

May 2021



## India Rural Evangelical Fellowship

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## Second Wave of COVID-19 is Devastating India

It is no secret that the 2nd wave of COVID has drastically hit India. With lack of oxygen, scarce amount of hospital beds, no room in COVID centers, insufficient medical care (and a system), India is in a state of shock, confusion and helplessness. In 2020, India's national and state leaders enforced strict guidelines to curve the amount of COVID cases in India – overall it was more successful than expected. 2021 has been a different story; the lack of action has left the country in complete chaos medically. In less than one month, India's COVID rates sky-rocketed by alarming numbers leaving the country in near medical collapse. Preventative measures were not imposed causing massive COVID outbreaks to strike even the smallest villages in rural India.

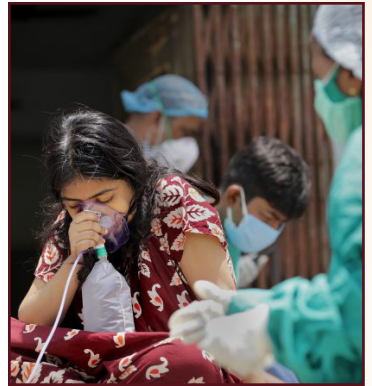
### How has IREF been impacted?

With the risk of housing students from the grade school through college levels, the Indian government gave the order to send all children back to their home villages. In a matter of 2 days (April 20th & 21st), IREF's campus became noticeably different with the first batch of students departing from campus (1st grade through 9th grade). Due to less students, IREF sent the 10th grade students to their homes as well.

Furthermore, just days before Jr College and college examinations, the government released the announcement of the postponement of examinations. With no indication of rescheduled dates for exams, IREF, without hesitation, made the choice to send the students home to their villages (in a safe manner and only with their parents).

In just a matter of days, IREF went from a compound of constant sound of movement to almost silence. Currently the IREF nursing college students are on-campus as their academic year continues. Because of the possibility of the need for more medical workers, these nursing students can be called by the government to serve at COVID Centers as some did during the 2020 lockdowns. The IREF campus is empty, but we are doing our best to keep those housed as safe as possible.

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## IREF Together was a Great Success!

"Without you, we cannot do anything. We cannot reach the lost for Christ," Emmanuel Rebba from IREF Together event.

In the midst of a challenging time for the IREF community, the IREF Together virtual event brought us together. Hundreds from across the globe gathered together to be conduits of hope for the marginalized in rural India. Thank you to everyone that took part in this year's event! We have been encouraged by all of the positive feedback! If you did not have the opportunity to watch the event, you can do so at [www.irefusa.org/together](http://www.irefusa.org/together)

IREF Together is a fundraiser for the ministry. The goal for the event is to raise \$75,000. Through your generosity, we have raised 81% of the total goal. Giving is available until Saturday, May 15.

Donate online at [www.irefusa.org/together](http://www.irefusa.org/together)



I am loved.

Watch the event  
and donate at  
[www.irefusa.org/together](http://www.irefusa.org/together)





**May 2021  
continued...**

**India Rural  
Evangelical  
Fellowship**

## ***Second Wave of COVID-19 is Devastating India...continued***

Additionally, the IREF family has felt the impact of loss as IREF Director, Emmanuel Rebba, has lost multiple family members due to COVID. While we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in Rural India, we are cautiously waiting for the Lord to give clarity and guidance as we desire to continue to serve those who are suffering in such a time as this.

### **How is IREF helping in the midst of this 2nd wave of COVID?**

While IREF wants to be on the frontlines to help those in need, this is an extremely different situation in 2021 as compared to 2020. Around this time last year, necessary government precautions were put in place; COVID had not spread to rural India which allowed IREF to help those in need with 5,000 COVID Relief packages. Because the 2nd wave is rampant and has devastated rural India, IREF is cautious in determining the best way to help. It is difficult to identify who needs help – these days everyone is in need of help as a result of COVID.

However, the IREF garden has already been a blessing to the IREF staff finishing up paperwork from the academic school year. We have given 4lbs of eggplant to IREF staff with more to give. We can see now that the IREF garden will be a need and a benefit to IREF and the students remaining on campus. With the uncertainty and severity of lockdowns, we can already see how the vegetables will serve IREF. Because of the dramatic spread of COVID, it is implied that India will administer harsher, stricter lockdowns, curfews and other regulations meaning the need for help will continue to increase.

At IREF, we see safety as a priority not only to those that IREF serves but also those who administer. We have decided that it is safer to assess, strategize and wait on the Lord to see how IREF can be used as an instrument of hope during such a hopeless time. One of the main pillars of IREF is community engagement. As a ministry we value humanitarian efforts in the times of crisis and disaster. During such moments, IREF has historically been first on the scene to assess and provide for flood and fire victims. However, this pandemic is something IREF has never seen before, and we want to wait on God to determine the best use of our resources and compassion.

### **What are IREF's next steps?**

While we wait for government announcements on examinations, lockdowns, etc., as a staff we are prepared to invest time, energy and resources back into IREF. 2020 lockdowns gave the IREF staff the time to restore buildings on campus – dorms, schools, water plants and more. With more areas still to clean and paint for the next academic school year, these needs will also be addressed

More than just aesthetics, IREF has been progressively intentional on creating and developing plans for recruitment of students. Government schools do not have the infrastructure that IREF does. Yet, the government has used this pandemic to launch campaigns of free school supplies to enrollees who join in government schools. Because of the new competitive measures, IREF would like to develop ways in which to draw students (and parents) to IREF. This would be in terms of new printed materials, new advertising methods, and school supplies to name a few. Our focus is to build on the infrastructures IREF already has in place and make them better during this time.

We want to be faithful with the time God has given IREF to devote itself to constructive strategizing as it concerns IREF's pillars of evangelism, education and community engagement.

## **Prayer & Praise**

- Please pray for the IREF students who returned to their home villages this week. We anticipate that many of these young people are witnessing devastating losses within their families and communities. Pray for their health, safety and spiritual well being during this time.
- Please pray for IREF evangelists and Bible ladies - many are concentrating their efforts on spreading the Good News in a different way than they're used to. And many are also facing tragic losses and uncertainty within their own congregations, and families.