of the affected and reduce the sufferings of our brothers and sisters of India.

The urgent calling of our beloved Pope Francis towards 'Being Courageous to Innovate' has directed the Church in India to extend life saving protection and caring for each other as One Common Family, One Common Home.

It gives me immense satisfaction to present this National Report that encapsulates Faith in Action and as Good Samaritans living the Clarion call of Serving with Love.

Most Rev. Sebastian Kallupura
Chairman - Caritas India

Message



Caritas India is the social arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and co-ordinates all its works of charity and development: fulfilling the mandate that Our Lord gave us in Matthew 25:40 "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

As in the Gospel parable, this small seed born 58 years back, has grown into a mighty tree and has become one of the biggest Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in India reaching out to all parts of the country and in all difficult situations. Ours is a big nation and there are many areas of want and poverty with lack of adequate medical and educational facilities. There is yet very great scope for development.

The Church in India has generously got involved in all situations: earthquakes, floods, riots and social disturbances while also gradually developing among our people a self-confidence, consciousness of human rights, greater gender sensitivity, protection of children, and building up of harmony among people of different creeds, cultures and ethnic origins. The teaching of Jesus is "Blessed are the Peacemakers".

Covid 19 hit the world unexpectedly. India experienced the shock in March 2020. All were totally unprepared for this great adversity and the challenges that it brought. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India offered assistance of the Church in bringing relief to all in distress. The Government gratefully accepted this offer and both Caritas India and the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) were invited for high level meetings, including one with the Prime Minister. We can proudly say that every diocese in the country got involved in this relief work. We helped over 22.07 million people on the way home and others in distress and a conservative estimate is that the contribution of the Church in India till now has been over Rupees 130 crores. Religious houses also contributed much with personnel, material help and financial assistance. Camps were set up by our Institutions.

The medical emergency still continues and has not yet reached its peak. All our hospitals, dispensaries and medical personnel have been fully involved in the relief. CHAI co-ordinated this effort.

While these are immediate and short term measures Caritas has begun thinking of long term measures, and studying how to come to the aid of people who have lost their jobs, suffered cuts in salaries, with many experiencing lack of money to be able to keep the family surviving and with a great uncertainty of the future. We have begun to think not only of relief but of training people for new skills so that many small-scale businesses can be started, and our people find means of survival.

The Church in India tried to give witness of true discipleship of the Lord. How much we succeeded, future generations will say. This Report gives a comprehensive idea of the challenges we faced and the efforts we made to overcome them.

We pray this pandemic will be under control soon but our experiences during this pandemic will surely stand Caritas in good stead. The work done will help us to become even more effectively the social wing of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India making the Kingdom of God present in our beloved motherland. We praise God for the efforts of all: the Administration, the Governing Body and the General Body of Caritas India. May God continue to bless our efforts.

Cardinal Oswald Gracias
Archbishop of Bombay &
President, Catholic Bishops Conference of India

Message



I am very happy to note that Caritas India has taken very bold and decisive steps to alleviate the sufferings of the people in different parts of India by offering timely help in food, shelter and hygiene during this disastrous period of the pandemic which is causing unbelievable hardships to millions of people. Cooperating with the agencies of the Central and State governments and also taking own initiatives, Caritas India was successful in coordinating the efforts of the people and agencies under the 174 Catholic dioceses in India in coming to aid of more than 22.07 million people. The Church through its agencies has reached a large number of people in this dire time to ameliorate the sufferings of the people because of the Covid 19.

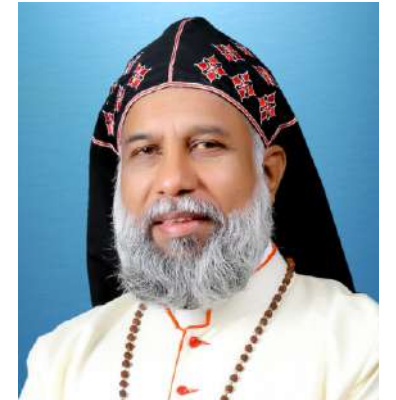
Caritas India has always been in the forefront in offering help when calamities and natural disasters strike India and destroy the life and property of the people. The valiant efforts during earthquakes like the Latur, Bangladesh Refugee crisis, floods in Odisha and Kerala and in the calamitous impact of the Tsunami etc are unforgettable.

During this pandemic, the poor, the dispossessed, the unemployed and the sick are suffering intensely. There should be no slack in our efforts at the unburdening of suffering of the people.

May the outstretched hands of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ bless our efforts to carry on His ministry of healing and help during this pandemic crisis!

Cardinal George Alencherry
Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church

Message



The Catholic Church has definitive ministry in the field of spiritual, social and humanitarian sectors of human life, for their holistic development, based on the Christian command and value – “I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34). Caritas India, as an arm of the Catholic Church in India, is the leading humanitarian organisation in our country, evolved from Christian charity and compassion, exercising its multifarious social activities with diligence and propriety. It upholds the basic Christian principles to safeguard human dignity and self-confidence to celebrate human life, in its entirety with an inclusive mindset. The motto of Caritas India 'the joy of service' reveals its spirituality. The beneficiaries of Caritas India are people of all faiths, irrespective of caste, creed or ethnicity.

The collaborative work of various institutions under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, ventured upon immediate humanitarian response whenever and wherever it is required, providing food, medicine, clothing, shelter etc. through the benevolent activities under the banner of Caritas India. The year 2019-20 has stunned the world with the enigmatic attack of the pandemic Covid-19, which threw overboard the sanity and peacefulness of human life. To alleviate and cope up with this situation, Caritas India together with various Governmental and non-Governmental organizations, extended its support over the

vast panorama of India, incorporating civil and administrative bodies through the Catholic Dioceses of our country. The national action plan prepared by Caritas India took stock of the Covid-19 and effectively intervened in areas with positive involvement under the guidance and patronage of the CBCI.

I, wholeheartedly, congratulate the new Chairman of Caritas India, His Grace Most Rev. Sebastian Kallupura (Co-adjutor Archbishop of Patna), Rev. Fr. Paul Moonjely, the Executive Director and his dedicated team for their timely and concrete intervention during the tragic attack of the pandemic Covid-19. The significant contributions and relevant intervention of Caritas India during the recent natural calamities are also praiseworthy.

I wish all the best for Caritas India to be at the service of our beloved country, in its upmost needs. I appreciate this initiative of Caritas India in bringing out a conclusive report touching all areas of its initiatives. May the publication of this report inspire many more to adhere the path of service.

May God bless India!

Cardinal Baselios Cleemis
Major Archbishop-Catholicos

The Church followed a process involving four main components during the COVID-19 relief and response – Action, Partnership, Knowledge Building and Sharing and Documentation.

When the world was full of fear, doubts and apprehensions during the pandemic, Caritas decided to ACT, Caritas didn't sit idle!

ACTION

PARTNERSHIP

Caritas realized that it could not act alone, so it networked and partnered with the like-minded NGOs to reach the last mile.

By collective efforts, many brains came together and there were many learnings in the process.

KNOWLEDGE BUILDING AND SHARING

DOCUMENTATION

Creating a memory for generations to come.

Introduction: Spreading Joy & Love in the Pandemic



COVID-19 pandemic, which first hit the world in December 2019, brought us to a standstill and locked us all inside. The world went on a 'Pause' mode. The humanity witnessed and experienced fear, hunger, anxiety, apprehension and loneliness. The pandemic showed us something that most of us had not seen in our lifetimes - Large number of people unable to have two meals a day.

As the world continued to battle and in fact, understand the coronavirus pandemic that hit almost 210 countries and territories, Caritas India sprang into action with its prompt and timely planning and response. Remaining true to its meaning, Caritas never loses an opportunity to spread and experience "Love in Action", be it a pandemic or a complete lockdown.

Caritas India, the social development arm of the Catholic Church in India, established in 1962, has evolved as one of the leading humanitarian organizations in the country with its decades of experience in the various sectors of development. In the current COVID-19 pandemic, the country evidently felt the need for promoting a 'Sharing Community' and upholding peace to curb further panic and fear. Hence, guided by the values and principles of

compassion and human dignity and under the guidance of the Catholic Church, Caritas India took the initiative of leading the COVID 19 Humanitarian Response.

Under the leadership and continuous engagement of His Eminence Oswald Cardinal Gracias, the President of Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), along with the National leaders of our Country and taking inspiration from the one to one conversation of the Executive Director of Caritas India with Mr. Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Catholic Church as a collective reached out to 2,20,76,176 (22.07 million) population with food, clothing, shelter, hygiene materials, protection kits and other services. To reach the millions, the Church spent around Rs 1.3 billion with the support from the donors, CSR, and other partnerships. Due to the concerted efforts of the leaders of the Church in the country, the dioceses, religious institutions, Conference of Religious India (CRI), Religious Congregations, Catholic Hospitals Association of India (CHAI) and other social work institutions managed by the Catholic Church, COVID-19 Humanitarian Response was made possible.

CARITAS STRATEGY: 6 BE'S

Focusing on authentic information and communication from the Government, Local, National, and International Organizations for the dissemination of information to the communities. This approach focused on developing awareness (IEC) materials, drawing from authentic sources and reaching out to mass population through the institutions and Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) by multiple initiatives, such as webinars, social media campaign, rapid researches and assessments etc.

1 Be Informed

2 Be Trained

Equipping oneself with the required knowledge and skills for preventive and protective measures of COVID-19 and capacitating others through various means and mode, such as virtual training, real time communication and tracking etc.

Calling to serve the poor with compassion and helping those in dire need with essential items that could help them sustain through the crisis.

3 Be Compassionate

4 Be Cautious

Preventing and being cautious by highlighting the four essential ways of curbing the spread of the virus i.e. Hygiene and sanitization, Physical distancing, Frequent cleaning and disinfection of surroundings and Regular monitoring of one's health.

Since the lockdown isolated everyone into the innards of their own houses, it became difficult yet important to develop a strategy to stay connected through means of virtual platform and tele-communication.

5 Be Connected

6 Be Courageous

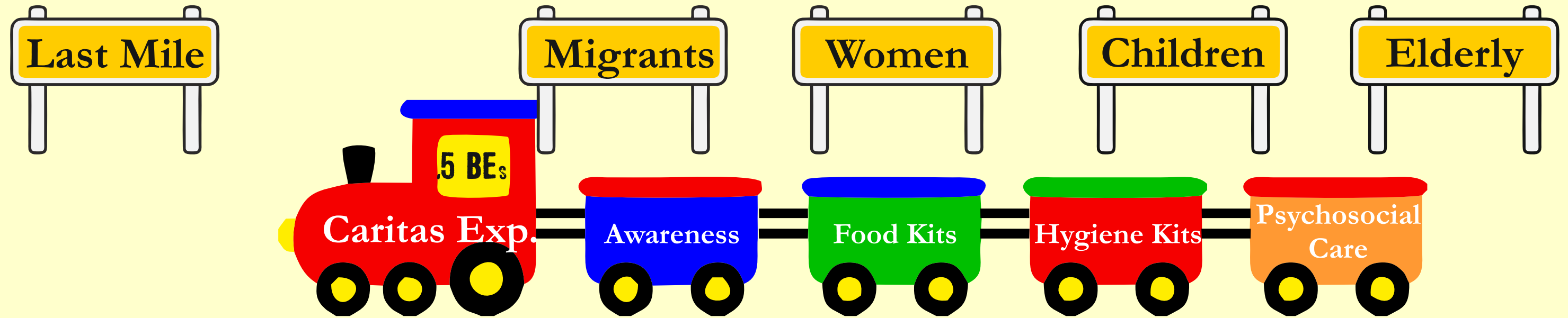
Pope Francis calls for Being Courageous and going out to the peripheries to reach out to the poor and aid them with resources from abundance. It is a call to explore new avenues and innovate to accelerate the mission of the Church to serve.

Strategy: Caritas@MissionCovid19

The COVID-19 Humanitarian Response by the Catholic Church, spearheaded by Caritas India, went the extra mile to show solidarity and support to the vulnerable and marginalized sections in the society.

Caritas India has been working closely with the government in responding to the crisis since March 23, 2020 through her partners across 28 states and 4 Union Territories, networking with more than 200 civil administration. Caritas India had organized a meeting with the Regional Forum Directors (the regional representatives), CBCI Commissions and other partner organizations to take stock of COVID-19 and come up with a National Plan of Action on 19th March 2020 at Caritas India Head Office in New Delhi. The reflection during the stock-taking meeting highlighted the situation of the pandemic and the efforts that have been taken up by the Church and various faith-based organizations across the country. Caritas India formed an emergency dedicated task force in collaboration with the Regional Network and Diocesan partners at the Diocesan, Regional & National level, under a virtual hashtag for a global social media connect as #Caritas@MissionCovid19. As a collective response, Caritas India proposed a strategy to the Church in line with Caritas Internationalis policy, which is: "Be Informed, Be Trained, Be Cautious, Be Connected, Be Compassionate & Be Courageous."





Reaching The Last Mile: Intervention Areas

Food for Survival: Being Compassionate

During the pandemic, access to the basic essentials for the survival i.e. food & water, became inaccessible for the significant section of the population in our country. Catholic Church left no stone unturned to reach out to varied sections of the society across the country – migrants on the move, individuals at the camps and quarantine centers, differently-abled, hostellers, tribal refugees, sex workers and their children, daily wage laborers, landless families, widows/widowers, orphans, pregnant women, homeless people, individuals and families with no PDS cards, people living in remote areas, PLHIV, cancer patients in the hospitals, old age people, the third gender, police personnel

Reaching Out

The Church followed a target-based approach where beneficiaries were prioritized as per their need and situation. A committee was formed for the identification of the beneficiaries and the distribution of relief materials. This committee involved parishioners, village leaders, organization staff, volunteers, etc. The formation and involvement of such committees ensured a transparent process and avoided duplication and helped in understanding the need of the community and finalizing the materials accordingly. Once the list was finalized, local vendors were identified, and items were purchased in bulk.

on duty, cyclists and truck drivers on the highways – the list is long and non-discriminatory. Access to food was ensured through four primary means – distribution of dry ration kits, initiation of community kitchens guaranteeing the distribution of cooked food, delivery of packed food items for the people on the move and providing access to Public Distribution System for a sustainable solution. Thus, the Church, spearheaded by Caritas India's approach of '6 Be(s)' reached out to 97,26,345 (9.7 million) people with the dry ration kits and 31,24,476 (3 million) people with cooked food through 974 community kitchens across the country.

These items were packed, keeping in mind the needs of a family and for a duration of a certain period. The packing and distribution of the materials were done adhering to all the precautions and guidelines and prior permissions.

Relief or Distribution Points were selected as per the convenience of the community. Hand to Hand distribution was avoided in most of the cases.

Food Packages

Every food kit contained dry ration that could support a family of 4-5 on an average, for two weeks at least. These packets had provisions to support full meals that could serve the essential nutritional needs for sustenance at about 600 to 700 Calories per meal. The content of the kits was decided based on refined food factors and dietary standards. The kits consisted of various cereals, pulses, and other essentials as

per the local dietary diversity.

In the case of Community Kitchens also, the nutritional value was not compromised, serving a sufficient quantity of staple food of the region – Rice, roti, poha, idli, sambar, dal, poori-bhaji, etc.

Stories of Change

Jenifer (name changed) lives in a village in Ernakulam District in Kerala. She is 19 years old, having a disability of CP/MR (80%) and Autism by birth due to which the father abandoned the family. Her mother is the only earning member of the family. In the lockdown period, she was unable to work and had no money to buy medicines for Jenifer. Through the local network of volunteers, the Cochin Social Service Society (CSSS) staff visited them and monitored the condition. CSSS Team gave them a food kit consisting of Rice, sugar, pulses, soap, paste, tea dust, rice powder, Bengal gram, and chili powder, sufficient for one month. CSSS team also facilitated the family in contacting Smt. Shailaja Teacher, the Health Minister of Kerala. After contacting her, with immediate effect they got medicines for two months.

Health, Hygiene and Sanitization: Being Cautious

Women Self Help Groups (SHGs) were facilitated to stitch the cloth masks. The raw material and textiles were arranged and given to them. Cloth masks were stitched in bulk and distributed to those in need. Some of the groups turned this as an opportunity of raising income by selling the masks at minimal rates as compared to the market rate. Other than the SHGs, many volunteers also helped the institutions in making masks and hygiene kits and its distribution to various people and stakeholders.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was a scarce commodity in the wake of the pandemic induced emergency. The demand and supply gap pushed these commodities to be more expensive, thus becoming unaffordable to the larger section of the population. As per the WHO and Govt. guidelines, preventive measures have always been the mandate to arrest the spread of the

disease. Therefore, the use of PPE items such as sanitizers, soaps, masks, gloves etc. became essential items to fight against the pandemic. On realization of this deficit, the Catholic Church decided to reach out in three main areas – Hygiene, Healthcare Assistance and Sanitization, keeping the approach of 'Being Cautious'.



Hygiene

Distributed 55,90,282 masks and 8,68,130 sanitizers nationwide.

Target groups - Individuals who are engaged in public activities and form high risk groups like street vendors, Hawkers, rag pickers, etc.



Health Assistance

Hospitals were equipped with PPE Kits, Thermal scanners, Disposable ventilatory circuits, Heat and Moisture Exchange (HME) filters, etc. for preparedness. Observation rooms for COVID Patients were also prepared.



Sanitization

The locality and surroundings were cleaned and sanitized by the community.

Houses, shops and other places were sprayed with disinfectants in coordination with the village Panchayats. Hand washing units were installed at public places by the volunteers.

Counselors from various states volunteered for their services to help break language barriers. Referrals were made based on an assessment of psycho-social needs to experts and specialists. Orientation and continuous training of volunteer counselors through virtual platforms were carried out regularly. For the same, a series of webinars was organized. The aged, lonely and the differently abled were assisted in availing online services, medicines, payment of various monthly bills.

Psycho-social Care: Being Connected

COVID-19 being the only focus and priority for many, everyone is 'worried,' 'stressed,' 'anxious,' 'isolated,' 'uncertain about the future,' 'feeling sad,' 'not able to sleep,' 'hopeless' and 'depressed.' During the lockdown, people had been pushed from a physically active lifestyle to a sedentary one, where the mind became a brewery that fermented self-doubt and discontentment.

Caritas India firmly believes that staying safe, positive and taking care of one's psychosocial wellbeing are

the most essential elements of surviving this Pandemic. That is why, one of the strategies laid out at the beginning was 'Being Connected'. Thus, realizing the need of the hour to cater to this hidden pandemic, the Catholic Church setup Helpline numbers in various states through which it reached out to 7,43,662 (0.7 million) distressed people. At the National level, Tollfree Helpline number - 844-844-1082 - was set up by Caritas India for the tele-counselling services.

Building Awareness: Being Informed and Being Trained

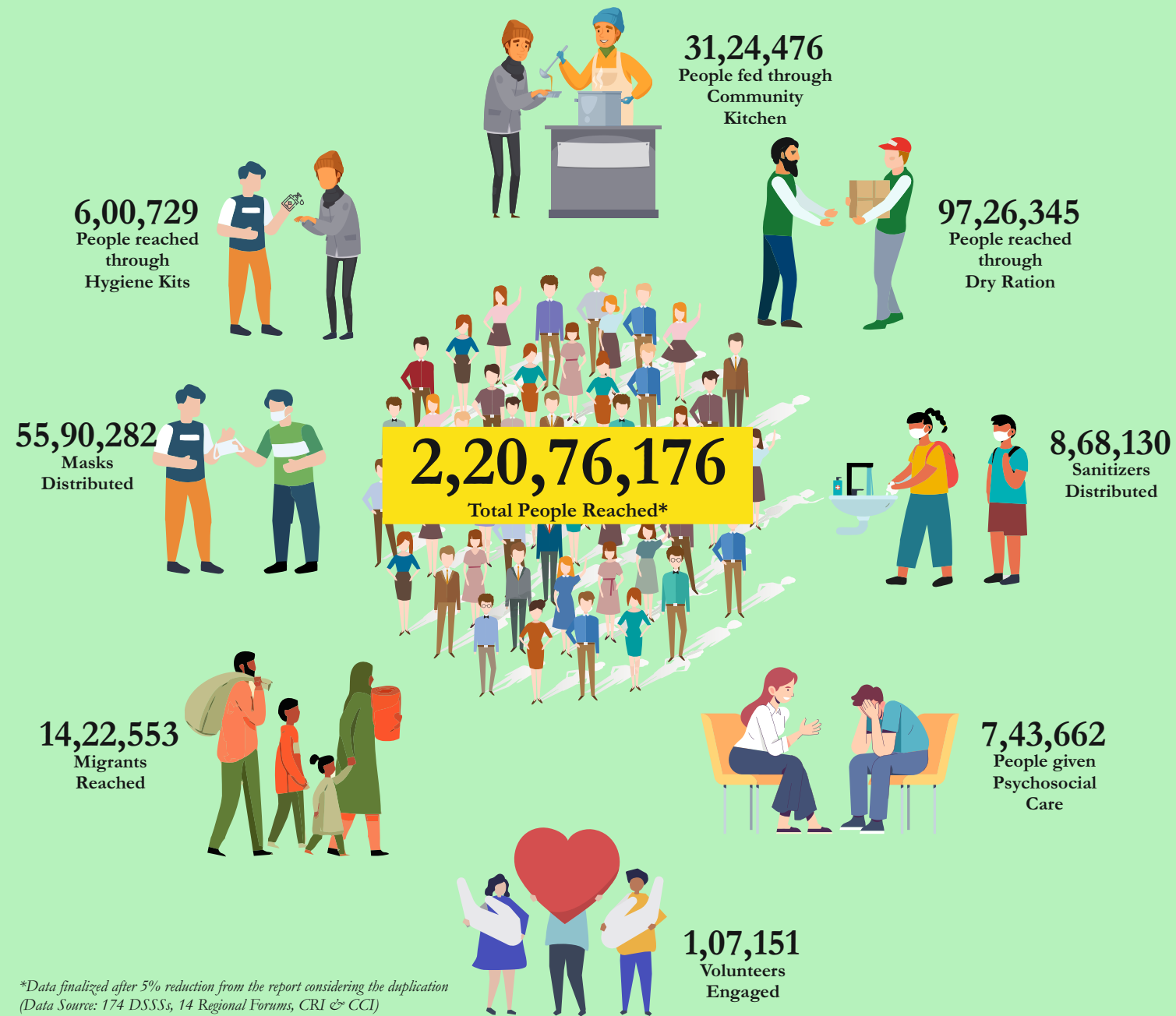
The Church played a critical role in the time of crisis by gathering information, organizing meetings, online campaigns, collecting regular activity data, conducting rapid assessments in areas where it has a presence and raising awareness through dissemination of important information on prevention, hygiene, fighting disinformation and encouraging people to stay at home.

Keeping in line with the strategy of 'Being Informed and Trained', proposed by Caritas India, multiple initiatives were undertaken to keep the communities, volunteers, staffs and the partners aware of the pandemic and relief measures through three important ways - Awareness Drives, Webinars, Researches and Assessments.



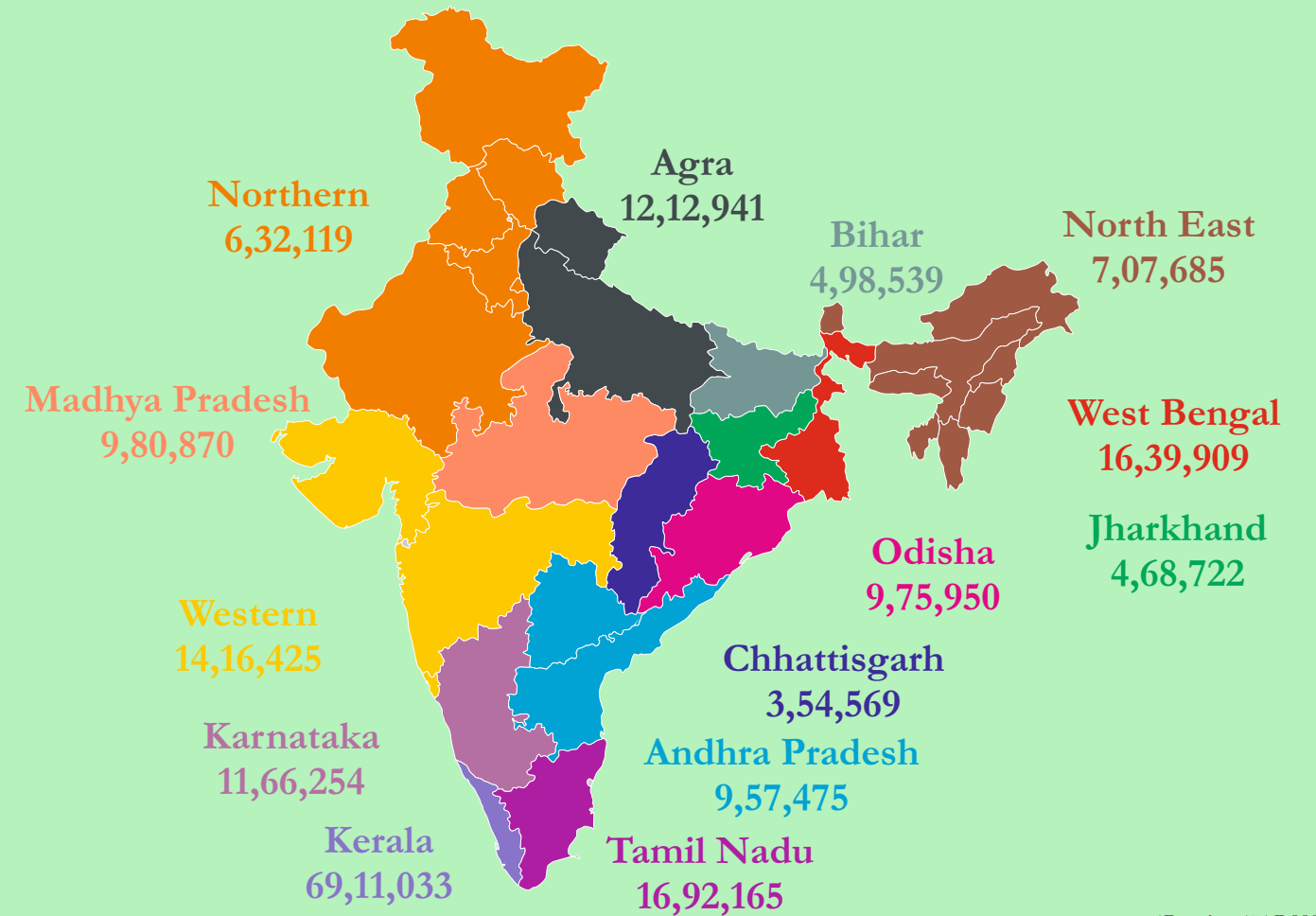
Covid-19 Reach & Coverage

Catholic Church started responding to COVID-19, even before WHO declared it as a global pandemic, in March with basic awareness programs at the community level. Since then, it has served more than 20.07 million people in the country. This section of the report will give a glimpse of the number of people reached by the Church from March 2020 to August 2020.



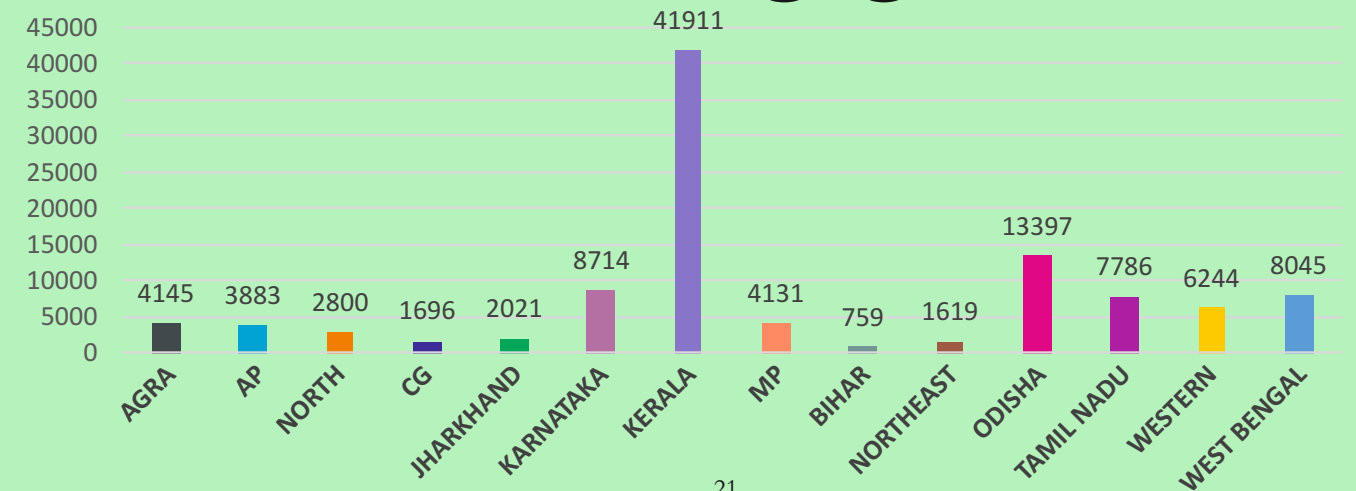
*Data finalized after 5% reduction from the report considering the duplication
(Data Source: 174 DSSSS, 14 Regional Forums, CRI & CCI)

Regional Coverage*

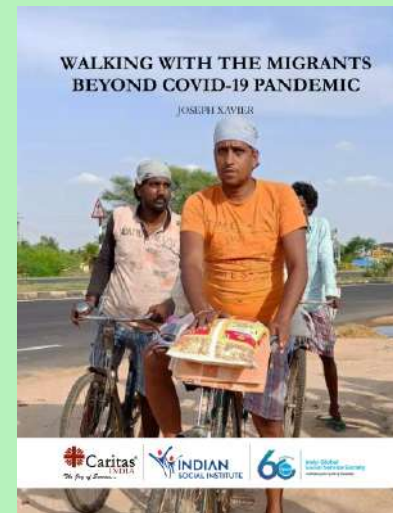


*Data from 174 DSSSSs

Volunteer Engagement



Knowledge Building & Sharing



Knowledge Building and sharing are two essential concepts of Knowledge Management. It emphasizes on creating a space for sharing results and ideas. This process is a continuous spectrum of learning, un-learning and re-learning. Development and growth are often marked by mapping this learning curve. Caritas India has come a long way in this curve and has been working on six thematic areas, expanding the scope for learning and knowledge sharing across the disciplines.

However, with the outbreak of Covid-19, the normal ways of functioning came to a standstill. Caritas India and its team of humanitarian aid and development workers quickly adopted to the unforeseen circumstances and came up with a strategy to function like a cloud organization. Prompt and efficient planning led to a new dimension of Caritas Online which focused on innovative and creative ways on knowledge building and sharing in the 'New Normal'. Instead of face to face and physical functioning, Caritas India went virtual. Other than Awareness Drives, Caritas India organized Rapid Researches and Webinars/Workshops for Knowledge Building and Sharing.



Rapid Research and Assessments

As a learning organization, CARITAS India, along with the partner organizations, attempted to generate evidence and knowledge from every situation, program and response. COVID-19 response created such opportunity to gather evidence from its communities regarding their immediate and long-term needs and challenges.

assessments would help the Church to strategize their future interventions and responses in different states. Also, the study's recommendations could be effectively used by various stakeholders to engage in advocacy works and lobby with respective states and philanthropists to develop proactive and innovative strategic responses. For the same, the findings of these researches were shared in different platforms to strategize future programs.

Spearheading the process, Caritas India conducted four research/assessments. These studies and

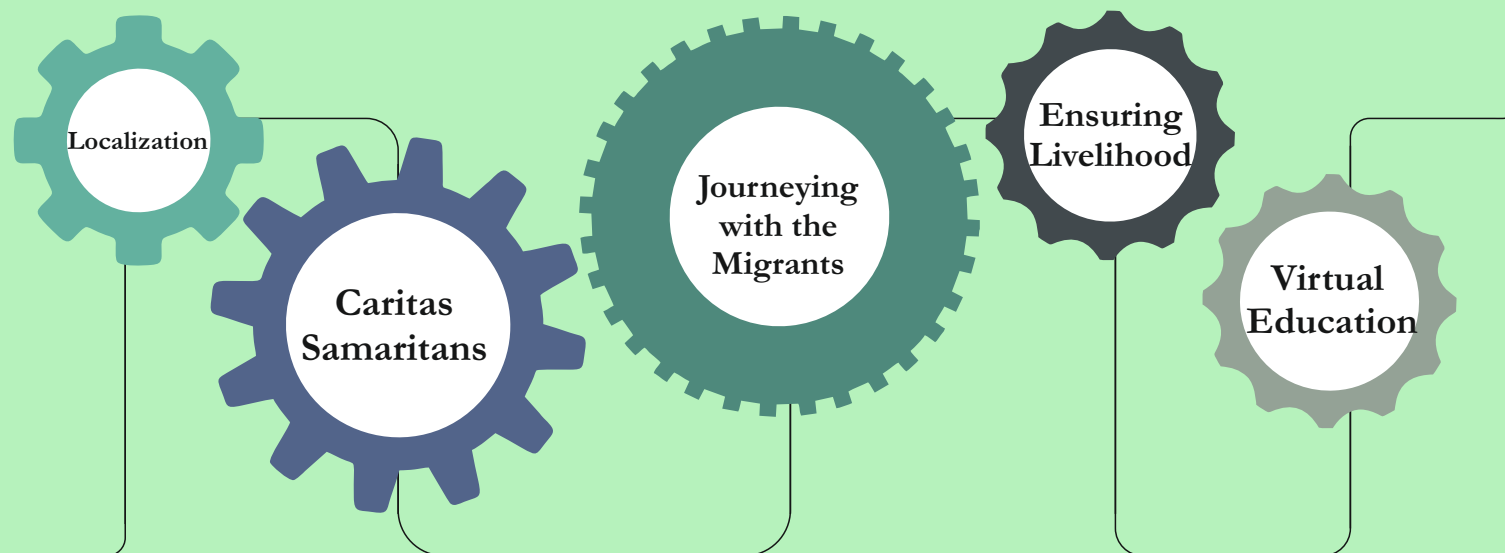


Virtual Connect

Web conferencing has made it easy to connect virtually through platforms and applications like Google Meet, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. It is an umbrella term used for all different online collaborative services including webinars, webcasts, online workshops, training and peer-level web meetings. Continuing with the

practice of maintaining the learning curve, multiple webinars were conducted with expert speakers who provided essential and critical information on various pertinent issues related to COVID-19 and its implication in the 'New Normal'

Silver Lining: Best Practices



During the relief response by the Church, several silver linings emerged, during the pandemic. One such best practice was expanding the scope of virtual platforms in the daily functioning of the organization, as mentioned in the previous section. It was overwhelming to witness the sharing attitude of the people, wherein many volunteered to share their resources, services, time and labor to overcome the impact of the pandemic. Some of the approaches and strategies that worked out for the best have been mentioned in this section.

Localization of Humanitarian Aid

Catholic Church, while responding to COVID-19, ensured decision making happened at the most appropriate level right through the community-based committees and partner supported interventions. Since the Church institutions and partners have their presence at the remotest of the locations in the country, there was an enormous scope for disaster preparedness, recovery response and follow up interventions. The Humanitarian Response was carried out keeping in mind the context and the need of the community and involving them in each process of planning and distribution process.



Caritas Samaritans Reaching the Last Mile

While COVID-19 has self-isolated billions of people, it has prompted millions to volunteer in many innovative ways — from making face masks and sanitizers to helping the distressed by providing them counseling through the phone. Despite coronavirus, the fire of volunteering has not extinguished within. The volunteers also joined hands in spreading awareness by contributing their skills in preparing IEC materials and dissemination of the information. They also played a critical role in the food kit distribution, preparation of food as part of the community kitchen and packaging and transportation of food materials at different levels. The church response of COVID-19 saw a brigade of 1,07,151 volunteers leading the way for the rest.



Upscaling Virtual Education

Schools and colleges, across the nation, being closed led the shift of classes being conducted online. Various modes of virtual platforms were used to impart courses online. The Church supported the children through mobile and tablets in various dioceses. In Kerala, for instance, the efforts of the Kerala Government of imparting classes through telecast on television was upscaled by providing the families with TV sets. Old smartphones were collected as donations which were distributed among the underprivileged children. Value addition to the existing courses was also done by hosting extra classes to ensure the effectiveness of virtual training.



Livelihood Integration

This pandemic has hit the source of livelihood of people from all spheres of lives. Amidst this phenomenon of loss of livelihood, the Church institutions with the support of the community, found different innovative methods, such as mask making, umbrella making etc., to create varied livelihood opportunities from the available resources. This pandemic also gave rise to various practices and creative ideas which prompted for a caring society – be it sectoral interventions and reaching out to the last mile or helping the stakeholders by bridging the gaps, such as providing PPE kits and Masks to the hospitals etc.



Journeying with the Migrants

Catholic Church promptly initiated the process of distribution of packaged food items and water bottles/juice to the migrants walking on the National Highways. Cooked food was distributed to the relief camps and quarantine centers, catering to the needs of the vast number of migrants. As scores of migrants returned to their native places, their savings spent on the journey back, and numerous others who lost their jobs, food security became an increasing concern. Many of the migrants were helped with filling up of forms for the PDS cards and linked with the Govt officials for the same.

Apart from food security, the migrants who were returning to their homes were made aware of the quarantine protocols. The return of migrants was notified to the Health Department. Their families were also made aware of the precautions they were supposed to take and were linked to the quarantine centers nearest to their villages. Migrants were provided information about the train and bus schedule and the availability of the tickets.



Stories of Change

Abhijeet (Name Changed), a 19-year old from West Bengal, had migrated to Goa in search of work. However, when the pandemic hit the world and brought the entire nation into a standstill, he started facing difficulties and tried hard to go back home. But Abhijeet got ill once he reached the railway station. He contacted his parents and informed them about his whereabouts and complained of the ill-treatment that he was facing as his condition was worsening. The family then contacted one of the staff members of Seva Kendra, DSSS partner of Caritas India in Kolkata, and shared their son's situation. The partner organization contacted the Coordinator in West Bengal who immediately responded to the issue. The staff visited the boy and started the process of shifting him to another hospital for better treatment. The organization helped the boy in the treatment, food, and lodging, bearing all the expenses. Once he was better, he traveled back home by train, and his parents, along with the staff of Seva Kendra, went to meet the boy in the quarantine center in Bengal on his arrival. The partner organization gave continuous support, through cooked food and hygiene kits, to him and other boys who came along with him.



Networks

Governments

In the view of surging COVID-19 cases across the country, it became imperative for government and non-profits to join hands to respond by feeding the millions of homeless on streets, migrant workers and many others. The Church reached out to local administrations for setting up kitchens along with the distribution of dry ration. This collaboration led to ease out the process of obtaining permissions for activities as part of the COVID-19 response.

Partners

The diocesan partners, since its inception has been the face of Caritas India within the community. The COVID-19 response was no different when Caritas India, through its 174 diocesan and different religious congregations, reached out to millions. The partner organizations not only increased the reach of CARITAS, making it a strong collective, but also strengthened the journey of reaching the most marginalized.

Donors

Caritas India partnered with its institutional donors to increase the effectiveness of the ongoing response. Their support helped Caritas India through its partners to extend its reach to the last mile. This partnership helped in sharing their expertise in training the partners on safe programming during COVID19.

CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS

With the support of Caritas Internationalis, Caritas India was able to support the frontline health workers and the informal migrants with WaSH kits, Health equipment and Food kits. The objective was to prepare the communities to safeguard themselves and improve their nutritional intake during Covid-19 community transmission. The support was majorly given in the areas of Delhi & Maharashtra state with Personal Protection, food and hygiene kits distribution.

CARITAS GERMANY

The funds were utilized for Covid-19 relief response in ten states by providing dry ration kits, hygiene kits and awareness generation about COVID-19 & hygiene practices. The objective of this donation was to ensure that the most vulnerable population will have food security in lockdown and in a no-job period. The states covered with their support were Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi and Gujarat.

HCL FOUNDATION

Food rations were made available to the communities ranging from migrant workers/ informal sector workers (prioritizing families living in slums areas, prioritizing families with senior citizens, single mothers) to transgender group and other vulnerable groups. Supply of good quality Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) were also made possible for the frontline health workers (FLWs) in dedicated Covid-19 hospitals. Protection/ hygiene/ sanitation kits were distributed for

communities at risk with increasing awareness in Jaipur, Pune, Nagpur, Vijayawada and Hyderabad.

ZOMATO – FEEDING INDIA

Partnership with Zomato Feeding India bridged the gap during & post the lockdown period as multiple communities who were yet to find a stable means to provide for their families were supported. Through this partnership, food kits were distributed in 16 states.

HANS FOUNDATION

The project enabled Caritas India and partner organizations to reach to marginalized households in Bihar through food kits that would last for 15 days for a family of 5. The target households comprised of communities belonging to the lower most rank of the social hierarchy, namely, Mushahar, Nat and Rajsamaj community. The project covered 24 villages under 10 Blocks in the two districts namely Buxar and West Champaran.

AARTI FOUNDATION

Through this partnership, Caritas India reached out to households residing in the slums of Meerut and Gautam Buddh Nagar districts of Uttar Pradesh through food kit support. It also focused on reducing the number of positive cases of COVID-19 across India by creating awareness.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA

With the support of Caritas Australia, Caritas India and partner organizations were engaged in Chhattisgarh & Jharkhand states. Dry ration kits were provided to the poorest and most marginalized

vulnerable families in urban slums and rural areas. Awareness raising activities were also organized and PPE and hygiene materials were provided to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

MISEREOR

The program aimed at livelihood restoration for the migrant families for carrying out the livelihood enhancement based on their skills, agriculture and allied sector activities. Through this support, Caritas India has reached different communities in 16 districts of 7 North Eastern states. Nutritional Gardens were promoted to address food security, nurseries of fast-growing cash crops, indigenous breed of poultry and duck rearing and Agri produce processing and allied activities were supported.

MISSIO

The program was aimed at preparing migrant workers returning home to safeguard themselves and improve their nutritional intake during COVID-19 community transmission. This partnership resulted in the sensitization of communities in distribution of Personal Hygiene Kits, Food Kits and PPE Kits in 7 districts in 2 states - Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand.

START NETWORK

The objective of this partnership was priority-based life-saving humanitarian assistance to low income group returnee migrants. The program was implemented in 25 villages of Balasore district in Odisha state. Households were supported with hygiene kits, awareness generation and unconditional cash transfer through bank for livelihood/food support.

CARITAS AUSTRIA

This partnership resulted in the distribution of Hygiene Kits (involving reusable masks and bathing soaps) and Food Kits (involving rice, lentil, wheat flour, mustard oil, salt etc.) and creation of awareness through IEC materials in the three districts in Madhya Pradesh.

SCIAF

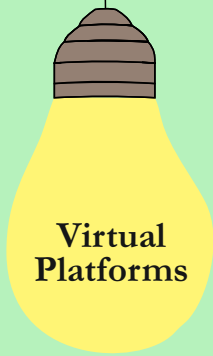
With the support of SCIAF, Caritas India was able to cover Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. The aim was to support the returning migrants with food and hygiene kits and awareness creation. The migrants, who were walking miles to get back to their homes during the pandemic, were supported by the Gorakhpur DSSS.

CHARIS

With the support of CHARIS, Caritas India supported in Ooty in Tamil Nadu and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. The aim was to support the poorest and most vulnerable families with food kits and hygiene kits. Apart from the families, even the hospitals were supported with the PPE Kits.

KEVENTERS

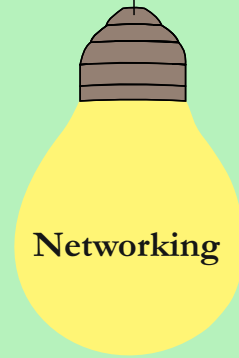
Through this partnership, Caritas India focused on reaching out to children in West Bengal. The DSSS distributed children-specific food to the affected children. This distribution was led by the Children Parliament members themselves.



Virtual Platforms



Community Support



Networking



Engagement of Volunteers



Resource Mobilization

Key Learnings

Networking and Linkages with the Stakeholders

Stakeholders would include the Government Departments at all levels, CSOs, CSRs, local leaders, Village heads and Panchayat, market vendors, bank officials etc. During the COVID-19 relief and response, efforts were put in correctly with this regard to smoothen the mobility of the staff, procurement of the materials, identification and

distribution processes. Support and leadership of Local leaders and PRI members in the relief and response processes created a cooperative atmosphere in the community. Thus, the pandemic came as an opportunity to build and strengthen a mutual relationship with the essential stakeholders.

Mobilization and Engagement of Volunteers

Engagement of volunteers in various activities of the relief and response has been much appreciated and applauded by multiple external stakeholders. This zeal and passion of the volunteers need to be sustained and kept alive. Catholic Church has taken this task with much

seriousness by encouraging and engaging the volunteers regularly. It is also essential to capacitate and appreciate them regularly so that their ardent will to volunteer never wears off.

Expanding the Scope of Virtual and Digital Platforms

Due to restriction in the mobility during the lockdown, virtual and digital platforms came as a blessing to the development sector. The scope of such platforms was realized and widened for various purposes such as mobilizing funds through

social media, spreading awareness and information, mobilizing and communicating with the other staff and stakeholders, etc. It enabled for time and cost saving techniques of organizing webinars, virtual meetings etc.

Resource Mobilization

The Church went out of its way in mobilizing resources and funds from all walks and sections of the society. It networked with many CSRs, Government Departments, local communities, various associations and committees in its circle through online campaigns and communications. Many came out in support, not just financially but also

with non-financial resources and services. At this point, there has also been a reflection on creating a local fund at the local level in the parishes as well as in the Panchayats for such emergency cases.

Community Support

'The onus to prevent the spread of the disease lies with each one of us' – this has been the universal spirit in the community all through the while. Community mitigation strategies were adopted wherein the community themselves took the responsibility to slow down the spread of the disease and to support each other in times of distress mutually. They came forward in most places to help with financial assistance towards relief

interventions. In most of the regions, the community members even shared the excess food supplies. There were cases where the school and other institutions' staff contributed their portion of salary for relief and response.





Healthgiri Award 2020

Best NGO for Healthcare Services

Every year India Today organise Safaigiri Award on Gandhi Jayanti. This year the Safaigiri Award was reincarnated into Healthgiri Awards 2020 to salute the invincible spirit of corona warriors who have led the battle against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Caritas India during the Covid-19 Humanitarian Response went an extra mile to show solidarity and support to the vulnerable and marginalised sections of the society. As a strong collective, Caritas India partners and congregational institutions contributed in breaking the chain of spreading Covid-19 by sharing knowledge, resources and reaching out to the weak and marginalised communities, with interventions around four key areas – Food Support; Health, Hygiene and Sanitation; Psychosocial Support and Creating Awareness – as mentioned in this document. It was a joyous moment for all the members, collaborators, donors, and well-wishers of Caritas India for being recognised as the best NGO for serving the impoverished and less privileged people of the country.



Caritas India received Healthgiri Award 2020 for best NGO in Healthcare Services during Covid-19. The award was presented by the Hon'ble Minister, Shri Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare to Fr. Paul Moonjely, the Executive Director of Caritas India in a virtual ceremony organised by India Today.

Afterword



Love your Neighbour

There is globalization of sensitivity and interconnectedness. Love your Neighbor is the new culture. Being liberated by God's grace through Faith has much more meaning and expression in times of this pandemic.

Be The Church to Serve

It is time to mobilize the Church to meet the overwhelming needs that exist at present and shall evolve post Covid. The huge outpouring of solidarity by all our Dioceses during this pandemic, wherein the local parishes were actively involved in providing care and support, has set a powerful example of new ways of expressing Christian Love in Action. The Church should continue to work with the local and state agencies and allow local officials to use our facilities and infrastructure for support

Continuous Learning and Increasing Responsiveness

The research studies and assessments conducted by Caritas India would help the Church to strategize their future interventions and responses in different states. Also, the study's recommendations could be effectively used by various stakeholders to engage in advocacy works and lobby with respective states and philanthropists to develop proactive and innovative strategic responses.

Networking and Partnerships

Partnership and networks continue to be the biggest strength, especially for the grassroot interventions, often reaching far-flung areas of the country. Continuous knowledge sharing through training, seamless flow of two-way feedback, and multiple communication channels have helped the church to understand situations in depth and respond accurately and effectively.

Fire of Volunteering

One of the most remarkable learnings of COVID-19 has been that while this pandemic had self-isolated billions of

people, it had prompted millions to volunteer in many innovative ways — from making face masks and sanitizers to helping the distressed by providing them counseling through the phone. Despite coronavirus, the fire of volunteering has not extinguished within. The Church would develop strategies and new ways to mobilize, engage and sustain this volunteer support for accelerating the development efforts.

Subsistence and Livelihoods

Efforts will also be taken to develop local measures for supporting the subsistence of guest workers or migrant workers and develop provisions for reviving and mainstreaming rural livelihoods to reduce the exacerbating poverty situation.

Capacity Enhancement

In the context of the New Normal, Caritas India revisions and redefines her approach. CIDAL (Caritas Institute for Development, Action and Learning) is a platform for learning and exchange of knowledge based on the experiences, emerging trends and needs of our stakeholders in the given context of COVID-19.

PsychoSocial Support Program

Caritas India also ventures into establishing a new initiative of Psychosocial support for Mental Well Being titled "BE CALM- Caritas Action Leading in Mental Health".

May the efforts of Caritas India and partners in creating an enabling environment help the communities to lead their lives as per the NEW NORMAL.

Fr. (Dr.) Jolly Puthenpura
Asst. Executive Director

Sincere Thanks to Our Donors



We are grateful to our leadership



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