

CHINAR'S DALEEL

A COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION - Phase 2

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Editor's Note

- by Afifa Lone, Information & Communication Lead

The world has been in COVID pandemic mode for more than six months now. The virus continues to spread quickly in Kashmir and other parts of the world. Unlike other crisis, this virus is here for the long haul, unless we get an effective vaccine. The time is to accept this hard reality and take precautions to sustain current circumstances. Based on ground assessment, this crisis has severely impact livelihoods of many families especially those relying on hand to mouth earnings, resulting in immediate need for basic essentials and education for marginalized communities.

As the situation worsened, we carried out relief operations aggressively across all the districts of Kashmir. We received relief requests on our helpline, social media and local leaders. Thorough protocols were developed to confirm that emergency relief kits were provided to the deserving individuals and to ensure the safety of CHINAR team. We have distributed over 4000 kits to families in distress till date.

CHINAR understands the importance of continuity in education for children, which has been impacted since August 2019. Our remote education program keeps the students engaged through virtual classes, distribution of study packets and even open-air classes.

As the unlock happened in May, it was time to resume some of the activities which were suspended due to COVID constraints - remedial centers, skill development centers and monitoring visits, following strict protocols.

This four-monthly COVID-19 special edition- 2 newsletter highlights crises relief activities since May, resumption of activities suspended due to COVID and new start-ups.

COVID Relief Program continues



CHINAR continued its relief operations across all the districts of Kashmir and Doda in Jammu. Earlier in March, CHINAR ran a massive awareness campaign for first one and half months to aware the masses about the disease in order to stop individual and community spread. Soon after, relief operations started with a focus on families who needed immediate support to sustain themselves. CHINAR customized its relief strategy for the current crises and came up with a combo kit, which comprises of essential food items, hygiene products and protective masks collectively called as emergency relief kits (ERKs).

An in-depth need assessment and thorough verification process was followed to identify the deserving families which includes collaborations with government, NGOs, local communities and other stakeholders on ground. CHINAR's regular coordination with the DDMA (District Disaster Management Committees), NGOs and local communities helps minimize duplication and better outreach. Our emergency response team ensured contactless delivery of ERKs at doorsteps of the deserving families. CHINAR's helpline number, emplaced immediately after the crises, catered 100 to 150 distress calls per day. Through our emergency relief program, we have distributed 4045 ERKs to the families in distress (including migrant workers), with 1856 kits given in last 4 months.

Livelihood distribution

COVID affected families

The lockdown due to COVID left many daily wagers/labourers with no source of income to fulfill the necessities of their families. CHINAR conducted an assessment survey across four districts of Kashmir region - Shopian, Pulwama, Srinagar and Kupwara to identify the families in immediate need of livelihood support. Bashir Ahmad Ladi from Keller village of Shopian District is one such example. Bashir used to do daily labour to feed his family but was unable to go out for work after COVID outbreak in Kashmir. CHINAR provided him livelihood support in the form of a Kiryana (provisional) Store. One of his three children is enrolled in child development program since 2018.

Similarly, Nisara Begum - a young widow survived by three children used to do odd jobs in her neighborhood to fulfill her domestic needs. After COVID19 outbreak, she was unable to make any earnings, which badly affected her mental health. CHINAR provided her livelihood support in the form of provisional store. Within months'time, her health condition improved and she started generating income for her family.



CHINAR received certificate of appreciation at a felicitation ceremony organised by District Disaster Management Authority, Pulwama for its contribution towards COVID -19 relief operations in the district. The event was attended by representatives of various NGOs, voluntary organisations and senior administrative officers.



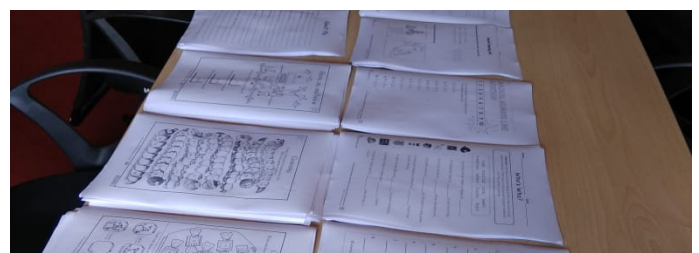
Education during COVID

Continuous disengagement from studies affects the learning abilities of students, creates disinterest among them and hence increases the dropout rates. CHINAR's remote education program keeps the students engaged through virtual classes and distribution of study packets.

Remote learning centers : After research and testing, CHINAR started remote education program for students during lockdown period on May 1st, 2020. Our strategy covers all the three categories of students – smart phones, regular phones and no phones at all. CHINAR is facilitating virtual classes through Zoom application, conference bridge calls and WhatsApp. Currently, nine virtual classes are operational across five districts with 223 students enrolled.



Study packets: CHINAR created and organized study packets for Level 1 (UKG-2nd) Level 2 (3rd and 4th Grade) Level 3 (5th -6th Grade) and Level 4 (7th – 8th Grade). These packets consist of interesting worksheets - English, Science and Mathematics, which will be helpful in enhancing student-learning abilities. Our community facilitators provide guidance to students on how to fill worksheets and conduct home visits to check their progress on regular basis. CHINAR has distributed 446 study packets among students in the pilot phase, with plans to give 500 more in the main phase.



Digital learning centers

A total of 25 girls graduated in the course of basic computer skills in Bemina, Srinagar. This is CHINAR's second digital learning center in the same area after receiving multiple requests from ground. The organization is planning to launch another center in Malwan, Kulgam by the end of September.



Entrepreneurship Lab (E-lab)

Resumed online

CHINAR's E-Lab program focuses on training young minds in entrepreneurship including business planning, marketing and developing 21st century skills. So far, over 100 students have been trained from two higher secondary institutions in Srinagar. In COVID times, CHINAR resumed this program online where students attended the crash course on entrepreneurship. In the first phase, two batches of girls (20 each) from Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Amirakadal enrolled for the course.

Teach with CHINAR -x(TWCx) launched



In August, CHINAR launched Teach with CHINARx (TWCx) program, which provides students an alternative schooling environment in the form of a mini classroom to continue their studies during current crisis. It is one of its kind solution with minimum dependency on COVID constraints, lockdowns, internet availability, and the opportunity to scale rapidly and reach a large number of children. Our X-factor is taking a mini classroom to a child while abiding with COVID-19 safety protocols. X also represent the number of children you will be teaching.

Each volunteer has to commit 8 hours a week to teach 3 or more children in his neighborhood – single or multigrade. CHINAR will provide handholding and training support to the volunteer alongwith with his/her personality development. Currently, the team is working on the project implementation plan including selection process, academic preparation support, training modules and marketing material to execute the program on ground.



Door-to-door tuitions

Started in Kupwara

CHINAR started door-to-door tuitions for students enrolled under child development program in Tehsil Handwara of Kupwara district. During our assessment, we found that the learning level of students has gone down due to prolonged closure of schools and tuition centers. Considering all the precautions including social distancing, our community facilitators go door-to-door to provide mentorship to students at their homes and evaluate their progress on regular basis.

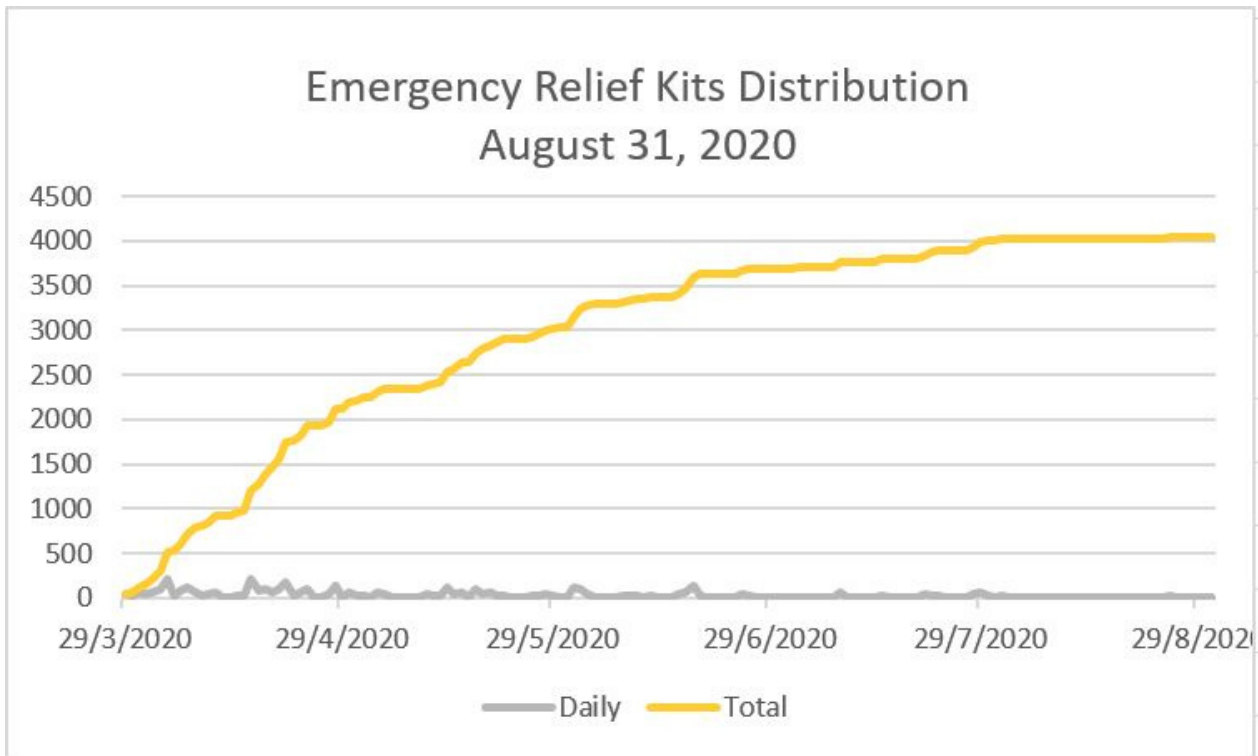
Piggy bank of hope

Ghulam Mohammad Dar lives with his wife and five children in a small house at Chowan village of Shopian district. In February 2020, CHINAR provided livelihood support to Dar in the form of a provisional store, after assessing his family situation. With his hard work and determination, he made good profit and earned well to support his family. During one of our monitoring visits in August, Dar opened his piggy bank and collected more than 16000 rupees. Previously, Dar underwent leg surgery due to which he was unable to do daily labor. Two of his children are also enrolled in our Child development program since 2016.



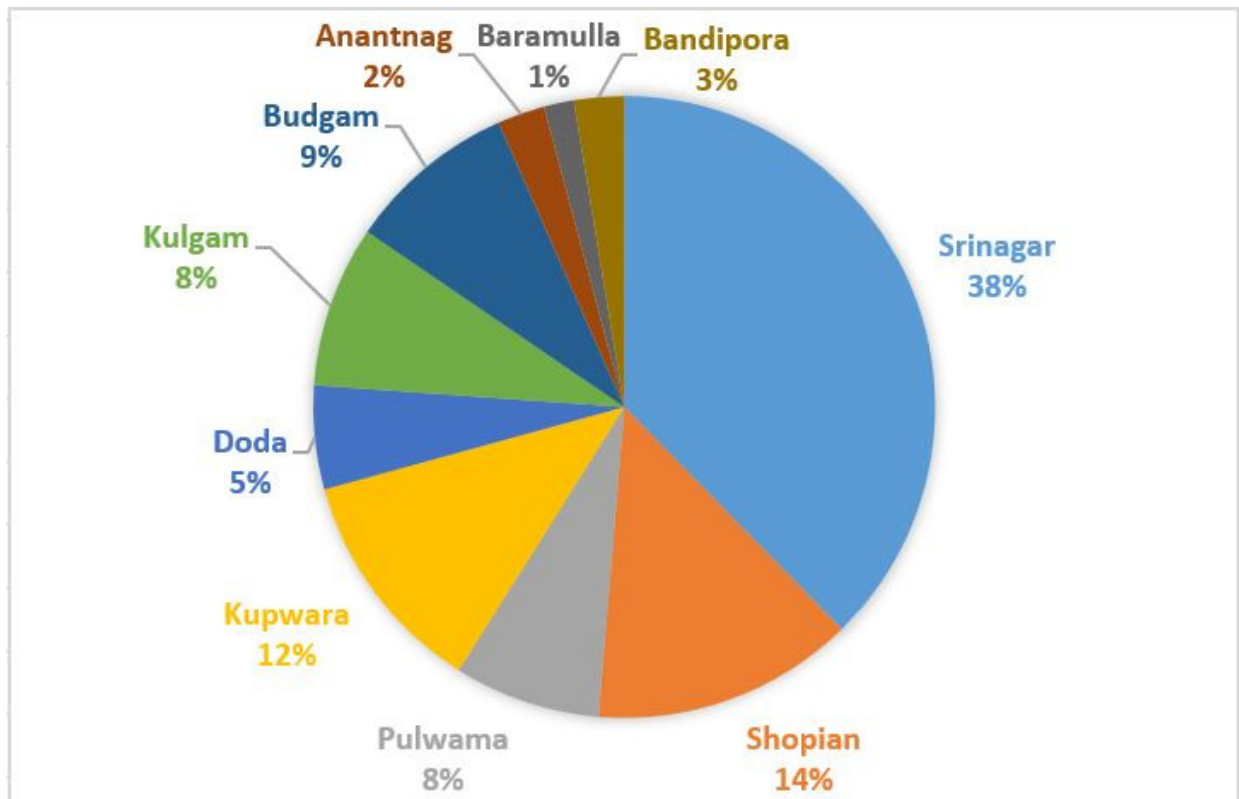
ERK Distribution - Cumulative

(Graph displays data collected till August 31)



ERK Distribution - District Wise

(Graph displays data collected till August 31)





Remedial tuitions

Resume in Shopian district

CHINAR resumes remedial tuitions in Zampathri village of Shopian district after five months of lockdown due to COVID. Over 40 students from seven villages of the district are attending the tuitions. Our community facilitators are taking all the necessary precautions including social distancing while teaching students at the centers.

Skill development centers

Resume across all the districts

CHINAR had suspended the operations of skill development centers across four districts (Srinagar, Budgam, Kupwara, Kishtwar) of J&K due to COVID constraints. After taking necessary precautions, training resumed in all the centers by the end of August. Currently, 90 young women are learning the cutting and tailoring skill from our centers.



Executive Director's Message

-Irfan Shahmiri, Founder & Global Executive Director



Our commitment to children of Kashmir is that we will provide you education, no matter what. That commitment pushed us to think outside the box and come up with the Teach with CHINAR -x (TWCx) program with the slogan – “if you can't take a child to school, take the school to the child”. It is one of its kind solution with minimum dependency on COVID constraints, lock-downs, internet availability, and with the opportunity to scale rapidly and reach a large number of children at low cost. Before TWCx, we successfully delivered zoom classes, featured phone classes and study packets where we helped over 1200 children.

COVID relief and awareness activities continued till the middle of the year after which we resumed normal activities in totally abnormal times. The child development team is busy scaling up from around 400 to 600 children by March of 2021. In youth space, we are developing a small business incubation initiative which will help youth with income generation in the conflict COVID battered economy. Our website upgrade is in process with the new site launch scheduled for November.