

# RISING to the occasion

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected life in every part of the country but also dealt a severe blow to businesses and the overall economy. But on the flip side, it has exposed avenues to overcome challenges, and many people have risen to the occasion to make a difference, be they related to business or ensuring the well-being of the community. **MARWAR** talks to eminent members of the Marwari community to understand how they have contributed to the cause of COVID-19, both in their home state Rajasthan and elsewhere.

Compiled by \* Pooja Mujumdar



**YOGESH CHAUDHARY**  
Director, Jaipur Rugs

We believe it is time for us and the design fraternity to weave faith into the lives of the weavers, who have been relentlessly weaving artistic pieces for us. It is time to stand by these women and their communities, whose lives have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In April this year, Jaipur Rugs Foundation (JRF), a part of Jaipur Rugs, started a COVID-19 fund to enable the distribution of ration (comprising rice, pulses, wheat flour and edible oil), PPE kits and other essentials such as masks, soaps and sanitisers to weavers. Around 100 *katwari* (spinner) families in Bikaner, 300 families in various villages of Rajasthan and 100 families in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh have benefitted from this initiative so far. Through JRF, we are also conducting regular health checks in weaver families. These apart, JRF is equipped to extend all necessary support to them in any emergency—COVID-19 related or otherwise—be it hospitalisation, financial aid, accessing medical care or requiring transport for medical reasons.



**SK CHORARIA**  
Director, Premier India Bearings Limited

We have undertaken several sustainable initiatives for marginalised communities, focusing largely on providing preventive health care, PPE kits, rations and other essentials. Various NGOs have been offered assistance and support to distribute daily meals and essential items across major slums in Kolkata. We also collaborated with the Eastern India Ball Bearing Merchants Association to reach out to daily wage workers and street dwellers around the central business district of Kolkata and provide them with daily meals and medical support. We have undertaken initiatives and mobilised resources in Rajasthan too. Rations and other essentials were distributed to marginalised families residing at Charwas village in Churu. We also partnered with the Dharam Sajjan Trust to distribute daily meals and essentials in Jaipur and Bikaner. We are in constant touch with the local authorities and our key partners to provide sustainable assistance to marginalised communities in every possible way.



**ATUL JALAN**  
Founder & CEO, Manthan

Based in Bengaluru, we started Thoda Bahut, a community relief initiative aimed at auto drivers (who had become jobless due to the lockdown), policemen and health-care professionals. We supported families of 1,100 auto drivers with a little fund for three months but stopped after the Karnataka government announced a one-time compensation of ₹5,000 for auto and taxi drivers. We also built a network of manufacturers and suppliers to deliver face shields to health-care professionals and policemen every day, for as long as required. To date, we have supported 20,000 health-care professionals and policemen. Through Thoda Bahut, we have been able to engage more than 3,000 corporate organisations/individuals, who have supported us with funds and by promoting this initiative via their network and social media handles. So far, we have raised close to ₹30 lakh. Thoda Bahut is an open platform and it takes just 4-5 passionate individuals to start this in their city. They just need to identify the beneficiaries, and our team will support them.



**SANJEEV AGRAWAL**  
Chairman, Orvi Surfaces

The COVID-19 pandemic sent shockwaves across industries, with most business activities coming to a standstill. Because of this, we felt it was critical to invest time and resources in uplifting our workforce, artisans and communities and empowering them through recognition, skill development and technology training. We recently joined hands with the India Design Fund to initiate a historic coming-together of five eminent architects and designers, who created bespoke products for auction. The proceeds of this auction went to charities supporting migrant labourers and artisans who were severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. Further, we have invested in training our *karigars*, exposing them to global craft traditions and cutting-edge technologies and machines. I firmly believe that instead of pulling back, it is time to invest in the future. By investing in digitisation, in sustainable products and processes and gaining a deeper understanding of consumer choices, businesses can be re-established.



**VIREN SHARMA**  
Director & CEO, International Dog Bazar; Founder, Mad About Dogs; Founder, PAWS; Secretary, Kennel Club of Rajasthan

As an avid dog lover, I have always been passionate about taking care of dogs. The day the lockdown was announced, I realised that stray dogs, which largely depend on food scraps from shops and restaurants for survival, would suffer, as these businesses would shut down. Even the people feeding them would not be venturing out of their homes due to the lockdown. So I called up the commissioner of Jaipur City Police. He arranged travel passes for us on the very first day of the lockdown and we started making food for stray dogs. Initially, we cooked food for 300 dogs with whatever resources we had, and then the number grew to 600. We also started a daily animal feeding programme under PAWS in March, feeding more than 50,000 stray dogs in Jaipur, without any external aid, donation or financial support. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the dynamics of survival, and stray animals and birds are the worst affected. We must take care of them.