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MEDIA RELEASE: New emergency measures in Indonesia put most vulnerable at risk

6 July 2021

Indonesian President Joko Widodo has recently announced new emergency measures to contain the latest COVID-19 surge in the country.

The populous South-East Asian nation has been reporting an average of more than 20,000 infections daily for the past week, as more infectious virus variants spread in the community and put the hospital system under strain.

The measures apply only to Java and Bali, and include tighter restrictions on movement and air travel, a ban on dining in restaurants and the closure of all non-essential offices.

The new emergency measures aim to reduce the pressure on a hospital system that has been pushed to the brink. Currently, 93 per cent of beds in Jakarta's hospitals are occupied, and some emergency wards have been forced to set up tents in car parks to make space.

"These new emergency measures will help reduce the spread of the virus, but we're concerned about the impact on vulnerable communities who don't have the means to feed themselves and their families during this health crisis," said Fr. Fredy Rante Taruk, Director of Caritas Indonesia (KARINA).

"This massive surge in cases over the past week may show that Indonesia is on the knife's edge of a devastating health crisis, but when measures like this are in place people like street hawkers and vendors, farmers, day labourers, and drivers may suffer, because it's harder for them to make ends meet."

"We're finding that not only are some people losing their employment completely, but even those who are able to continue their work in rural areas, like farmers, are struggling to find people to buy their produce, so they're also struggling to meet their basic needs."

"We're working with local communities and the Church network to support marginalized communities to maintain their food supplies and make an income during this crisis. It's easy to forget people out on the farms, but if they're not able to produce food in future seasons because they can't afford seeds, then the whole country is at risk of food shortages and famines as we recover from the pandemic."

Caritas Indonesia works directly with local communities to support them to maintain food supplies and earn an income during COVID-19.

"We also work with communities to support women-headed households to have food security, and communities still recovering from Tropical Cyclone Seroja," said Fr. Fredy Rante Taruk.

Visit [caritas.org.au](https://www.caritas.org.au) or call 1800 024 413 toll free to provide much needed support to vulnerable communities in Asia by donating to our Asia Regional Appeal.

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Fr. Fredy Rante Taruk, Director of Caritas Indonesia, is available to interview from Indonesia.

Bernice Sarpong, Caritas Australia's Humanitarian Program Coordinator for Asia is available for interview from Sydney.

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