

COVID-19

Challenges and Needs – India

After India peaked at over 100,000 infections per day in 2020, it went down to 5000 infections per day in January 2021. Our health minister announced that we were at the end of the pandemic. But it started increasing soon with the second wave. Two new strains of the mutated virus were found in India, and now the daily infection rate has already crossed 400,000 infections per day and is expected to peak at 500,000 per day. Last year the pandemic was limited to cities and elderly people. But now it is growing in leaps and bounds in rural areas, infecting youth and even children. In March we had a double mutation virus, and now several areas have reported a triple mutation virus. This has created several urgent needs for the nation of India. We would appreciate your prayers for the following:



Photo Courtesy-India Today, News Click, Hindustan Times & India tv

Prayer Concerns

1. **Wise Governance:** Please pray for Government to make wise decisions. The way the infection rate is growing, complete lockdown in containment zones is the only way to control the spread of Covid-19. They need to manage limited stocks of oxygen, medicines, hospital beds, and other resources for those in need.

2. **Management of resources:** As many nations are helping with oxygen, ventilators, raw materials for vaccine production, pray that this will be used efficiently along with national resources.
3. **Health system:** Pray for health workers to be kept from breaking down. Most govt. hospitals are running on double or triple capacity. Thousands are waiting outside hospitals for admission and many die waiting.
4. **Superstition:** Along with the health system, India has a serious problem with superstition. Last week a rumor spread that masks with the name of their god “Ram” written on them will save people from this virus. Such masks went out of stock. Another rumor said, if you pour water on a particular temple idol, this virus will not come near you – 23,000 people gathered at the temple and police had a hard time dispersing them.
The world’s largest religious gathering happens once in twelve years at the Kumbh Mela. The last one was in 2010, so the next one was to be in 2022. But some astrologers said, “The sun’s coming in Aries Zodiac and Jupiter’s in Aquarius in 2021 is very auspicious, happening once in 83 years”. So, they suggested Kumbh Mela should be done in 2021, even though the pandemic was at its peak. With pressure from around the world, it was stopped in the middle, but not before the risk of millions taking infection all over India.
5. **Vaccination:** Though India is the highest producer of the vaccine in the world, the challenge is too big for us. If 75% of 1.38 billion people need two doses of vaccination, India needs **2 billion vaccines** as soon as possible. The present production rate is extremely low and it will require several years to vaccinate the whole population, while the virus continues to destroy.
6. **Motivation:** If any crisis continues endlessly, motivation is often the greatest casualty. Please pray for the motivation of Christian leaders and workers. Churches are not able to meet and the physical ministry has become so difficult. Missions are not able to pay the salaries of pastors and evangelists. Urban churches have moved online, but most rural churches don’t have that luxury.
7. **Persecution:** During the pandemic, systematic persecution of Christians continues in India. In 2020, the Evangelical Fellowship of India recorded 327 attacks on Christian missions and workers. In 2021, we are already helping several people suffering persecution.
8. **Relief:** EFI estimates about 300 to 400 pastors and missionaries have died in the last three months. Somehow it seems more men are dying than women. This results in a huge number of widows and orphans. Many are not able to afford treatment. Please pray for the Church to reach the people in need, especially “the household of faith.”
9. **Economy:** After going down in 2020, India started picking up on the economic front. But now with the second wave again the situation is very bleak. Over 230 million people have lost jobs in the last one year, mostly

from the unorganized sector. If the economy does not improve, it will further destroy many families and communities in a nation where already 40% lived under the poverty line.

Urgent needs



Pastor Ram Niwas – Duncan Hospital – Bihar



Queue for refilling oxygen cylinder

The urgent need presently is for the treatment of those affected with Covid. If proper care is given, many lives can be saved. Though government hospitals are free for everyone, it is extremely difficult to find beds. Private hospitals charge an enormous amount for admission and treatment. All the prices of medicines and medical equipment have increased greatly and many are selling in the black market. It is equally difficult to find an oxygen cylinder, and after finding it, one has to stand in the queue every day for a refill. We can help in the following ways:

1. **Ongoing Treatment:** Help with ongoing treatment of patients, giving priority to pastors and missionaries. While the need will be huge, we will be able to help partially and trust God to provide the rest from other sources. This may be used for admission to the hospital, medicines, oxygen, and other needs. We plan to help 50 patients. Suggested help: INR 10,000 per patient. (US \$ 143 & GBP £ 100)
2. **Oxygen Concentrators:** These are small instruments that separate oxygen from the air, concentrate it, and provide it directly to the patient. One instrument can save the life of one patient. Once he/she recovers, we can help another patient, and so on. Ideally, we would like to keep one (or more) instruments in every major city. We need 10 instruments. Amount: Per oxygen concentrators cost from INR 75000 to 95000. (US \$ 1071-1357 & GBP £ 750-950)
3. **Help to widows and orphans:** Losing husband and father, a breadwinner and protector of the family, is a heart-breaking experience. Many are dying young without much saved up for the future. This puts an enormous burden on families. While there is a long-term need for children's education, presently we will deal with the short-term need of helping the family to recover and start living. We aim to help 50 widows and orphans. Suggested help. INR 15,000 per family. (US \$ 214 & GBP £ 150)

Other needs



Dry ration for poor & needy

1. **Preventive measures:**

We would like to provide **preventive medicines (Vitamin C, Vitamin D3, Zinc Tablets), N95 Masks, Sanitizers, PPE kits for pastors**, especially in rural areas where it is difficult to get all of these. We plan to help 500 pastors. A package per pastor: INR 1000 (US \$ 15 & GBP £ 10). Due to the overcrowded hospitals, patients with other sicknesses are also struggling to get help. We would like to help such 50 patients with medical tests, treatment, and medicines. Suggested amount: INR 5000 per patient. (US \$ 71 & GBP £ 50)

2. **Family needs:**

Like last year we will continue to help struggling families as they will not be able to go to work regularly and earn for many months to come. We aim to help such 1000 families with groceries. But other needs, whenever necessary – clothes, blankets (in winter), kitchen utensils, travel money to reach their village, etc. Suggested amount per family: INR 1000 (US \$ 15 & GBP £ 10).

3. **Online medical consultation and awareness training:**

As physical gathering is not possible for some time; we hold all our meetings online. Several doctors have offered to help with the training. This won't cost anything for the online meeting, except for the honorarium given to doctors. Most may not take it. Total suggested amount: INR 20,000. (US \$ 286 & GBP £ 200)

4. **Training and encouragement:**

We feel training and encouragement also are required in spiritual areas as we fear many, especially those who have seen untimely death in the family, may lose faith: fear of death; victory over worries; fear of the unknown; trusting God in difficult times; taking the risk to help others; giving to those in need; why doesn't God answer prayers?