



We were scheduled to go for an expedition to Mt. Saser Kangri I (7672mts) in mid-August 2010.

This mountain is part of the western Karakoram Range, accessible from a small village by the name of Panamik.

Panamik is about 06hrs drive ahead of Leh, across Khardung-La, one of the world's highest motorable passes (at 18,380ft).

About 10 days before we left, Leh and it's neighbouring villages were left devastated by multiple cloud bursts spread over different areas. The aftermath of the devastation was immense. Approach roads had been cut off completely and getting to Leh was seemingly impossible. People were stranded, and with the routes cut off, supplies were running short.



We postponed our departure from Delhi to Leh by a few days, hoping for the roads to open up.

We had planned to travel by road, because we had a lot of equipment, gear and rations to carry for the expedition.

Accordingly so, we had thought of hiring a truck with a carriage capacity for 2 tons. Planning these details for the expedition also gave us another thought. “Well, since we are headed that way, why not carry some relief aid with us. We’ll stop in Leh, hand it over to the authorities and then move along.” So we put a word out on Facebook, not really expecting much.



And boy, were we wrong about that one last thought? We were overwhelmed with the response. We received monies, clothes, ration and medical supplies from our neighbors and from half way around the world! It was way more than we had expected. Needless to say, we realized two things, one there are good people on this planet, lots of them in fact. And the second, never underestimate the power of Facebook!



With all that support coming in, we had to revise our plans as well. Where-in initially we had planned to haul every thing in to that single 2-ton truck; we now had to hire another 2-ton truck.

People asked us how we intended to distribute the goods, and we then decided to go directly door-to-door, instead of handing it over to the authorities. Where-in initially we had planned to stay overnight in Leh and then move on, we decided to put a few members of our staff behind to complete the relief aid and join us later for the expedition. Apart from packing for the expedition, we now had a lot of packing to do for the relief aid. We decided to use the monies received for purchase of various materials.



So finally, after an entire day's of buying, sorting and packing, which also extended well into the night, we left Delhi on 17th Aug 2010 at 0300hrs.

There are two approach roads to Leh. One via Manali, and the other via Srinagar. While the road between Manali and Leh was in a mess, the one from Srinagar was worked upon and made functional by the Border Roads Organization (BRO). It is simply commendable, the job they do!



After a good 3 days of driving, undoubtedly one of the best drives in India, we reached Leh on the night of 20th Aug 2010. We could not see much then, and it was only the next day that we got to look around and know. On the face, Ladakh was still peaceful and recovering. Not much of a dent in this town, as compared to what the neighbouring villages have undergone. The news channels had been effective in highlighting the plight of the main town and Choglamsar (a neighbouring village), however, they were yet to talk of the (badly) affected villages that stretch up to a radius of 135kms from Leh.



Listed below are some of those areas (list taken from local authorities):

1. Choglamasar Village
2. Pheyang Village
3. Saboo Village
4. Shey Village
5. Taro Village
6. Stakmo Village
7. Nimoo Village
8. Ney Village
9. Tia (Timosgam Village)
10. Skurbuchan Village
11. Wanla (Hinju village)
12. Saspotse Village
13. Sku (Markha Village)
14. Chilliing (Sumda Village)
15. Nang and Hanu Thang Villages
16. Gya Meru Village
17. Bogdang and Tyakshi villages in Nubra valley
18. Igoo, Hanuthang and Kanji Villages
19. Basgo Village



Some of the areas we covered
over a week –

1. Pheyang Village
2. Choglamsar Village
3. Saboo Village
4. Kampri
5. The Leh Hospital
6. Secmol School
7. Imamia School Leh
8. Govt. Middle School Leh
9. Jawahar Navodya Vidyalaya (Jawahar Navodya School)
10. Govt. Girls Sr. Sec. School



One of our biggest concern was how do we distribute the aid material. We did not want to just hand it over to the authorities (a lot of stuff with the authorities is reportedly eating dust in their stores). We wanted to hand it over directly to the affected people. And as they say, when you really want something, the entire universe conspires for you to get it. Well in our case, we needed a contact, a reliable person. We found 3 of them and our timing couldn't have been better!



Iftikhaar, Zubair and Gulzar, three medical students (on leave from college) from Leh had been reaching out to various affected families with medicines and supplies. Having moved door-to-door and seen things for themselves, they had excellent field information (and at times ended up knowing more than the authorities). So we decided to pool in resources and work together. It was also during this time that we bumped into Kiran and Nikhil adding to the relief effort. It was worth it. We reached out directly to the affected families, and we knew that this is exactly how we had wanted to do it!



Villages had formed a core committee that regulates the supply of relief-aid material received in large quantities. However, it was also possible for us to go directly to different families. Every village has a head appointed for the committee. The head is designated as a “Nambardar”. They have all the information on the affected families. And it was from here that we were able to trace people out. Affected families now stay in shelters (mostly tents) or, are putting up at some one else’s place, or then at the local monasteries



We had a lot of things with us. And we could not really carry everything just everywhere. So we would start by figuring out where we need to go, and accordingly what we need to carry there. From jeeps to tempos to even bikes (the Royal Enfield in this case), what ever we could lay our hands on we picked up for traveling around. A dedicated two-man team along with the three medical students in Leh, and what ever more hands could be brought in, was the count of our work force.



We received clothes, books, toys, shoes, medical supplies etc. from a lot of different corners. Below are some of the contributors in this regard –

1. Ajay Jaiman
2. Samixa Ghildial
3. Rosy Das Gupta
4. Reet Sidhu
5. Deepak Majumdar on behalf of Escorts Group



We also received the following donations –

Sukanya Subramanian - INR 13000

Varun Bhandari - INR 2000

Colleen Kerrigan - INR 21912
(USD 480)

Balachaur - INR 3500

Angeline – INR 1000

Anirudh - INR 2500

Nivedita - INR 7000

Pallavi - INR 2000

Ajay Jaiman - INR 8000

Vivek - INR 1500

Shilpa - INR 750

Arif - INR 1000

Sadaf - INR 29000

Bhandarkar Rd Clg - INR 1000

Nishant - INR 5000

Sukanya Subramanian - INR 11000

Kartik Rajan - INR 18000

Total amount received – INR 128162



We spent the money on:
Transport Delhi to Leh – INR
50,000/-
Utensils – INR 25,000/-
Ration – INR 50,000/-
Tarpaulin sheets – INR 6,000/-

For any questions or queries
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Gulzar and friends are active
with the volunteer work in Leh.
Feel free to get in touch with
them.

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