

## Seizing the moment

I am sure many of you are wondering how IREF is faring in the midst of India’s lockdown. The answer is that, in typical fashion, IREF(India) has seized the initiative to make the most of the unique opportunity that the lockdown has presented them with!

*Be very careful, then, how you live—  
not as unwise but as wise  
making the most of every opportunity,  
because the days are evil. [Eph 5.15-16]*

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March, the Central Government of Andhra Pradesh closed all schools, requiring children in boarding schools to return home. Within a few hours, nearly all of IREF’s students had left for their home villages. The following week, India’s Prime Minister announced a 21-day Lockdown for the entire country.



*Public transport was suspended with very little notice, so IREF staff rushed to contact families to ask them to pick up their IREF students*

But here are some examples of how IREF(India) has seized the opportunity to do good in these challenging days.

## God’s love in action

Because of limited access to markets and increased curfews - some daytime ones as well as night-time ones - shopping for basic daily food items (such as milk, vegetables, and fruit) became very difficult for almost everyone in rural India; most rural villagers depend on fresh produce, as they don’t have fridges and freezers (or even cupboards) to store perishable items, which can deteriorate very quickly in the intense heat of an Indian summer.

So IREF decided to be bold in seizing the moment by offering aid packages to those in greatest need. Maintaining strict rules of social distancing and donning face masks, IREF’s leadership prepared and distributed packages of rice and vegetables (mostly) to IREF’s non-teaching staff and some surrounding neighbours, several of whom are IREF church members, in its first wave of relief work.



IREF has often offered much-needed humanitarian aid in times of floods, fires, natural disaster, and other emergency situations – and the coronavirus pandemic certainly falls in this category. The local Public Works Commissioners approached IREF, knowing of its community work in helping others during emergency situations.

Although the number of Covid cases in rural India is low, sanitary workers in Repalle have been working tirelessly to keep the town safe and sanitised. Their activities include sewage maintenance, street sweeping, and other sanitary-related work. The workers are mostly from lower-caste communities and low social-economic backgrounds; they work extremely hard, yet have next to nothing materially.

Whilst everyone else is being encouraged to stay indoors, they keep working hard outdoors in often blistering heat. They strive to keep each town clean, healthy, and safe for everyone else.

IREF recognised the sanitary workers for their sterling work by distributing 250 food packages composed of rice, cooking ingredients, and fresh vegetables.



*Repalle sanitation workers gather on IREF’s campus to receive provisions, whilst maintaining social distancing*

The programme resulted in plenty of smiles as former IREF students, now sanitary workers in Repalle, came forward to receive their packages. What a wonderful way to round off the food distribution programme!



Through your prayers and support, IREF is determined to be the hands and feet of Jesus to provide for those who risk their own health to keep others safe in Repalle.

### Ready for every good work

Emmanuel Rebba writes:

*As Covid-19 makes it way to Repalle, we expect to be a place of refuge – whether as a temporary hospital, food shelter, or place of stay. We are prepared to be used however God desires. The government knows we are willing - and excited to help! For now we wait, trust, and rest in God.*

### The Gospel isn't in lockdown

When Emmanuel started to hear news of the Covid-19 pandemic, he began filming multiple Gospel messages with the IREF TV crew for broadcasting on Subhavartha (Good News) TV, a Telegu cable channel, which is available to 80 million people in India and in 175 countries worldwide!



His messages are bringing hope to many people in the midst of the dark days in which they are living. As a result of this ministry, hundreds of phone calls are received each day in response to the messages. Please continue to pray for IREF's TV ministry.

*God's word is not chained [2 Tim 2.9]*

### Caring means sharing

IREF(India) is committed to caring for all its many staff. Thanks to the generosity of its supporters, IREF's teachers, pastors and Bible Ladies have all continued to receive their salaries during the current

lockdown. They are currently in their home villages, practicing social distancing and spending time with their families, safe in the assurance that they will be provided for materially. IREF Pastors can still visit families in their villages once a week to hold small, family prayer meetings.

*Share with the Lord's people who are in need.  
[Rom 12.13]*

### Humble service

While IREF has been on lockdown, God has provided an opportunity for a variety of maintenance projects to be undertaken throughout IREF's campus. Chinnaswamy, one of IREF's UK-supported pastors, along with some other IREF staff who live within walking distance of the campus, has helped out wherever required. Chinnaswamy has been active in preparing food relief packages for IREF personnel and members of the local community.



*IREF staff members, who have been quarantining together, prepare food relief packages.*

### For your prayers

Please pray for:

- for Dee and Emmanuel Rebba, and for their family members, that they will all be kept safe from the Covid-19 virus and be granted wisdom from beyond themselves as they face so many uncertainties - yet new opportunities;
- the protection of all the children, students, staff, and evangelists in IREF's care;
- for IREF's TV ministry, that it will bring forth much lasting fruit;
- for IREF's Bible Ladies and Pastors, as they seek to care for their congregations and spread the good news to those searching for hope;
- for those of our supporters working in front-line services in the UK.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

[Romans 15.13]

*David Hunt* [Chairman, IREF(UK)]