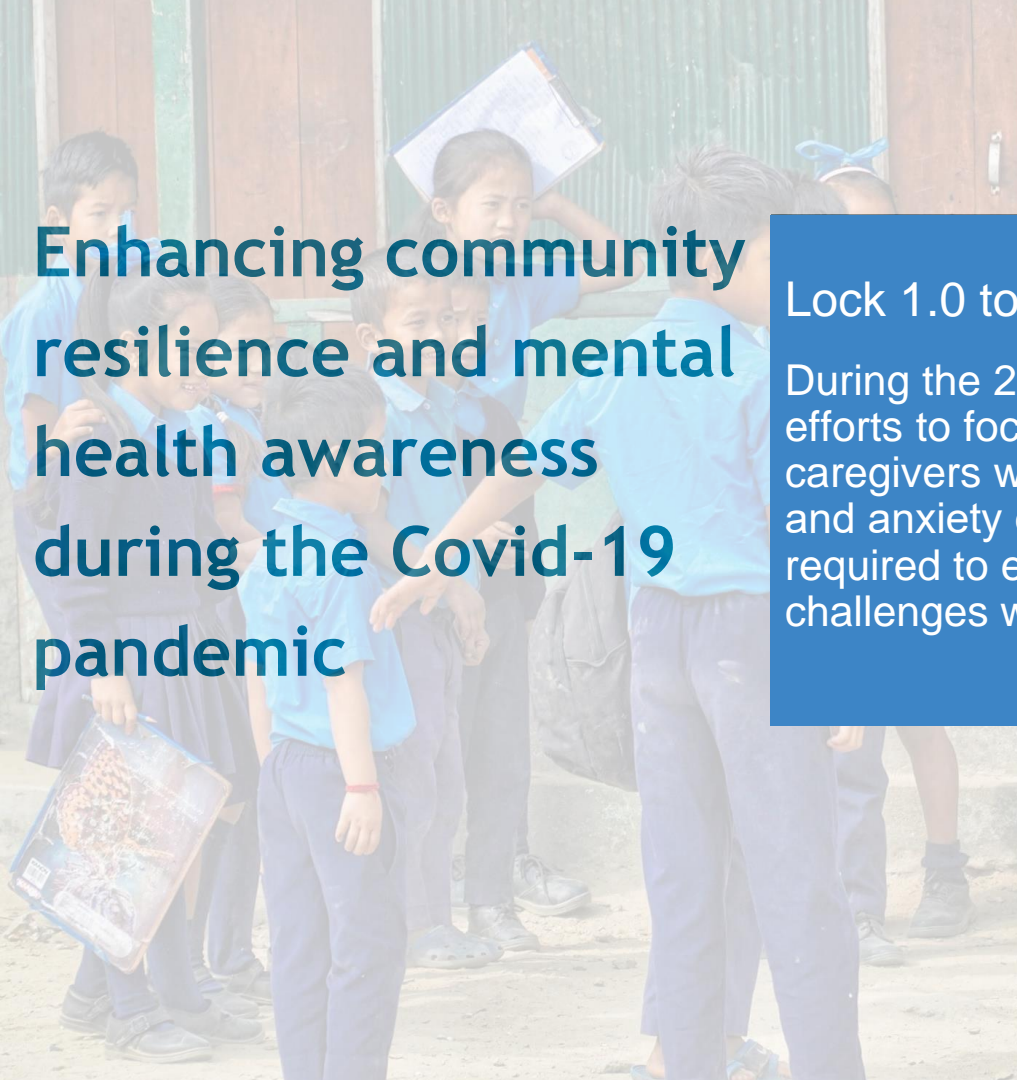




## Highlights from 2020





# Enhancing community resilience and mental health awareness during the Covid-19 pandemic

## Lock 1.0 to Unlock 4.0

During the 2020 lock-down, we pivoted our programmatic efforts to focus on equipping teachers, school leaders, and caregivers with knowledge of the impact of stress, fear, and anxiety on children's mental health and the skills required to effectively support children through these challenges while remaining safe during the pandemic.



# Delivering Factual and Contextual Information

## Contextualizing and Delivering State Training

Partnering with the State Inter Agency Group, DLRP adapted the state-level Covid-19 training to the Darjeeling context.

Community members were armed with the knowledge required to serve as Covid-19 educators in their communities.

## Leveraging existing community networks

Building on existing relationships, DLRP worked in direct partnership with teachers to disseminate messaging in their villages. Teachers presented information formally and informally in their communities as well as across WhatsApp networks.

This messaging increases uptake of social distancing, mask wearing, and other behaviors that reduce the risk of virus transmission

Teachers also promoted the use of concrete coping skills to deal with stress, fear, and anxiety.

# Community Conversations

## Social Media and Popular Press

Key message videos and mental health reference sheets were developed and distributed broadly to community members through DLRP's social media channels and WhatsApp groups.

To promote conversations around children's mental health, several articles were published in the *Darjeeling Chronicle* (English-language) and *Himalayan Darpan* (Nepali-language).

## Awareness Workshops & Community Visits

With relaxation of restrictions, the project team visited 32 communities in November and December.

Visits were coupled with informal workshops on connecting with students, rebuilding classroom community, and addressing the social-emotional needs of children as they return to school.





# Engaging Teachers and School Leaders

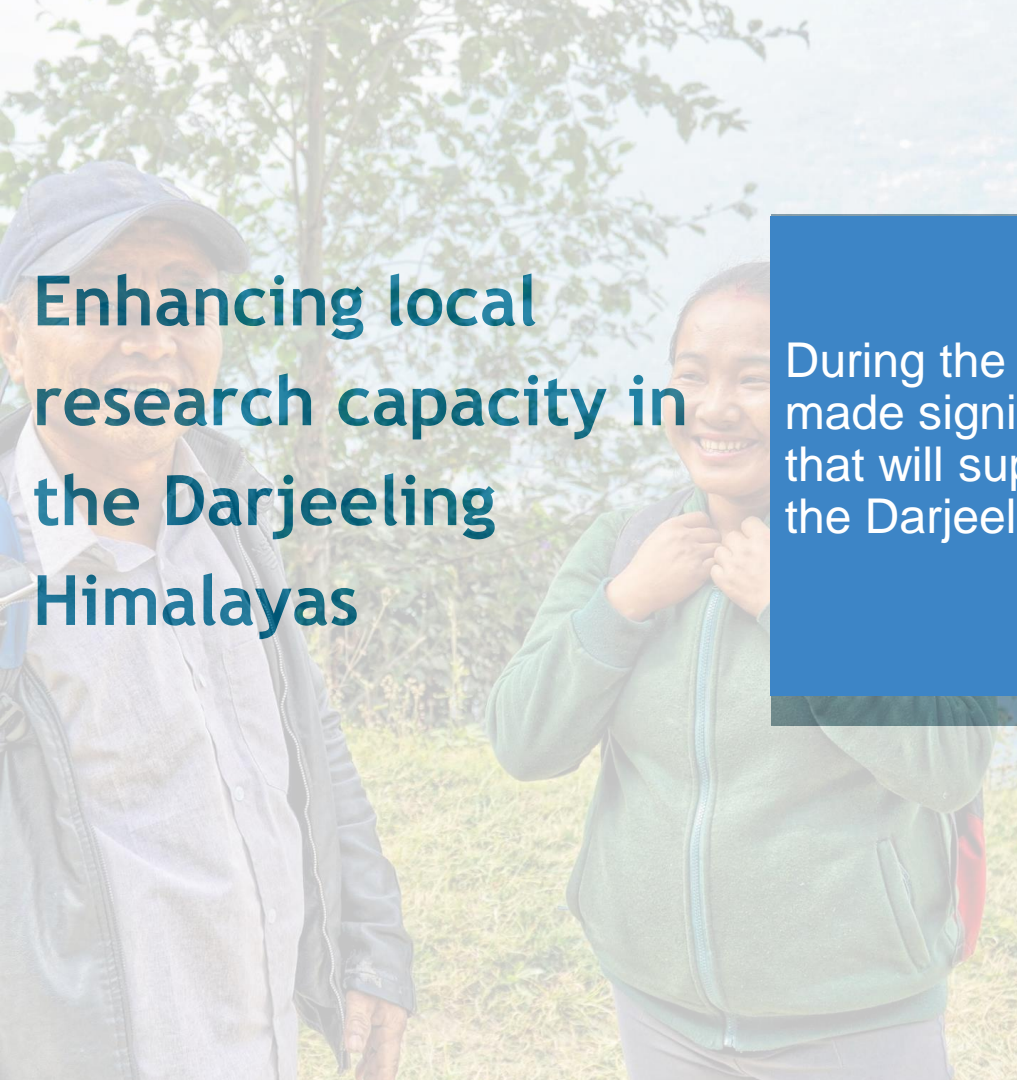
## Principal Workshop & Teacher Training

Through a series of workshops for school leaders and training for teachers we have engaged with about 150 teachers and principals across 73 of schools.

Embedding universal mental health promotion within overall health, safety and school re-opening this training package emphasizes:

- Social-emotional wellbeing of students
- Rebuilding classroom communities
- Positive response to the stress children are facing.

Trainings are accompanied by an workbook for school leaders and multi-level 6 lesson health curriculum.



## Enhancing local research capacity in the Darjeeling Himalayas

During the 2020 lockdown period, our team has made significant strides in developing an ecosystem that will support ongoing mental health research in the Darjeeling Himalayas.

# Research Capacity Building

## Local Ethics Committee

A Darjeeling-based ethics committee has been formed under the guidance of Amar Jesani. Formal registration under the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been initiated.

## Scientific Advisory Committee

A committee of experts in the mental health, implementation science, and research ethics has been convened to guide the conduct of our research program.

## SPIRIT Fellowship

Choden Dukpa is participating in an NIMH-funded implementation science fellowship let by the Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy.





## Plans for 2021







# Adapting to the needs of school and community

## Layering universal mental health support within targeted care

With widespread pandemic-associated stress and trauma, teachers have communicated a need to more directly support all children.

As school climate is a proximal determinant for positive mental wellbeing we will support schools in (re)-establishing positive school environment and student connectedness in 2021.

This will be layered within an adapted and more fluid version of the targeted care that is at the core of the Tealeaf model.

## Extending beyond schools

The unique challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in many children who are (and likely will remain) disconnected from traditional in-person education.

In response we will expand and build out intervention components to better involve caregivers and community institutions (*samaj*).

# Research in 2021

## Documentation of Naturally Occurring Tealeaf Modifications

Using the Dynamic Sustainability Framework, we will take an implementation science research perspective to study the planned and unplanned adaptations to delivery of children's mental healthcare.

## Pandemic Socio-emotional Impact

We will continue research initiated during 2020 with a focus on understanding the socio-emotional impact of the pandemic across communities, locales, genders, and socio-economic classes.

## Effect on Children's Mental Health Status

We will formally compare mental health status of children pre-Covid versus various periods during Unlock (school re-opening) and beyond. We will test our hypothesis that children may have higher levels of mental health struggles as they return to school.

We will rapidly produce and disseminate this information to drive conversations at local, regional, and national level.





## Research Plans - Covid-19 and Beyond





# Proposed Research Plan



**Phase 1  
(2019)**

Pilot study in preparation for definitive trial



**Phase 2 (2020-21)**

Research in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic



**Phase 3  
(2022-24)**

Three-variable hybrid study of effectiveness, implementation, and context

# Effectiveness-Implementation-Context Trial

**Effectiveness:** stepped-wedge-cluster randomized controlled trial (SW-CRCT) to assess the impact of the intervention on children's mental health, daily functioning, academic achievement and school attendance.

**Implementation:** an embedded mixed methods evaluation of implementation guided by the RE-AIM implementation science framework (reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance).

**Context:** an embedded qualitative exploration of context to understand the effect of culture and social context on implementation process and intervention outcomes and to explore the locatedness of the site of intervention within the larger historical and socio-cultural context.

# Benefits of Hybrid Trial

## Justification for a proceeding to a hybrid trial

Based on the 1) established effectiveness of task-shifting mental health care activities to non-specialist and lay health workers, 2) strong face validity for the efficacy of *Tealeaf*, and 3) thorough evaluation of the risks associated with the intervention, we have met the condition for proceeding past an efficacy evaluation to a hybrid study.

## Increased research efficiency

By adjusting from an efficacy to effectiveness-hybrid trial we will still perform a rigorous determination of whether *Tealeaf* works, while also generating context-specific knowledge of implementation.

## Bridging the know-do gap

Thorough implementation science research we will arm future implementers (including our team) and policy-makers with valuable information on how to tailor the intervention and implementation strategies to match and benefit from their particular context.

We will also gather a rich data set that will facilitate transition to large-scale, real-world intervention delivery.

