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MEDIA RELEASE: Caritas Australia launches appeal for COVID-19 crisis sweeping across India

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India's COVID-19 infections have surged past 20 million, nearly doubling in the past four months – marking the biggest increase in COVID-19 infections globally.

The country of nearly 1.4 billion people currently has a staggering 3.45 million active cases, although experts warn that actual numbers could be five to ten times higher than those reported.

The enormous second wave has had a devastating impact on India's healthcare system, with widespread shortages of hospital beds and oxygen.

Vaccine registrations recently opened to adults; however, vaccines are also in short supply due to shortages of materials and a slowdown in manufacturing.

"Now, more than ever, it's vital that we provide support to India to prevent even more lives being lost," said Bernice Sarpong, Caritas Australia's Emergency Program Coordinator for Asia.

"We are working with our local partner Caritas India to support marginalized communities to prevent spread of the virus and also educating on how to look after loved ones with COVID-19 at home, while the healthcare system is overwhelmed."

"People are flooding hospitals, the hospitals have no beds and people are just dying. We are distressed and worried as we see in front of our eyes hundreds of our own near and dear ones dying or not getting a place in the hospitals," said Fr Paul Moonjely, the Executive Director of Caritas India.

"We are equally worried about the protection and safety of our health workers."

Caritas India, Caritas Australia's partner in India, seeks to provide livelihoods, food, hygiene materials and psychosocial support to the most vulnerable. The organisation is currently working to set up COVID-19 information centres and treatment centres to reach marginalised communities.

Caritas Australia has launched the India COVID-19 Appeal to help support vulnerable communities in India. Visit caritas.org.au/india-appeal or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support to the appeal.

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Note:

Bernice Sarpong, Caritas Australia's Emergency Program Coordinator for Asia is available for interview.

Father Paul Moonjely, Caritas India's Executive Director is available for interview from India.

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