

# IAPSRs's activities against covid-19 outbreak in Iran

## Introduction

This report is bringing a brief description of the attempts and achievement of Imam Ali Popular Students Relief Society (IAPSRs) during pandemic covid-19. IAPSRs is a long-established non-governmental organization accredited with general consultative status to the United Nations ECOSOC, with the mission of eradicating poverty and social exclusion by empowering women and children of marginalized neighborhoods throughout Iran and the Middle East. IAPSRs is one of the major volunteer-based NGOs with the highest geographical expansion in Iran with over 20 years in operation and has consistently contributed toward the advancement of sustainable development goals.

Besides the problems that vulnerable groups have to deal with on everyday life, this report is aiming to describe the new challenges and new problems that they have faced during the pandemic.

## Vulnerable groups against covid-19

Inequality is one of the most important factors affecting people's health. People constantly compare their own welfare with society's average rate and once they realize they have less access to resources, they feel deprived. This issue exposes them to stress, mental challenges and risky behaviors that help spreading the disease further.

Considering actual socio-economic conditions of the society, one can point out multiple vulnerable groups such as children who are victims of child labor and who are keeping on working in streets even during these dangerous days.

Other unrecognized victims are marginalized families with low incomes. High population density in marginalized neighborhoods has drastically increased the impact of corona virus. In addition, since they get frequent helps from public services, governmental and healthcare centers; and providing basic needs are far more important for them. The fear of being exposed to infectious areas (or expecting them to respect the social distancing and hygiene) is simply not a concern for them.

Other victims of this situation are breadwinning women. Fragile immune system, impossibility to visit doctors for each malady, probability of not being aware of underlying diseases, malnutrition, numerous pregnancies and the obligation to use public transportations are some of the issues these women face. Inflation, high living costs, rent etc. are challenges that in case of the temporarily closing of IAPSRs's Iranian Houses put even greater pressure on breadwinning women. Iranian Houses are IAPSRs's centers in which over 800 children and women are being received educational and medical services. Some of these houses are economic empowerment center for women in marginalized areas, which are mainly closed due to the pandemic outbreak.

There can be named many additional factors that put the health of these groups in danger, like hesitations to visit a doctor due to high costs of medications, lack of a supportive program to cover medical expenses, fear of losing job (which gives them no option but to leave the house), inaccessibility to trusted and reliable information and a more vulnerable immune system due to malnutrition and a stressful lifestyle.

In long-term, this pandemic will have more substantial negative impacts on the poor class of society. Along with this, any pause in the general economy situation caused by the pandemic will massively influence this group of people.

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*The coronavirus doesn't differentiate rich or poor, but high population density, poor economic conditions, lack of sanitary facilities, limited access to information, nutritional problems and malnutrition in marginalized areas are some of the reasons that require us to recognize the risky situation of these areas in spreading the virus.*

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## **IAPSRs's policy and managerial actions towards Covid-19**

IAPSRs, being connected to children and women in marginalized areas, has conducted several emergency meetings to identify the largest problems and temporary actions:

### **(i) IAPSRs's centers activities around the country**

Since children's gathering in these centers, even with highest hygienic codes, can further spread out the disease, the ultimate decision was to stop all classes held at IAPSRs's Iranian Houses.

Essential instructions are given to families as well as packs of hygienic items have been distributed. An important preoccupation of members was that kids will not stay home like others but will probably be obliged to work even longer hours in the streets. It was decided that social workers have more interactions with families and monitor critical cases.

### **(ii) Vulnerability of working children in metro lines and streets**

Immediate decision was to constantly communicate to municipalities to stop contractors from exploiting kids at least during this crucial period. Special care packages including hygienic and nutrition packages were distributed among them.

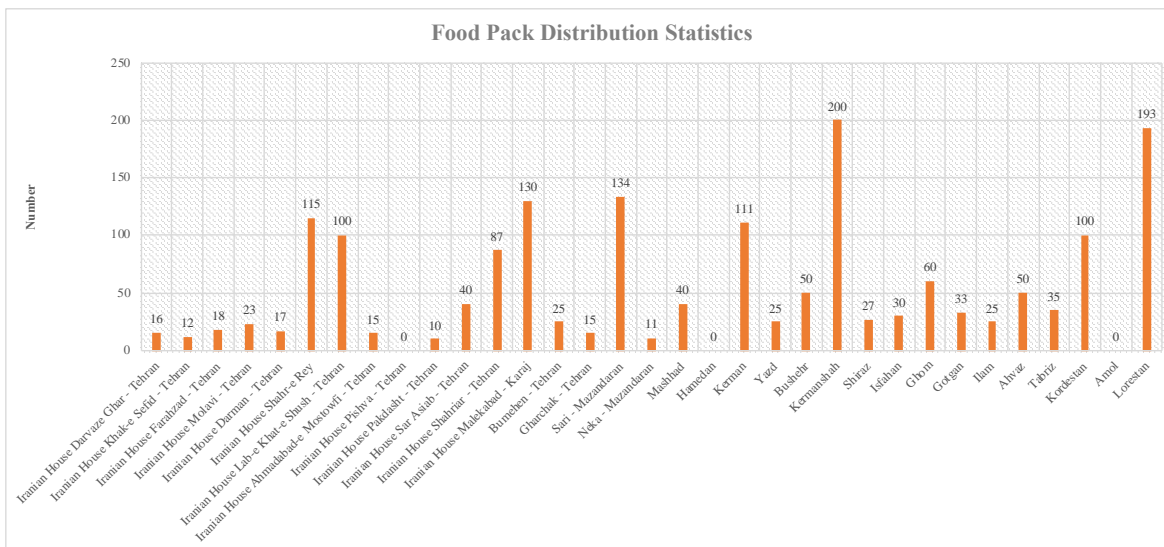
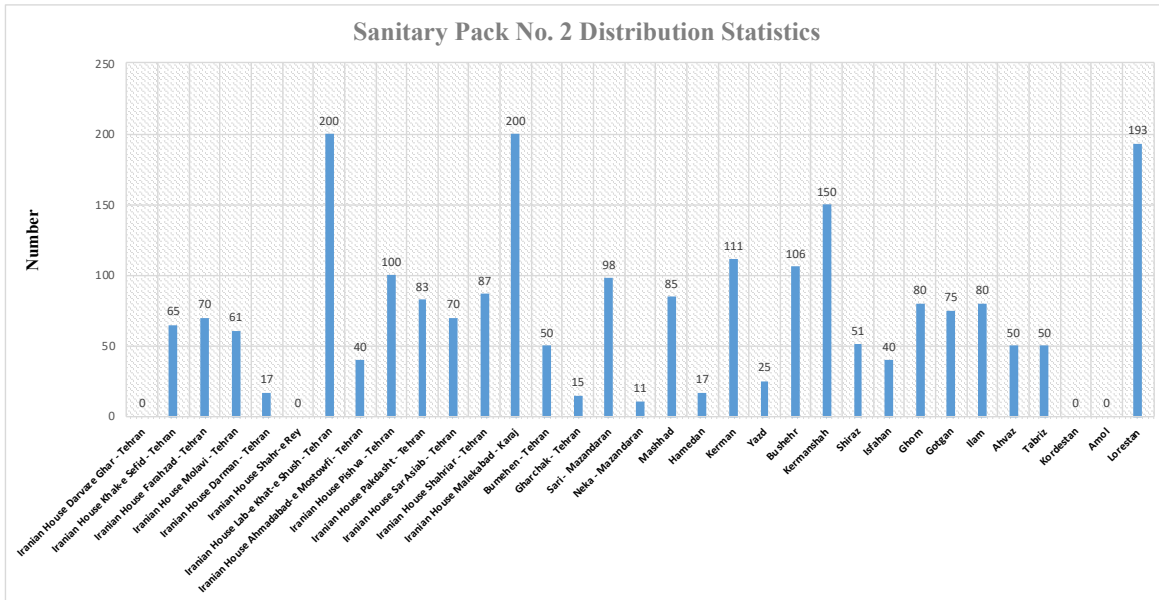
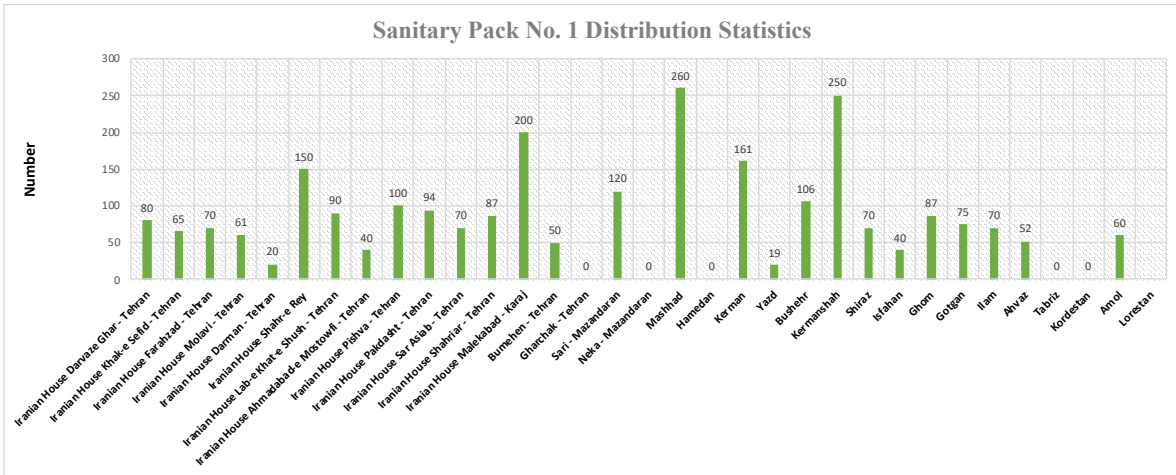
After the problem identification, IAPSRs's protocol was defined to better face the Corona (Covid-19) outbreak (February 3rd, 2020):

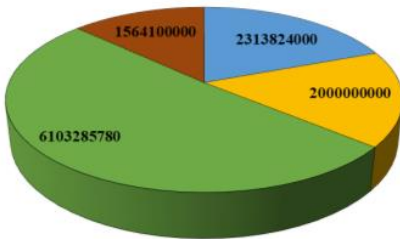
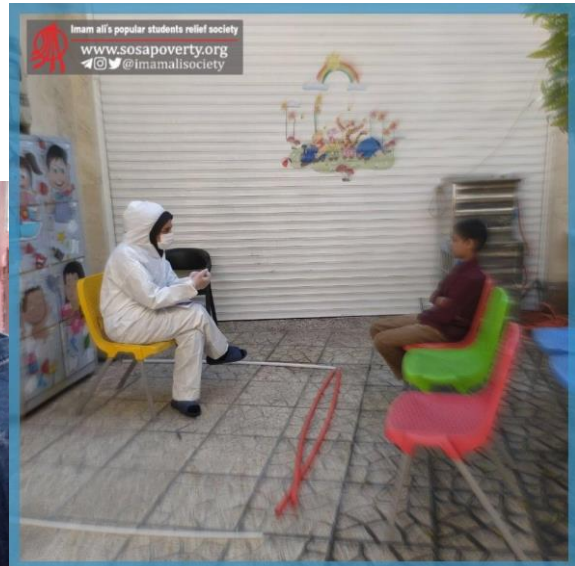
1. All group and team activities of IAPSRs are suspended.
2. IAPSRs's Iranian Houses activities are presently suspended, and children and staff presence are forbidden.
3. Critical cases are followed up by social workers. All social workers are equipped with gloves, mask and a medical gown which will be returned to Iranian Houses after the mission is completed, so that it can be disinfected and reused.
4. All places that are inevitably open must be repeatedly disinfected.
5. Any kind of connection with children and their families, especially at their house, must be avoided. This is of considerable importance since the effort is to set up a cultural pattern and augment social mindfulness.
6. Serving prepared food from any charity sources and distributing fruit or unpacked food is prohibited.
7. Distributing supplement pills based on doctor's recommendation amongst children and their families is recommended.
8. Any action to increase awareness regarding this disease and its preventive measures, such as installing posters and banners, are recommended.

Three major groups of activities were accomplished along with the protocol: 1) preventive actions, 2) educational workshops and 3) distribution of hygienic items. They are listed in detail as follows:

- Instructive workshops for children and mothers under protection
- Disinfecting of Iranian Houses
- Lock down of all Iranian Houses (during this period women will be paid)
- Open letter to the Health Minister
- Distribution of 2547 hygienic packs (No. 1) and 2280 hygienic packs (No. 2) amongst families under protection around the country (see fig. 1)
- Distribution of 287 hygienic packs specifically for working and scavenger children (see fig. 1)
- Distribution of 1747 food packs among families in need around the country (see fig. 1)

- Distribution of vitamin pills in some centers in case of necessity
- Establishing an executive protocol specific to the Corona crisis
- Establishing members' immunity instructions





- Sanitary and food packs in cash
- Sanitary and food packs in non-cash
- Hospitals Equipment
- Materfamilias salary

Total costs for activities since the outbreak of Coronavirus 11,981,209,780 Rials.

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