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The Economic Times

Indian-American NGO raises USD 400,000 for COVID 19 relief efforts

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WASHINGTON: An Indian-American non-governmental organisation has raised more than USD 400,000 for relief and assistance work among thousands of COVID-19 affected people in the US, including distributing thousands of face masks to health care personnel.

With this, just two Indian-American organisations - Sewa International (USD 400,000) and Indiaspora (USD 600,000) - have raised USD 1 million for their COVID-19 relief efforts.

On Saturday, Sewa International also announced the launch of a national registry for COVID-19 Blood Plasma.

So far, it is the only 24/7 service that offers a national registry for both donors and recipients under the Convalescent Plasma Therapy programme with live phone facility and social media support.

"Our mission is to bring together matching blood donors and COVID-19 patients seeking the plasma, in-time and save lives, and we are open round-the-clock to serve" said Sewa

International president Sree Sreenath.

"We are using technology and human resources for troubleshooting regulatory and logistical bottlenecks. We are in a mission to help physicians and families of critically ill COVID-19 patients obtain convalescent plasma in a timely manner," he said.

Run by a dedicated team of volunteers, the services adhere to HIPPA medical data protection laws, and protects the privacy and confidentiality of the registered users (donors and recipients), the NGO said in a statement.

"A dedicated group of physicians and technologists designed and developed this registry rapidly because they saw the urgent need for such a service nationwide," said Prem Pusuloori, Sewa Director of National & International Programs.

The NGO which started its helpline on March 15 from three cities has now expanded to eight cities in the US. More than over 200 volunteers have been trained in manning the helplines. One fifth of the helpline cases are related to grocery delivery and food request, 38 per cent are of medical and health issues, 13 per cent are travel-related information and eight per cent ask immigration questions, it said.

More than 200 volunteers have so far have made 10,000 home-made masks and donated to nursing homes, school districts, EMS centers, USPS workers, hospitals.

The Indian-American NGO has donated over 30,000 surgical and N95 masks to hospitals, emergency management system of counties, ambulance services, first responders, caregivers, county Sheriff offices, Nursing homes, courthouses.

It has also distributed over 2000 bottles of sanitizers, and 2,000 pairs of gloves. Several other Indian-American organisations are carrying out relief measures across the country.

The Connecticut-chapter of GOPIO headed by its trustee and past president Shelly Nichani delivered food for healthcare workers at the Stamford Hospital on Sunday.

Overseas Congress Seva Dal in North Jersey have helped five hospitals with masks and gloves, along with three food drives for first responders, said Rajendra Dichpally.

Globally, the novel coronavirus that originated in China in December has killed 108,862 people and infected over 1.7 million people globally. The US has the highest number of infections at

529,887, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

The US on Sunday overtook Italy as the country with the highest number of deaths due to COVID-19 pandemic with the fatalities crossing 20,000.