

# CHINAR'S DALEEL

*A COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION*

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### CHINAR International

*Investing in Children & Youth*

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## Editor's Note

- by Afifa Lone, Information & Communication Lead

Someone once said, "Preparedness, when properly pursued, is a way of life, not a sudden, spectacular program." At the beginning of the year, nobody imagined that COVID-19 would affect millions of lives and result in numerous deaths across the globe. In January, our team was focused on efforts surrounding our core intervention areas - scale-up surveys under child development, "Teach for Kashmir" fellowship under education, and crisis relief post August 5, 2019. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kashmir changed things drastically.

CHINAR International's past experience in disaster management proved pragmatic in dealing with the current crisis. Immediately after the first case was reported, we focused on spreading awareness about the disease in order to stop individual and community spread. Safety of the staff was a major concern so we arranged PPE's and developed protocols to work on the ground. Soon after, we carried out relief operations, with a focus on families who needed immediate support to sustain themselves during these testing times. We have distributed 2,569 Emergency Relief Kits to families in distress till date, with numbers increasing daily.

The COVID-19 pandemic once again placed education on the back-burner after 7 months of political shutdown. Our Community Learning Centers (CLCs) remained operational till the end of February. CHINAR International is currently identifying educational alternatives to provide students with access to remote education facilities during the lockdown period. We have successfully launched six virtual classes till date.

This quarterly COVID-19 special edition newsletter highlights relief activities since the start of the coronavirus outbreak in Kashmir as well as implementation of our core programs prior to the current crisis.

# COVID-19 Relief Program

In the wake of the recent outbreak of Coronavirus across the globe, we launched a COVID-19 Relief Program in Kashmir. This program has four focus areas - awareness, emergency relief, helpline service and education.

**AWARENESS:** This involves sharing information among the general public about coronavirus, its symptoms and precautionary measures via social media, posters, flyers, etc. A large scale awareness drive was conducted across all of CHINAR's intervention areas. Posters and flyers with relevant information were put on walls/shops and other hotspots to generate awareness among the local masses. We also uploaded awareness videos (dubbed in local Kashmiri/Urdu language for better outreach) on our social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, twitter, etc.



**EMERGENCY RELIEF:** CHINAR customized its relief strategy for the current crises and came up with a combination kit comprised of essential food items and hygiene products, collectively referred to as Emergency Relief Kits (ERKs). Food items include rice, flour, edible oil, tea, sugar, spices, etc. Hygiene products include soaps, sanitizers and masks to ensure the safety of families against COVID-19. Sanitary napkins for females are also included. An in-depth needs assessment and thorough verification process is followed to identify the deserving families. This involves collaboration with the government, NGOs, Baytulmals, local communities and other stakeholders on the ground. Our emergency response team ensures contactless delivery of ERKs at the door steps of the beneficiary families.

***A total of 2,569 kits have been distributed till date with numbers increasing on a daily basis.***





**EDUCATION:** CHINAR is currently working on remote education facilities for students during the lockdown period. Through this initiative, a large group of students will be able to attend online lessons/lectures delivered by experienced teachers remotely. An initial survey revealed that 30% of our beneficiaries have access to smart phones, 55% of them possess regular phones and 15% have no phones at all. Considering 2G internet speed in Kashmir, we are exploring applications like Zoom, that work on low speed connections. For students without smartphones, we are using alternative solutions such as conference bridges, audio lectures, etc. We are also planning to deliver study packets that contain worksheets and home assignments to students, especially those that do not have access to a phone. **Currently, we have six virtual classes operational across Srinagar, Shopian, Baramulla, Budgam and Bandipora districts, with many more in the pipeline.**

**CHINAR HELPLINE:** Our helpline caters to 100-150 distress calls per day. Our team rushes to the spot after completing due-diligence process and provides ERKs to the families. For cases that have special requirements, medical or otherwise, referrals are made to other entities/individuals specialized in such areas of intervention.

## Virtual Town Hall Initiative

CHINAR's Virtual Town Hall initiative is an online global forum that provides people with a platform and opportunity to interact with experts from different fields to get answers to their questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Four town halls have been organised as part of this initiative till date, with focus on the following thematic areas: global call for prayer, infection control, prevention strategies and CHINAR's COVID-19 relief programs. Our next town hall will focus on "Finding mental strength to fight the COVID-19 pandemic" and many more topics are in the pipeline.

CHINAR INTERNATIONAL  
INVITES YOU TO JOIN THE PEOPLE  
OF JAMMU & KASHMIR IN

**TOWN HALL**

**KNOW ABOUT CHINAR  
INTERNATIONAL'S WORK IN  
JAMMU & KASHMIR**

An informative Q&A session on our COVID-19 emergency relief work and CHINAR's mission - "Empowering orphans, vulnerable children and marginalized youth in conflict areas through quality education and socioeconomic initiatives"



**SATURDAY, MAY 2ND, 2020**  
**6:00 - 6:45 PM IST | 8:30 - 9:15 AM EST | 1:30 - 2:15 PM GMT**

We have chosen this time slot keeping Ramadan in mind. Apologizes for the inconvenience in certain geographies especially North America.

**Speaker:**  
Mr. Irfan Shahmiri, Executive Director, CHINAR International

**Moderator:**  
Dr. Altaf Lal, Board Member, CHINAR International, USA

**Please send your questions in advance by April 30 to:**  
E-mail: [info@chinarinternational.org](mailto:info@chinarinternational.org)

**Phone (WhatsApp):**  
+91-60051 88878

**Facebook Live:**  
[www.facebook.com/CHINARInternational/](https://www.facebook.com/CHINARInternational/)

**FreeConferenceCall:**  
1) Online (Meeting ID: [92023373](https://join.zoom.us/j/92023373))  
<https://join.freemconferencecall.com/info52837>

**2) Dial-In (Access Code: 873037):**  
AUSTRALIA: +61 7 5660 6012  
INDIA: +91 172 310 0958  
UAE: +971 600 521283  
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USA: +1 978-990-5298





## Winter Kit Distribution Held across four districts

As a part of our crisis relief operations, we wanted to identify the need on ground outside of the standard provision of food kits and community learning centers. Following an in-depth assessment process, we decided to provide winter kits to selected families living in utter poverty across four districts - Srinagar, Shopian, Kupwara and Pulwama. These kits comprised of blankets, pherans, solar lanterns and other essential items. Winter Kits were distributed to a total of 107 families from the aforementioned districts. We also distributed bags, socks and shoes amongst children ahead of their upcoming academic session. Parents, guardians, teachers, community members and volunteers participated in distribution events across all the districts. One of our USA board members, Mr. Altaf Lal, also attended the Srinagar event and had an interesting interaction with beneficiaries who shared their experiences and challenges. He greatly appreciated CHINAR's work and applauded the team for their tremendous efforts.



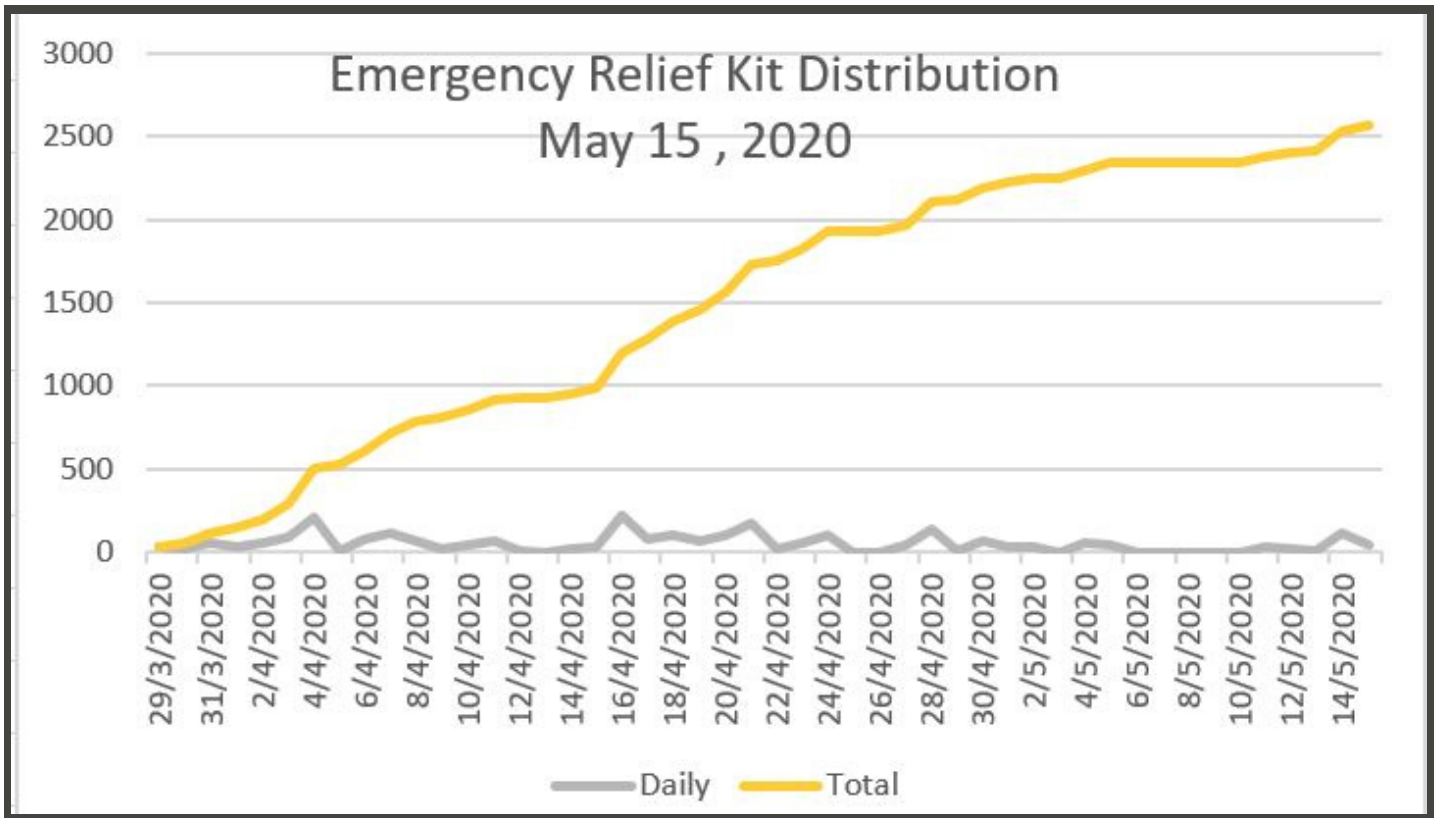
## Teach For Kashmir Fellowship Ready for launch

CHINAR's education team focused on the launch of a two year Teach for Kashmir (TFK) fellowship program, which aims to enhance learning outcomes, reduce school dropouts, encourage community involvement in government schools and develop leaders in education. A six-month TFK pilot internship program, which started in October 2019 in Shopian and Pulwama concluded in March 2020. In January 2020, experts from our partner organization, Teach for India Entrepreneurs (TFIx), braved the cold weather and visited CHINAR to review the fellowship status and provide guidance for the launch in March 2020. It was a very fruitful visit as they provided useful inputs on all aspects of the fellowship including the fellow selection process, student and fellow curriculum, training modules and the project implementation plan. They also interacted with a pool of potential fellows as well as CHINAR's Executive Director. We are very grateful to both Sneha and Nivritti for their visit and are ready to launch the TFK fellowship as soon as the pandemic is over.



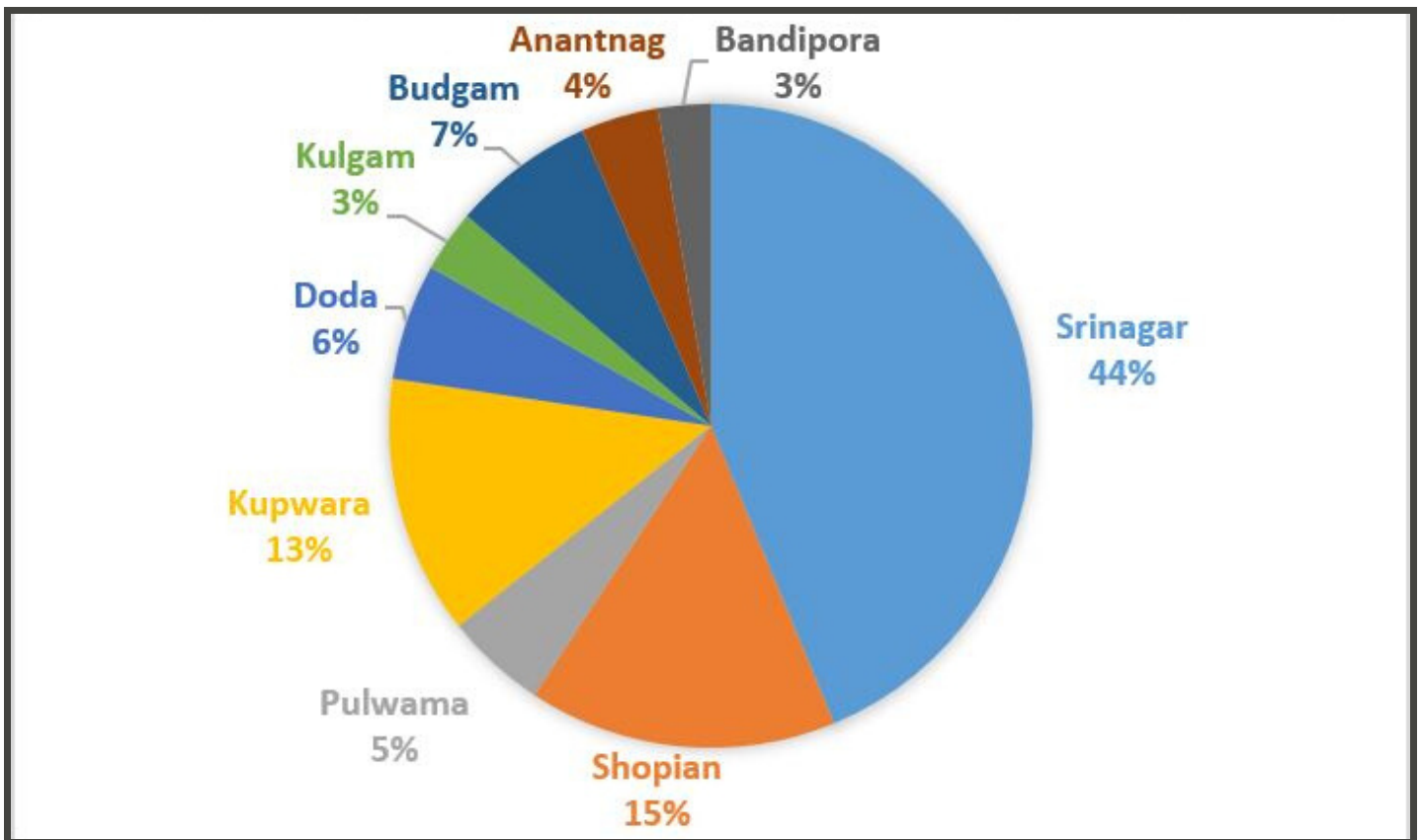
# ERK Distribution - Cumulative

(Graph displays data collected till May 15)



# ERK Distribution - District Wise

(Graph displays data collected till May 15)





# Livelihood Distribution

## Support for families in distress

The ongoing conflict in Kashmir has had an immense impact on the livelihoods of families especially those who rely on hand to mouth earnings. Since August 5, people have suffered huge economic losses due to prolonged shutdowns and curfews across all the districts of Kashmir division. CHINAR launched a special livelihood program for families who have no source of income due to conflict. A thorough assessment survey was conducted across four districts - Shopian, Pulwama, Srinagar and Kupwara to identify the most deserving families with the help of CHINAR's self-devised standard tool.

In Shopian, four families were provided with livestock in the form sheep units - six sheep in each unit - and one family received financial support to start a provisional store. In Pulwama, two families were provided sheep units and one family received received financial support to start a provisional store. In Srinagar, CHINAR provided livelihood support to five low-income families based on their skill-set and experience in the trade. In Kupwara, one sheep unit was given to a family who was in dire need of livelihood support.

The livelihood distribution events were attended by the selected families, experts from the animal husbandry department, volunteers, community members and chopans (village shepherds). Experts briefed the families on guidelines of sheep rearing and importance of dosing and vaccination to minimize mortality rate during harsh winters. Livelihood Support provided to families includes:

- Sewing machines and accessories for boutiques
- Readymade garments for roadside vendors
- Auto rickshaws
- Cosmetics and beauty products
- Sheep Units

# Scale-Up Survey

## To identify potential beneficiaries

In the first quarter of 2020, we undertook scale up surveys to identify potential beneficiaries for our Child Development program, which ensures livelihood support for families and quality education for children. A survey was conducted across five districts - Srinagar, Kupwara, Shopian, Pulwama and Budgam - to collect baseline data about families living in those areas. Starting in February, 239 families were surveyed, out of which 162 qualified for the final round of selection. In Srinagar, 78 families were assessed, out of which 24 were selected for the program. In Kupwara, 55 families were surveyed in different villages of Tehsil Handwara, out of which 14 were selected for the program. In Shopian and Pulwama, 30 families were identified for the main program (Shopian: 15, Pulwama: 15). This year, following an in-depth needs assessment and thorough verification on the ground, CHINAR expanded its program to include Budgam district where 38 families were assessed out of which 8 were enrolled in the program. In Doda, out of 23 families surveyed, 6 made it to the final selection. Currently, 285 children are enrolled in our program. We are targeting to add 221 more children to our tally for a total of 506 children.



## Youth Development Update

CHINAR's skill development program focuses on training youth in marketable skills to help them attain a sustainable source of income for their families. So far, 350 youth graduated in multiple skills from our skill centers spread across four districts – Shopian, Pulwama, Kupwara and Srinagar. In January, CHINAR started another Skill Development Center in Narbal, Budgam where 20 young women were enrolled in a cutting and tailoring course. A batch of 25 girls received training for basic computer skills from our Digital Learning Center in Bemina, Srinagar. We have received 10 more desktops from Sun Pharma to expand the volume of our centers. Our business incubatee, Mehnaza continues to inspire young women through her interviews in print and electronic media.

# Community Learning Centers (CLCs) Conclusion of Phase I

Community Learning Centers (CLCs), which began in September 2019, continued to function till the beginning of March 2020. Over 1500 children were enrolled in these centers with over 40 community volunteers engaged in activity based learning, remedial teaching and recreation across nine districts of J&K. Our CLC facilitators and local volunteers received intensive training support from CHINAR to deliver sessions and actively engage children in the learning process. Regular monitoring visits were used to keep track of students' progress, curriculum status and the level of community involvement. When schools reopened after winter vacations, CHINAR began conducting end line assessments of all students enrolled in CLCs across all the districts. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Kashmir, our team was not able to complete assessments for 10 centers following government advisories regarding social distancing. The plan was to evaluate all the centers and close the first phase of CLCs. An academic preparation support was prepared to launch the second phase of CLCs, which would continue while the schools were open. However, the coronavirus pandemic once again resulted in the closure of schools before the new session began in March.



## Executive Director's Message

*-Irfan Shahmiri, Founder & Global Executive Director*

Kashmiris are no strangers to hartals and lockdowns. This lockdown was better in some ways as we had phone and internet connectivity which was a huge help. The challenge with the COVID crisis is that we don't know this beast, we don't know how long it plans to stay and we don't know how much damage it's going to create. But Inshallah, this too shall pass.

I want to take this opportunity to salute the people on the front-lines, especially the medical community, the DC administration in Kashmir region and the NGO community. It has been a great team effort. I also want to thank CHINAR's patrons who have been supporting us with renewed zeal and enthusiasm. And finally a salute to CHINAR's ground team. Once again they have rapidly and professionally delivered in crisis mode.

I end by wishing everyone a blessed and spiritual Ramadan. Hope and pray that you and your near and dear ones are safe and that you all remain safe in these tough COVID times.

