



## Sixth International Sewa Meeting Held in New Delhi, India

The Sixth Sewa International Meeting -- a congregation of Sewa International chapters from around the world -- was held December 6-8, 2018, at the New Maharashtra Sadan, in New Delhi.

Sewa International representatives from 13 countries -- India, USA, United Kingdom, Australia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago, and Nigeria -- participated in the three-day event. Eleven representatives from the United States' chapters attended the conference.

Day one, which was chaired by Dattatreya Hosabale, Joint General Secretary of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, had seminars on the 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG), and what they mean to India and the social sector at large. The key note address was given by Dr. R. Balasubramaniam, a well-known development scholar, author, public policy advocate, leadership trainer and activist. This was followed by paper presentations by eight speakers covering the SDGs.



Dr. R. Balasubramaniam, Ma. Dattatreya Hosabale and Mr. Shyam Parande at the inaugural session of the seminar.

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## Executive's Corner

*Dear Sewa Family,*

I cannot believe that we are already in 2019. First, a big thank you to all of our volunteers, donors, and ardent Sewa supporters. On behalf of Sewa International, I wish you and your families a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

What a great year 2018 was! So many accomplishments by our chapters to reflect on and feel proud about. Flood relief and rehabilitation works undertaken in response to the devastating floods in Kerala, hurricane disaster management, the start of four new chapters in different states, the inauguration of the Sewa learning center in Columbia, South America, and so many innovative projects at the local chapter level. Of course, our new website has been launched, thanks to our IT team putting so many hours into web site development and deployment.

These kinds of achievements are not possible without the full support of dedicated national team members, Sewa local chapter coordinators, advisory body members, Sewa full-timers, and our dedicated volunteers. I want to share with you all that our team is continuously working on establishing an effective organizational structure at the national and chapter levels by identifying qualified and committed people from different sectors of the community. We have made a serious attempt to recruit more senior citizens, women, and youth in leadership roles and general organization activities. This has helped Sewa bringing more energy and perspective

into our work, thus achieving remarkable results.

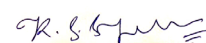
On a regular basis, our national team members do *pravaas* (travel to different chapters) to assess the team dynamics at the chapter level, and to guide them in resolving issues and motivating them to continue their vital work.

We understand that communication is the bloodstream of an organization: to keep communication flowing, we conduct conference calls and in-person meetings at both the national and chapter levels. Moreover, we continuously strive to build our volunteers knowledge base by conducting information sessions on a regular basis. Many volunteers join these calls and learn about issues like organization building, volunteer management, fundraising activities, disaster management, etc.

I want to make it clear that our team is waiting to hear your valuable suggestions to improve our work to achieve our higher goal "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" (The world is one family).

We have a lot to do in 2019, and we are very excited to get started. Are you ready to work with us again this year?

Sincerely,



**Syam Kosigi**  
VP Organization



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A documentary film screened on Sewa International's programs executed over the past two decades across India provided a holistic view of the work done, the diversity of the projects undertaken, and highlighting the impact on communities.

Day two saw the presentation of reports by Sewa representatives of the 13 countries, followed by interactive discussions and brainstorming sessions on the activities. Saumitra Gokhale, global coordinator for the Hindu Swayamsewak Sangh (HSS), summarized Sewa International's activities and work and how Sewa's work has been consistently expanding in terms of geographic reach and quality of work. The Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis, graced the event and addressed the delegates.



On the final day, Kiren Rijju, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Government of India, addressed the participants on *Disaster Mitigation* and explained how it is a major concern of the government. *Disaster Mitigation Measures* are those that eliminate or reduce the impact and risk of hazards through proactive measures taken before an emergency or disaster occurs. He explained the challenges faced in implementing disaster mitigation measures and pointed out the critical role of the civil society and nonprofit organizations in facilitating this.

The discussion and brainstorming during the day ended with action points identified to take Sewa International activities to the next level:

- A five-year plan was recommended to be developed by all chapters, similar to the five-year strategic plan developed by Sewa International (USA)
- Disaster management to be a focus area -- organizations should invest in building a strong local network and invest in building a team to understand and strengthen disaster risk management; governance to manage disaster risks; *Disaster Risk Reduction* (DRR) for resilience; enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response; and to 'Build Back Better' (BBB) in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction
- Reporting and documentation to be strengthened -- using technology tools, and involving young volunteers to strengthen the social media base
- Focusing on steps to be taken to adhere to the *General Accounting Principles* (GAP) by Sewa International chapters in all countries
- The need to involve more youth in all areas so as to train and prepare the next generation of leaders and organizers to serve communities
- Strategize on branding, social media, and advertising for a larger strategic reach
- Participate in Tedx talks and paper presentations at conferences for brand building and recognition
- Capacity building in each chapter – by organizing webinars and exchange programs to help and energize all Sewa chapters

## 2018 Holiday Event for Camp Fire Evacuees



Sewa International team, working with a group of local volunteers headed by Heather Helwig, a long-time resident of Loomis, Placer County, CA, organized a Christmas luncheon for 200 fire evacuees of the devastating fires that ravaged Northern California in early November 2018. The fire that originated in Butte County, CA, devastated the three cities of Paradise, Magalia, and Concow killing 83 people, burning down 6,500 homes, and driving about 52,000 people to seek shelter.

The luncheon was held at the Blue Goose Event Center in Loomis, on Sunday, December 23. Over \$7,500 in gifts, gift certificates, and laptop computer donations were distributed to the attendees at the event. This brought some holiday cheer to the people who lost everything in the deadly fire.

The attendees were offered a delectable menu of traditional Christmas food, holiday pies, cookies, and more. A variety of activities were organized for all age groups: face painting, fashioning balloon animals, and a raffles game. There was a Christmas craft corner, and photos with Mr. and Mrs. Santa for the young and old alike. The attendees had an opportunity to participate in a raffles game and win several gift-hampers prepared by Sewa volunteers and the local volunteer team.

Melissa Johnson, a recipient, was very appreciative of the laptop computer donation and said "Thank you, Sewa. This is going to help me in my nursing career and going back to school." Another mother at the event, who escaped the fire, said, "Thanks Sewa for making Christmas doable for my kids. Paradise will stay strong because of you guys."

In the coming weeks, the Sewa International team will focus on rehabilitation work in collaboration with the local population. "Sewa means selfless service, and we are here to serve in any way possible," said Jyothsna Prasad, Sewa volunteer and the chief organizer of the event. "The enormity of the fires and the tragic consequences are still fresh in our minds, and any cheer and support we can offer we consider it a privilege and an honor," she said.

"An opportunity to serve the victims of this destructive natural event was the best holiday gift we received from this successful event," said Minal Joshi, a full-time Family Services Coordinator for Sewa International.

Contributing to Sewa International's outreach effort were three other NGOs -- Annapoorna of Sacramento, CA, Bharati Tamil Sangam, California and the VHP of America (VHPA) -- whose generosity helped Sewa International reach out to the distressed Loomis community.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Brinda Tammara has been involved with Sewa International since the inception of the Pennsylvania-Delaware Chapter in 2015. Brinda is the chapter treasurer. Along with the local team, she is actively engaged in fund raising activities like "Sports for Sewa," "Svara Sewa" (a music-themed program), and donor management. She was instrumental in working with Pfizer to donate 30 laptop computers to the Philadelphia Bhutanese community.

Brinda Tammara strongly believes in the concept "*Maanava Seva, Maadhava Seva*" (Service to Humanity is Service to Divinity). She says that volunteering not only gives her an opportunity to give back to the community in some small way but also benefits her by meeting like-minded people who can be a positive influence.

Brinda likes gardening and traveling places. She works as a scientist at the pharmaceutical firm Pfizer, and lives in Pennsylvania with her husband Vijay and two teenage sons, Maanas and Maahir. Prior to her work with Sewa, Brinda volunteered at the local YMCA and two other nonprofit organizations -- Shakti Foundation and Manabadi. The likes of Brinda are the spirit and strength behind Sewa.

## Atlanta Chapter Prepares to Celebrate Holi Again – Corporate Sponsors Ready to Join in!

Sewa Atlanta is all set to organize the fourteenth annual *Holi* (Festival of Colors) event on March 23, 2019 at the Atlanta Cricket Fields in Forsyth County, north of Atlanta. This year, *Holi* will be observed on March 21 in India. *Holi* has steadily increased in popularity around the world, including in the United States, and Sewa Atlanta has been hugely successful in attracting the local communities to the colorful event. Last year, around 6,000 people showed up for what was truly a beautiful and joyous event. This year, it looks to be even bigger as major corporate and business sponsors are lining up to support the event!



## Upcoming Events

Jan 12, 2019 : Sewa New Jersey | *Sewa Milan* | PAL Center, 33 Baldwin Road, Parsippany, NJ

Jan 19, 2019 : Sewa Atlanta | *Food for Hungry* | Otwell Middle School Cafeteria, 605 Tribble Gap Road, Cumming, GA

### Sewa International

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

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



Editorial Team: Prof. Ramesh Rao, Columbus State University, GA; Shyam Byra, Media Entrepreneur, Philanthropist and Businessman, Phoenix, AZ; and, crucially supported by our mission oriented staff -- Aravinda Rajagopal and Kusuma, Sewa Bengaluru Office, India.