

Houses Built, Livelihoods Restored: Sewa to Complete Kerala Floods Rehabilitation Work by December 2020



A Sewa report prepared for the Kerala Flood Rehabilitation Project

Contd. on Page 2

Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Families & Friends,

As COVID19 spread across the world, Sewa International spread its wings too in various countries to battle this pandemic which has wrought untold havoc on lives and economies. In the United States, Sewa International is serving various communities across the country, including Native American communities which have been impacted most due to nonavailability of basic infrastructure like running water, electricity, and navigable roads which made it difficult for native elders to fight Covid-19. It is the first time that Sewa International volunteers are partnering with various Native American indigenous organizations in serving the most affected families.

Currently, Sewa International has served the following nations:

1. Hopi Relief -- 12 districts, including Monkopie in Mesa, AZ
2. Navajo Nation -- Salt Lake City, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, 4 corners Collaborative, Hard Rock, JoJoCakes, Right Relations Relief for Navajo Nation & The Community Learning Network, and White Mountain Tribals.
3. Yakama Nation -- Washington state
4. Gila River Indian Reservation -- Arizona
5. Tempe School of Urban Natives -- Arizona

Sewa International Chapters from Phoenix, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Denver, Portland, and volunteers from Albuquerque, NM are not only working in these communities but have partnered with many Indian American and Hindu organizations to multiply Sewa's efforts. We have distributed \$100,000 worth of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including masks (N95s, K95, surgical and DIY), Face Shields, Wipes, Sanitizers, Thermometers, cleaning supplies, gloves, as well as groceries, fresh vegetables, and solar lights. Recently Lynn Charley from Jojo Cakes requested relief for Native Americans affected by wildfire in Washington state, and Sewa's Seattle chapter, with support from the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh volunteers distributed meals to 250 people, which is an example of the trust and relationship that Sewa International has begun to build with Native American groups. While we continue to work diligently in alleviating the hardship caused both by the coronavirus pandemic as well as the numerous natural disasters – fires, hurricanes, floods, etc. – we seek your continued help and good wishes to carry on with our mission of serving all without discrimination. The year 2020 will long be remembered for the multitude of challenges humanity has faced. I believe it is important for us all therefore to renew our pledge to continue to work for all humanity, indeed all life. Sarve bhavantu sukinah!

Sincerely,

Swadesh Katoch
Vice President, Disaster Recovery



Houses Built, Livelihoods Restored: Sewa to Complete Kerala Floods Rehabilitation Work by December 2020

Sewa International is planning to wrap up the Kerala Flood Rehabilitation Program by December 2020 after successfully completing more than 80 percent of the project work designed to help people recover from devastating floods that hit Kerala in 2018.

Sewa has constructed 24 houses for flood victims so far and planning to finish the construction of the remaining three houses and two school buildings by November 2020. Sewa is operating 14 counseling centers in nine districts and each center is headed by a qualified, full-time counselor. Until now these centers have helped more than 7,000 people deal with the trauma and distress caused by the floods.

Sharing the project update in an online donors' meet, Director for Donor Relations, GopaKumar Krishnapillai said that the counseling centers have conducted more than 100 sessions on mental health issues and organized 176 special counseling events. Sewa's counselors have done more than 450 school visits and supported 19 children of prisoners as part of this project.

Started in 2019, the Kerala Flood Rehabilitation Program is executed by Deseeya Sevabharathi, Sewa's partner organization in Kerala. More than 1,500 donors from the US supported this initiative through their donations and more than 50 donors participated in the meet organized by Sewa on August 22.

Dedication & Tireless Work

Prof. Sree Sreenath, former president of Sewa, recalled his visit to Kerala after the floods and said the school reconstruction and other such project ideas emerged from his discussions with volunteers. Nishant Agarwal, Chief Executive Officer of Sewa International, India, thanked Deseeya Sevabharathi volunteers for their dedication and tireless work in helping rehabilitate the flood victims.

Dr. Ravi Raghavan, representative of the Kerala Hindus of North America (KHNA), and Vinod Bahulayen, both from Los Angeles, and Uma Shankar and Anand Gundu, members of the Livermore Shiva Vishnu Temple spoke at the event and appreciated the rehabilitation work in Kerala.

Two individuals who received newly constructed houses from Sewa, P.M. Manoj and Shijo from Kuttanad, and S. Ramanan, President of Sree Krishna Vidya Peetham in Ambalappuzha, attended the event. Deseeya Sevabharathi General Secretary Vijayan, Secretary Sajeevan, and Coordinator Nitheesh also participated.

Swadesh Katoch, Sewa's Vice President for Disaster Relief shared his experience coordinating rescue efforts during Kerala floods in 2018. Sewa's President, Arun Kankani, in his concluding remarks, said that Kerala Floods Rehabilitation is one of the biggest successful projects of Sewa International and appreciated the dedication, innovation, and commitment of all volunteers engaged in this initiative.

Houston Chapter Ranked Among Top 25 in the City

The Houston Chapter of Sewa International features at number 25 among the top 100 charities operating in the city, according to a Houston Chronicle ranking. In an article published on September 27, Sewa International Houston, spending 87.7 percent of the funds it raised on programs and services, was ranked twenty-fifth, ranking higher than many of the larger institutions in the city.

Gitesh Desai, Houston Chapter President, said, "This ranking is a testament to the impact we make in our community. The year 2020 is turning out to be a year of ever-growing needs, for common people as well as for charities. We have been able to collaborate with other non-profits as well as try some innovative programs. Sewa volunteers, donors, and patrons along with our partnering organizations rose to the challenge to provide relief and assistance to our community during this pandemic. We continue to work, day in and day out, to serve those in need". He thanked Sewa International volunteers and supporters, and said, "We couldn't have done this without your support and guidance".

Contd. on Page 3

Houston Chapter Ranked Among Top 25 in the City

Where Houston charities rank

Charity Navigator top rankings for Houston: The number shown is the percentage of expenses each charity spent on programs and services.

CHARITY NAME	PERCENTAGE	CHARITY NAME	PERCENTAGE	CHARITY NAME	PERCENTAGE	CHARITY NAME	PERCENTAGE
1 Houston Food Bank	97.6%	25 Sewa International, Inc	87.7%	50 Asia Society Texas Center	81.9%	75 The Forge for Families	76.2%
2 Goodwill Industries of Houston	94.9%	26 YMCA of Greater Houston	87.5%	51 AIDS Foundation Houston	81.8%	76 Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Houston	76.0%
3 Houston Parks Board	94.8%	27 Wesley Community Center	87.2%	52 Small Steps Nurturing Center	81.8%	77 Trees for Houston	75.6%
4 Target Hunger	94.7%	28 Pratham USA	87.1%	53 Cenikor Foundation	81.6%	78 Star of Hope Mission	75.5%
5 Medical Benevolence Foundation	94.0%	29 Houston Zoo	86.9%	54 Amigos de las Américas	81.6%	79 TIRR Foundation	74.8%
6 Medical Bridges	93.8%	30 Boy Scouts of America Sam Houston Area Council	86.9%	55 The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	81.2%	80 Friends for Life Animal Shelter	74.8%
7 Habitat for Humanity Northwest Harris County	93.4%	31 Communities In Schools of Houston	86.3%	56 Houston SPCA	81.1%	81 The Source	74.3%
8 Soi Dog USA	93.3%	32 Houston Public Library Foundation	86.3%	57 Coastal Conservation Association	81.1%	82 Houston Area Women's Center	74.1%
9 The Citizens Foundation, USA	92.3%	33 Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, Inc.	86.2%	58 Dress for Success Houston	81.0%	83 Ronald McDonald House Houston	73.9%
10 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston	91.5%	34 Houston Public Media Foundation	85.8%	59 Inspire Women	80.9%	84 Nehemiah Center	73.9%
11 Epilepsy Foundation of Texas	91.1%	35 Citizens for Animal Protection	85.3%	60 Houston A+ Challenge	80.8%	85 The Ensemble Theater	73.8%
12 Buffalo Bayou Partnership	90.8%	36 Girl Scouts of San Jacinto Council	85.1%	61 Prison Entrepreneurship Program	80.8%	86 Yellowstone Academy	72.9%
13 The Children's Assessment Center Foundation	90.2%	37 Jewish Federation of Greater Houston	84.9%	62 re:MIND	80.6%	87 Contemporary Arts Museum Houston	72.7%
14 Northwest Assistance Ministries	89.8%	38 Theatre Under The Stars	84.9%	63 Houston Volunteer Lawyers Program	80.4%	88 ChildBuilders	72.4%
15 Faith In Practice	89.6%	39 Houston Ballet	84.6%	64 Child Advocates	80.2%	89 Bo's Place	71.6%
16 Discovery Green Conservancy	88.7%	40 Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA	84.6%	65 Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast	79.8%	90 Open Door Mission, Houston	70.7%
17 Houston Humane Society	88.6%	41 Children's Museum of Houston	84.5%	66 Kickstart Kids	79.7%	91 ACLU Foundation of Texas	70.6%
18 Memorial Hermann Foundation	88.6%	42 Christian Community Service Center	84.1%	67 Galveston Bay Foundation	79.7%	92 Children at Risk	69.8%
19 Houston Habitat for Humanity	88.3%	43 Hermann Park Conservancy	83.1%	68 Casa de Esperanza de Los Niños	79.5%	93 The Periwinkle Foundation	69.7%
20 Rebuilding Together Houston	88.3%	44 Healthcare for the Homeless - Houston	83.1%	69 The Women's Home	79.0%	94 Every Village	69.5%
21 United Way of Greater Houston	88.2%	45 Project Row Houses	82.9%	70 Covenant House Texas	78.3%	95 Amazing Place	64.9%
22 Memorial Assistance Ministries	88.2%	46 The Parish School	82.2%	71 Junior Achievement of Southeast Texas	77.5%	96 Lone Star Flight Museum	64.0%
23 The Rose	87.8%	47 Houston Museum of Natural Science	82.2%	72 Alley Theatre	77.1%	97 Center for Houstons Future	62.5%
24 The Sunshine Kids Foundation	87.7%	48 Texas Defender Service	82.1%	73 John P. McGovern Museum of Health & Medical Science	76.8%	98 ESCAPE Family Resource Center	62.3%
		49 Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston	82.0%	74 Project GRAD Houston	76.7%	99 Texas Heart Institute	56.6%
						100 Holocaust Museum Houston	56.4%

Source: Charity Navigator

Staff graphic

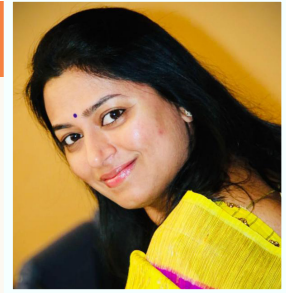
Sewa Abroad - Cycle4Sewa – A Sewa UK Initiative

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to take a toll, Sewa volunteers around the world have been working hard to mitigate its effects. From relief efforts and fundraisers to virtual events, Sewa International is going the extra mile to help those in need. In the United Kingdom, one of the most anticipated annual events organized by Sewa went virtual and was held between August 24 and September 06. Participants had to download the Strava app so that they could record their cycling, walking, or running mileage. Individuals joined groups based on age, sex, and activity.

Held in East London, Cycle4Sewa is an annual charity event that brings together people from all over the country to enjoy a day of cycling and other activities. Since the event's launch in 2012, Cycle4Sewa has raised over £100,000 for service efforts. This year, with the dire situation of the worldwide pandemic, events like these are more important than ever. But the benefits of participating in this event go beyond the money raised: people ride bicycles for health and fitness as well as to appreciate nature, spend a day with friends and family, and just enjoy the fun of cycling. During this quarantine period, physical activity has dramatically decreased as people are confined to their homes. Cycle4Sewa is therefore a great way to keep oneself fit while also contributing to the service of others.

As Cycle4Sewa went virtual, a few changes were instituted to make the event better than ever. Participants had more ways to get involved, including the choice of cycling, walking, or running. An app was created for participants to record their activity over a period of two weeks. Arun Kankani, President, Sewa International, said: "Such an initiative is an example for other Sewa chapters across the world, including in the United States. Here, we can implement a similar virtual initiative to bring people together across the country and promote health, as well as raise money for our various initiatives. This initiative will help so many people across the country, especially with the US being at the top of the list for the spread of the coronavirus".

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



For someone who started volunteering at the age of six, serving others during a pandemic is natural. Whether she is stitching masks, distributing hygiene supplies to first responders, or serving food to homeless people, Madhavi Gunasekaran, Sewa International's full-time volunteer from Atlanta, is always willing and ready. For her, it is all about responding to a higher calling in life.

Madhavi imbibed the quality of serving others from her businessman father and teacher mother. When she was young, Madhavi raised funds for a charity in her native place Anbagam in Tamil Nadu, India. After moving to Atlanta in 2001, she started volunteering for Tamil Sangam. Later, a friend introduced her to Sewa International and she got involved very actively in the Atlanta chapter. Coordinating food arrangements for the Atlanta Holi event was her first major assignment, and about six years ago she became a full-time volunteer of Sewa.

Experience serving a warm meal to three thousand people at the Holi event came in handy when she and her friends started serving food to homeless people every Tuesday and Wednesday in soup kitchens and in the Atlanta downtown area in the last weekend of every month. She regularly organizes food drives to collect funds for Sewa International and inspires her friends and neighbours to cook. She also encourages children in her community to make brownies, cookies and cupcakes and sell them to raise money for Sewa International.

Madhavi thanks her husband Kumar, an information technology professional, her son Pranav, a high school senior, and her daughter Prathika, a fifth grader, for the great support she gets for doing Sewa work. Due to COVID-19, she missed the Holi event this year but got busier than ever leading many initiatives to help the people affected by the pandemic. Her team stitched and donated more than 4,500 masks and with other volunteers she helped serve more than 7,000 home-cooked meals.

Madhavi and her team has not taken a break since April 2020 and she says all this Sewa work is possible thanks to her family and friends. She says, "Sewa brings all of us under one roof and inspires us". She loves Sewa International for focusing on community development and working for the wellbeing of all.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT



Parminder 'Peter' Pental is an entrepreneur who lives in Tacoma, WA. He was introduced to Sewa International by his close friend Deva Bodas who also lives in the Seattle-Tacoma area. Parminder recently donated a large sum to Sewa International for COVID-19 relief efforts in India.

When asked about why he chose to donate to Sewa International, Parminder said he wants to help India battle the COVID-19 crisis, and that he was impressed by the relief work carried on by Sewa International in the US to help people deal with the pandemic. Contributing to education and mental health related projects are very important to Parminder Pental and his wife. Helping out during natural disasters is equally important to them and they believe that donating to Sewa International during the pandemic is one way for them to give back to the communities that nurtured them and supported them.

Upcoming Events

- Apr **25**, 2020 to Oct **31**, 2020 : Sewa PA/DE | LEAD Community Fridays
- Aug **30**, 2020 to Nov **08**, 2020 : Sewa Youth Talent Contest 2020 | Arizona
- Sep **21**, 2020 to Oct **25**, 2020 : Sewa Youth Talent Contest 2020 - SPONSOR
- Oct **06**, 2020 to Jan **03**, 2021 : Gift of Charity on Wedding of Sunil and Mallika | Delaware

Sewa International

P.O.Box 820867
Houston, TX 77282-0867

(708) 872-7392
info@sewausea.org
www.sewausea.org



Editorial Team: Vidyasagar Tontalapur, Denver, CO (Director, Communications), Inchara Kumar & Shreya (Interns), Kusuma Swaroop, Sewa Bengaluru. Consultant: Prof. Ramesh Rao