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Sewa International gets USD 500,000 reconstruction grant



By Seema Hakhu Kachru

Houston, Aug 8 (PTI) Sewa International, an Indian non-for-profit organisation, has been awarded with a USD 500,000 grant to rebuild homes devastated by Hurricane Harvey last year in the US state of Texas.

The American Red Cross awarded the grant to Sewa for reconstruction in Rosharon Village, Brazoria County, Texas.

In the next 18 months, Sewa will help reconstruct 11 completely destroyed homes and 24 partially-damaged homes, benefitting 154 people.

"This grant from the American Red Cross is an affirmation of the good work done by Sewa. The total cost for rebuilding and repairing homes at Rosharon for this project is estimated to be about USD 675,000, and Sewa International's donors are contributing USD 175,000 towards this cause," said a Sewa spokesperson.

Sewa also received a USD 397,000 grant awarded by the Greater Houston Community Foundation (GHCF) in December 2017, providing case management help for 600 individuals. Completing the work in record time, Sewa International ended up helping 1,600 individuals from minority and underprivileged communities, the spokesperson said. The Sewa International team members in Houston were instrumental in raising funds from its supporters across the US.

In less than a year since Hurricane Harvey hit, Sewa raised over USD 2 million, including the latest American Red Cross grant of USD 500,000, for disaster recovery.

"Despite generous support of funding agencies, the task at hand is enormous," Achalesh Amar, Coordinator of Sewa Houston told PTI.

"The experience of rebuilding Rosharon has been demanding, sometimes frustrating, but more often rewarding and always an optimistic one. The American Red Cross grant allows us to lay the foundation, literally one home at a time -- to rebuild and revitalize Little Cambodia," Amar said.

Gitesh Desai, President of the Houston Chapter of Sewa International said the American Red Cross grant further strengthens Sewa's resolve to fulfill "our mission of giving back to the society through selfless service".

One of the most affected communities was Rosharon in Brazoria County which suffered major damage. Known as Little Cambodia, Rosharon with a population of approximately 1,400, is 30 miles south of Houston.

Home to predominantly Cambodians refugees, and some Laotian and Mexican refugees, the majority eke out a livelihood in this insular setting through subsistence farming.

Families here had fled Cambodia in the late 1970s escaping the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge. Nearly fifty per cent of the families are involved in growing water spinach, a staple of Asian cuisine. When Hurricane Harvey roared through South Texas, it devastated "Little Cambodia", bringing down houses, rendering people homeless, and leveling greenhouses thus destroying livelihoods. PTI SHK CK CK