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AUSTRALIA

End poverty  
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## **MEDIA RELEASE: Thousands of homes destroyed by Cyclone Tauktae in Gujarat, India**

19 May 2021

More than 26 people have been killed and thousands of homes destroyed after Category Three Cyclone Tauktae hit the coast of Gujarat, India, late on May 17.

The cyclone made landfall on India's west coast, leaving a trail of destruction as the country fights the worst outbreak of COVID-19 in the world.

Wind speeds surged as high as 185 kilometres an hour, the heavy rain and strong winds causing significant damage to major refineries, ports, villages, crops, cattle and roads. Authorities evacuated more than 200,000 people from low-lying coastal areas, including COVID-19 patients in healthcare facilities.

Vaccinations were also suspended for two days in Gujarat to facilitate evacuations, prompting concerns about the spread of the virus, as the state of Gujarat alone has reported an average of 10,000 daily cases over the past week.

"After weeks of chaos and loss from COVID-19, this cyclone could not have come at a worse time. Thousands of families have lost their homes while they are also struggling to cope with not just the rapid spread of the virus, but also the serious impacts that lockdowns have had on the economy," said Father Paul Moonjely, Executive Director of Caritas India.

"Caritas India is working with organisations in Gujarat to assess the damage. In addition to the immediate needs of food, sanitation and hygiene, we're especially concerned about the long-term impacts for families that have lost their houses and livelihoods. It will take many years to rebuild, and rebuilding from disaster will be much harder during COVID-19."

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

Caritas Australia has been working with Caritas India on long-term development programs for over 50 years.

Caritas Australia has launched the India COVID-19 Appeal to help support vulnerable communities in India. Visit [caritas.org.au/india-appeal](https://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.**

**The Catholic agency for international aid and development**

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