



## India and Brazil

Catholic Relief Services and our partners around the world are working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent risk, save lives and bolster recovery in high-risk communities. The current crises in India and Brazil highlight the heightened risks facing vulnerable families and communities—and the role of CRS and our local partners to respond.



At a crematorium in New Delhi, India, women mourn a person who died of COVID-19.  
Photo by Vijay Pandey/ZUMA Wire/Alamy

### GLOBAL EFFORTS



CRS and our partners have reached over 10 million people to date through on-the-ground efforts that help prevent the spread of COVID-19, bolster the capacity of local health responders, and assist extremely vulnerable families to manage the compounded impacts of the pandemic on their lives. A top priority for CRS is ensuring that national vaccine strategies include people in the hardest-to-reach communities. We are also using our networks and programs to educate local leaders and communities about the vaccines. CRS and our Catholic partners play a unique role as a trusted source of information—which, at a time of fear and misinformation, is truly lifesaving.

### INDIA

As India faces a second wave of COVID-19, thousands of people are dying daily. On April 26, 2021, the country reported the world's highest daily caseload for the fifth straight day, with 352,991 new cases and 2,812 virus-related deaths. Hospitals and medical facilities across the country are beyond capacity, having run out of oxygen and intensive care beds. Hundreds of patients can be seen awaiting lifesaving care outside facilities in crowded city centers.

CRS and Caritas India are supporting families and communities affected by COVID-19 in the states of Kerala, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and in the capital, Delhi, complementing government efforts. A critical role for CRS and Caritas has been supporting migrant workers who have a heightened risk of COVID-19 exposure and are stigmatized because of their work. To date, CRS and Caritas India have provided 14,885 people with food assistance and hygiene kits. We have also provided psychological first aid for those dealing with distress, anxiety and loss.

The devastation of COVID-19 is amplified in communities affected by natural disasters. CRS is supporting Caritas India's capacity to provide comprehensive programming to people in these communities—many of whom have been displaced from their homes and are especially vulnerable to the health and economic impact of COVID-19.



Caritas Brasileira transports hygiene kits by boat to remote communities in Brazil's northwestern state of Amazonas. Photo courtesy of Caritas Brasileira



“The participation of community leaders and volunteers has been paramount. A sense of belonging to the social cause has aroused a spirit of solidarity ... so that love will reign and life will prevail.

Fabio Pereira dos Santos  
Health and Hygiene  
Educator, Caritas Brazil/  
Prelate of Tefe

## BRAZIL

Brazil accounts for 30% of new COVID-19 cases globally and is home to an increasing number of immune-resistant and highly contagious variants. On March 5, 2021, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that Brazil's failure to arrest the virus' spread should be a concern for Latin American neighbors and a warning to the world. Brazil has the second-highest number of deaths globally after the United States. Rural and urban health systems are in total collapse, and intensive care units for treating COVID-19 have reached critical occupancy levels, at over 90% in 15 of 27 state capitals.

Mass vaccination has been slow, with the government announcing that it only has enough doses for half the population by the end of 2021. A recently approved law allowing states and private companies to buy vaccines will damage the vaccination campaign by driving up competition and prices. This, in turn, exacerbates the country's deep social and regional inequalities. The Brazilian media report a growing anti-vaccine sentiment, which had been rare in a country with an award-winning national immunization infrastructure.

Human rights organizations in the country have been reporting the devastating impact on indigenous communities in the Amazon. CRS partner Caritas Brasileira is working in some of the most vulnerable and isolated indigenous communities.

To date, they have:

- Reached 5,000 extremely vulnerable families belonging to riverside, indigenous and maroon settlements, or 58% of families in these areas. We have also reached 43% of families in peri-urban and rural communities in some of the farthest reaches of Amazonas state, in an effort to prevent even more dangerous variants from emerging before mass vaccinations can be completed.
- Provided 5,000 families with four months of hygiene materials such as hand-washing stations, rainwater harvesting systems, soap and hand sanitizer.
- Provided four months of materials for home disinfection—bleach, gloves, towels and mops—to families with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Disseminated vital, accurate information on how the virus is transmitted, what to do and where to go if people have symptoms, and communicated preventative measures in partnership with seven radio stations and online community engagements reaching over 360,000 people throughout the state.
- Mobilized the private sector to donate oxygen cylinders to rural health systems where the death rate has soared due to the lack of a reliable oxygen supply chain.