HELPING THE MOST VULNERABLE SURVIVE COVID-19 IN INDIA

Oxfam is building on its work over the past year to help the poorest and most at-risk people survive a second wave of coronavirus.

BY CHRIS HUFSTADER | SUMMER 2021

When the second wave of COVID-19 hit India in late April, it created a public health crisis that left hospitals overwhelmed and people literally dying in the streets. In less than a month, the country saw more than 100,000 deaths, bringing the total death toll to more than 300,000—the third highest in the world behind the United States and Brazil.

“I do not know of a single family that has not seen at least one of its members infected,” says Pankaj Anand, Oxfam India program director.

As we have seen in earlier outbreaks, the poorest people in India are disproportionately affected. Lower-caste Dalit people endure routine discrimination and face the highest risks, according to Alivelu Ramisetty, Oxfam America’s director of gender justice and inclusion. “They are suffering the most in the pandemic due to the pervasiveness of the caste system and poverty,” she says. “They have limited access to health care and other forms of social protection.”

Women are also experiencing greater risks in the pandemic. “Women are working as frontline health workers and care providers, and are facing a higher rate of infection—as much as two or three times higher,” Ramisetty says. “The pandemic has also affected their financial health, especially those working in the informal sector and at small businesses. Their duties to provide unpaid care to sick family members have increased.”

Oxfam is building on its work during the first COVID-19 wave to help migrant workers stranded far from home with no work, money, food, or public transport during lockdowns. We are continuing to provide cash, food, hand-washing facilities near transportation hubs, and safety kits containing face masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, soap, and other hygiene items to help people stay clean and avoid infection.

Oxfam is also helping people who have lost their jobs and homes. Many are members of minority ethnic groups, Muslims, people with disabilities, and women and girls, who are also facing a higher risk of domestic violence.

ASSISTANCE FOR HOSPITALS AND FAMILIES

To help government hospitals cope with this deadly second wave, Oxfam is procuring and delivering medical equipment such as
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DO ONE MORE THING TODAY

The crisis in India shows the need for vaccine access in all countries. Sign the People’s Vaccine petition calling on President Biden to work collaboratively with world leaders and health authorities to boost vaccine manufacturing and create an equitable global distribution plan: oxf.am/PeoplesVaccineNOW.

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