

THE
Rose Bowl

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NEWSLETTER OF THE DOON SCHOOL OLD BOYS' SOCIETY



COVID-19 ISSUE

**Heinrich Harrer on Mid-Term | 3 Doscocs in Slovenia | SALA Lit Fest Report
DSOBS Covid Relief Effort | Farewell Omendra Singh**

Himalayan Hills

Ratnamala Kapur

Managing Trustee, Village Ways Charitable Trust

Our remote rural mountain villages dotted across the Himalayan landscape of Uttarakhand, is a sight familiar to most of us who have studied at Welham Girls and the Doon School. These mountain villages conjure up photographic images of stunning snow-capped mountains, terraced farms, narrow meandering paths, wooded rhododendron, sparkling brooks, and sun-chapped smiling faces. However, under the layers of this beauty, the harshness of life here is a reality. Due to the remoteness of these valleys and the difficult terrain, there exists an acute shortage of healthcare and health facilities.

It was against this backdrop that Village Ways Charitable Trust took it upon itself to work in the remote upper valleys of Saryu and Pindar in January 2008. Preventive health care practices



The Himalayan landscape of Uttarakhand



The village at the foothills

via locally-trained Peer Health Educators was the simple and sustainable methodology adopted by the Trust.



The village police post receives donations from Good Earth

Early in March '20, as the catastrophic COVID pandemic swept the world, in our small corner, Village Ways Charitable Trust, was asked for assistance by the local Uttarakhand Government authorities. We understood the importance of protecting the village communities and reached out to those stalwarts of philanthropy, the Doon School Old Boys' Society and Goodearth. We immediately received generous support and offers of collaboration to gear up for the challenge in ensuring protection for the remote marginalised Himalayan villages.

Junaid Altaf provided triple layer masks and gloves that were critical to the success of our outreach program. Samrath Bedi of Forest Essentials, made generous donations of soap. In areas faced with scarcity of water, Ajay Swarup of Sir Shadi Lal Enterprises, provided sanitisers. We were fortunate to cross the requirement of sanitisers with further donations by an anonymous Dosco. Through



More donations being received

these resources we were able not just to spread awareness, but to ensure that the communities were prepared. The generosity of The DSOBS and Goodearth made the outreach program a reality. The cadre of frontline workers trained by Village Ways Charitable Trust, supported by Goodearth, were called upon to distribute the products in the remote and isolated upper Saryu villages and the upper Pindar villages, both in block Kapkot, district Bageshwar, Kumaon. It is noteworthy that these villages due to the difficult mountainous terrain do not have road access and a lot of the distribution was done by walking from village to village and house to house, to ensure wide-reaching distribution. This personalised approach also helped in teaching families how to use the masks provided, the importance of hand hygiene and the usefulness of hand sanitizer in the absence of water. The frontline workers underwent further training for specific precautions to be taken and for government protocol to be followed at the village



A volunteer takes a survey

level during outreach activities. Engagement with community leaders and commitment from them to enforce social distancing within the communities were sought.



Volunteers wait to receive the distribution material

We have been able to do our part in helping to contain the pandemic and raise awareness, especially when dealing with the return of members of the community coming back from different parts of our country.

With the returning migratory workers, a surge in COVID-19 was expected in these villages, but we have been able to curb the spread of the virus within these villages.



Every household was given masks and a sanitiser bottle

The DSOBS also provided PPE kits, infrared thermometers, gloves, sanitizers, masks and other critical resources which are presently being distributed among local government community hospitals at Block Ramgarh, District Nainital and further into remote villages where we work.