



Sewa News

www.sewausea.org

September 2017

To Donate for
Harvey Relief
Text **"TEXAS"**
to **56512**

"OK, World... We have a problem in Houston!"

Many have heard the popular Apollo 13 astronauts' purported call to the NASA Mission Control Center in Houston, saying "Houston, we have a problem" (The actual words were "OK, Houston, we have had a problem here"). Now, we have to ask if we need to add to that Houston lexicon a new line. Following the landfall of the Category 4 Hurricane Harvey on August 25, there was a deluge of rain, and vast areas of Southeastern Texas was flooded, including large parts of the fifth largest metropolitan area in the United States. Tens of thousands of people had to evacuate their homes on short notice, and almost everyone in the city was affected, as rain poured incessantly, marking it the most "extreme rain event in U.S. history". Nearly 52 inches of rain fell, and parts of the city were submerged in up to 25 feet of water!



Pic courtesy: REUTERS/Richard Carso"

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Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Supporters:

I believe you agree that "sarve bhavantu sukhinah" ("May all live happily") is the inner voice of all living beings. I think nature expects all of us to express our inner voice in the form of action! Nature does it so, in its own way. Water gives life and makes the earth rich wherever it flows. Flowers give pleasure and fragrance which enhances our energy levels. It is the same with the sun and the moon. In fact, the entire nature is in tune to serve the world.

Yet, human beings are not happy. How can we express our inner voices? As Krishna mentioned in the Bhagawad Geeta, the only way is "sewa" (service) as it is "paramo dharma" (highest duty). Dharma is nothing but the way of life. Sewa is the only way of expressing our inner voice. So, Sewa International was founded with this idea in mind, and to provide everyone an opportunity to express their inner voice by putting "service above self".

"Sponsor a Child", "Mangal Nidhi", "Sports for Sewa", "Dance for Sewa", "Get inspired", "Yuwa for Sewa" -

these are some of the programs that Sewa International offers/conducts in an effort to provide a variety of avenues to serve humanity in distress.

The principle, "Serving Humanity is Serving Divinity", provides a spiritual direction to us all. So let us offer *sewa* with "Tan, Man, and Dhan" (physically, mentally, and financially). It means there is no fourth dimension, and that we should exhaust all the possible ways in making our inner voice heard.

We should be giving and performing *sewa* especially during festive events like Ganesh Chaturthi, Navaratri, and Diwali, as well as celebratory events like birthdays, marriages, and so on.

Visit sewayatra@sewausea.org to learn more, and join Sewa volunteer services at your local chapters.

Wish you all a happy festival season!

Anil
Anil Deshpande
VP Marketing & Fund
Development



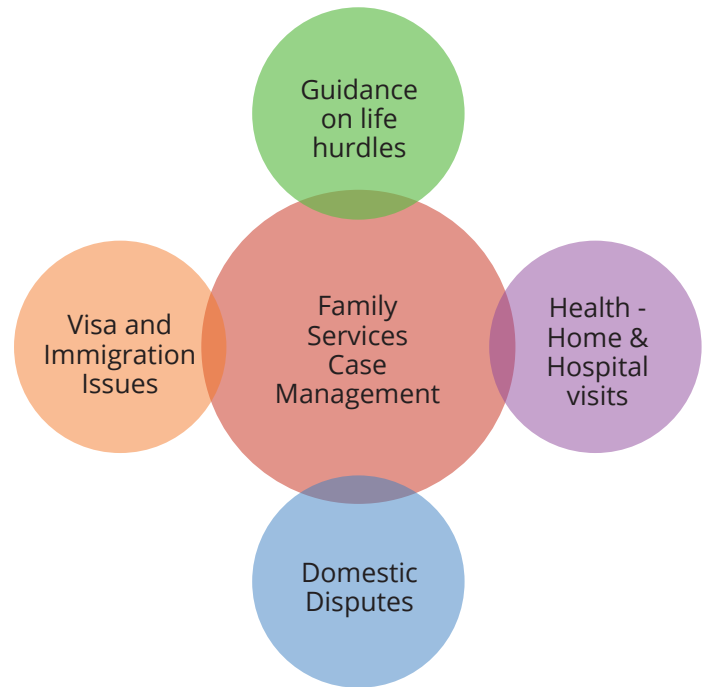
Those in need get a helping hand from Sewa

In July and August of 2017, Sewa Family Services Case Management (FSCM) teams handled five new cases and continued supporting more than ten cases in New Jersey, Georgia, Arizona, Texas, and California.

This year, till now, FSCM teams have been able to offer assistance to people who needed help with visa and immigration issues, hospitalization due to accidents and medical issues, and family crises due to issues of domestic dispute. Veteran Sewa volunteers joined hands with individuals and organizations in local communities in this effort.

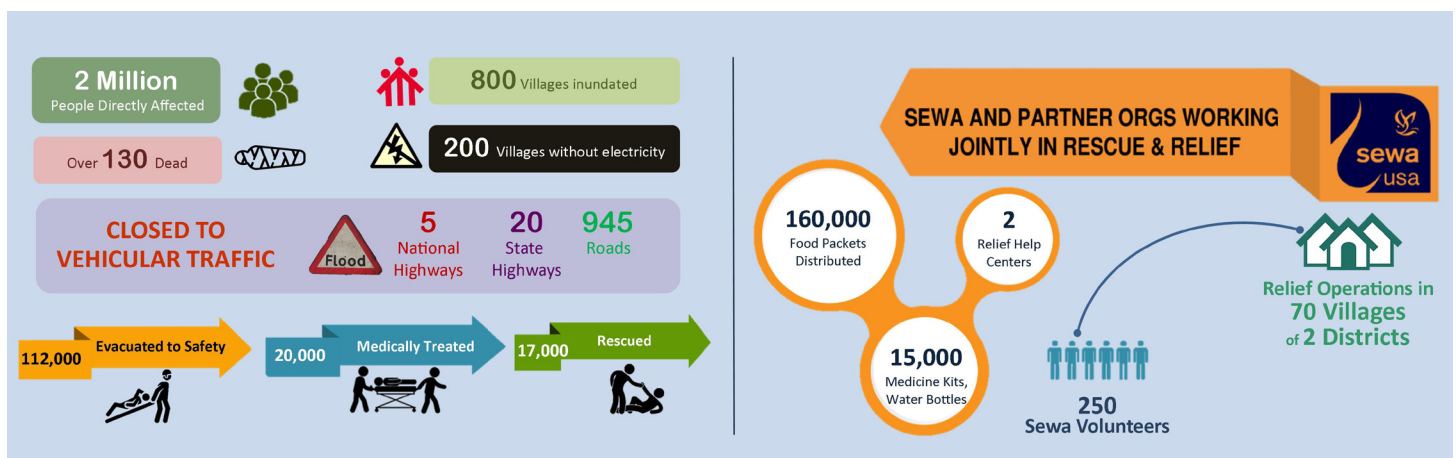
FSCM is one of the premier projects of Sewa International. The aim is to help individuals and families going through difficult times or crisis situations. Sewa volunteers work with other community organizations and volunteers to support people in need by providing helpful information or by providing a volunteer that can help. The goal is to make the journey less stressful and manageable with the caring and compassionate support of the FSCM volunteers.

Within a year, FSCM volunteers have helped over 60 individuals and their families. In about one third of the cases, people needed help because of unfortunate situations caused due to the sudden death of a loved one. About 15 families needed help in family dispute issues. The other cases included providing help during hospitalization because of accident/health/medical issues, immigration and visa problems, and



vehicle donations to refugee families. The majority of beneficiaries have been from California, Texas, Illinois, Arizona, North Carolina, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Georgia.

2017 Gujarat Floods



Hurricane Harvey

The Houston Metro Area is home to a large number of people of Indian origin. The Sewa International Houston Chapter team immediately swung into action, even as the chapter president, Gitesh Desai, had to evacuate his home early in the morning, wading out into five-foot deep water. Unfappable, he affirmed, “The residents of Houston are staying strong through the crisis and coordinating citizen-led efforts to help thousands of people who are stranded in flooded houses without food and water.” He is staying in a hotel, but true to the commitment of “selfless service” he is in constant touch with those working on relief efforts.

Nikhil Jain, the Houston Chapter Joint Coordinator also found his home flooded, and had to evacuate with his family and parents to a Sewa volunteer’s home. He continues to support others while handling all the challenges he and his family faces. Meanwhile,

Kavita Tewary, Project Coordinator, who was on medical leave, resumed work, even though she had planned to be on medical leave for another couple of weeks. She and her family, including her parents, had to vacate their home due to flooding. They have been with friends, and waiting to get back home.

Many Indian businesses and places of worship have opened their doors to give shelter to displaced families and individuals. Sewa volunteers were instrumental in rescuing nearly 200 international students from their apartments. They also helped people find shelter and delivered food to those that were stranded in their homes and apartments. A local Emergency Management Services team was reported to have fielded nearly 150 calls a day, while it did not come as a surprise that the Sewa volunteer team fielded a similar number of calls.



People getting ready to leave their flooded neighborhood
(Photo courtesy: Vilas Jambula)



Sewa International volunteers preparing food packets to deliver to the stranded Houstonians

Sewa International President, Prof. Sree Sreenath urged all people to stay safe and exercise caution as they venture out once the rain abates. “After this first phase of rescue and relief, we have to prepare for the long-haul rehabilitation work. Sewa International is requesting all Houstonians to join hands and help Texans get through this difficult time,” he said.

Sewa volunteer teams will help in relief and cleanup efforts, and volunteer teams across the country will help in coordinating the logistics of the cleanup, and in raising money. Donations to Sewa International will go a long way in helping with relief and rehabilitation efforts. To donate, please go to: www.sewausea.org/donate

Ravi Chakinala's association with Sewa began in 2009 as a donor to support Sewa's international education fund. During a visit to India in January 2011, he traveled to some of the Sewa project sites and was inspired by Sewa's grassroots impact. On his return to the United States he had discussions with the national team and started Sewa's New York Metro Chapter. He was elected the chapter president, and till date continues to expand the chapter activities and guide newer members. .

The same year, he organized a cricket tournament, which has become a Sewa feature, under the Sports4Sewa moniker -- the proceeds of which benefit education projects in India. The enthusiasm and support from participants and supporters resulted in including other sports like volleyball and badminton. Since 2011, the NY Metro Chapter's Sports4Sewa efforts have raised over \$200,000. Sports4Sewa gained immense popularity and is now organized annually at other Sewa chapters across the country. In addition to fund raising, Ravi took an active role in helping the local community in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, leading teams in cleaning local parks and serving food at food banks. Since 2014, Ravi has been managing Sewa's flagship program *Sponsor a Child* as its Program Director. The program that started by supporting a few hundred under-privileged children now has grown to over 1,300 beneficiaries across multiple regions in India and Nepal.

Ravi's contribution to the community has been widely recognized by the local authorities and he has been conferred with a Proclamation by New Jersey Assemblyman Raj Mukherji, and, a Proclamation from Jersey City Mayor's Office and City Council. Ravi Chakinala is an inspiration for all of us at Sewa.

Born in Ramagundam, Telangana, Ravi studied at Chinmaya Vidyalaya and DAV Public School. With a B.Tech in Computer Science and Engineering (2006) from IIT-Madras, Ravi came to the U.S., and has been working with a hedge fund in New York City as an algorithmic trader, helping predict and profitably invest in global financial markets.

Volunteer
Empowerment

Sewa families, Get Inspired interns, and LEAD volunteers from the North Jersey Chapter of Sewa enjoyed a weekend camp at Jagannath Dham, in upstate New York, a five-hour drive from North Jersey. Organized with an aim of strengthening friendship and relational bonds and empowering volunteers, a number of team-building activities were organized catering to all age groups. Volunteering activities such as painting two large decks, mulching wood, seeding fields, working at Goshalas (cow sanctuaries) were organized to involve all the participants. The 70-member team divided into smaller groups, and took turns to cook mouthwatering recipes over the weekend. Campfires, freeworks, and talent shows kept everyone entertained and rejuvenated, making it a memorable weekend.

Upcoming Events

- Sep **08-17** : 3 locations - Katy, Sugar Land, West Houston - Stop diabetes Movement – 25 hour Yoga workshop
- Sep **09** : Lincoln Park, Jersey City, NJ - Sports for Sewa - Cricket for Charity
- Sep **10** : Weiss Field, 33401 Webber Road, Avon Lake, OH - Run for Sewa
- Sep **16** : CPMA middle school, San Diego, CA - KATHAA, Weaving stories through Indian Classical Dances
- Sep **16** : Jain Center 435 IL-59, Bartlett, IL - Garba for Sewa
- Sep **16** : 5325 Keith Bridge Road, Cumming, GA - Fall Cricket 2017
- Sep **22** : Centerville Junior High School, 37720 Fremont Blvd, Fremont, CA - Dandiya 2017

Sewa International

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