



# Sewa News

www.sewaua.org

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## Sewa International – Empowering People, Serving Humanity

Sewa International (India) was started in 1993 to facilitate overseas Indians to contribute towards emergency rescue and relief operations in times of disaster.

Over the last 25 years, Sewa International has matured into executing and managing long-term comprehensive rehabilitation and developmental projects in various parts of India and beyond, delivering sustained benefits to the affected communities. Today, Sewa International has presence in 22 countries across the world focusing and executing projects addressing local issues, promoting volunteerism, and supporting a broad range of development projects. In India, Sewa International has worked on 14 disaster rescue and relief activities, and some multi-year rehabilitation projects. In the most recent floods that affected the entire state of Kerala, Sewa worked with



Library on Wheels

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## Executive's Corner

Dear Sewa Supporter,

*Sewa hi paramo Dharmah* – Sewa is the ultimate duty - so goes our motto - the *raison d'erte* for us all. 'Sewa' is a movement based on this principle and has spread to 22 countries over the past 30 years. In the US alone, we have 37 active and a total of 43 Chapters. To build Sewa International into an efficient running train, we have: the *destination* - provided by the vision and mission through our five-year strategic plan; *intermediate stops* - goals specified by our Board; *fuel* – contributed by our donors (wealth) and volunteers (time); *efficiency* – backed by our irreplaceable Mission oriented Staff (MoS); and, *steering* – provided by our National Executive Team.

This year has been significant for Sewa with the progress made in revenue and project performance in 2018. This is the first year of our five-year Strategic Plan developed over the course of 2017 through an inclusive process, that was facilitated by a team of professionals from the industry. We have won a \$500k grant from the American Red Cross, we successfully completed a \$400k grant from the Greater Houston Community Foundation servicing 1,600 or 150% more victims of Hurricane Harvey than

committed to in the grant. We raised \$600k for Kerala Floods recovery. We provided education access to 1,500 students in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Colombia; built 1 of 100 schools in Northeast India, and, built 126 toilets across five states of India. Our ASPIRE tutoring program in three cities in the US served 315 (pre-K to high school) students in Houston, TX, Cleveland, OH, and Atlanta, GA. We served 99 Family Services cases across the US. Our volunteers put in more than 150,000 hours. Four new Sewa Chapters were established in Charlotte, NC; Bucks County, PA; St. Louis, KS; Rochester, NY. To top it all, at the tail end of last year and along this year, we received a major \$10 million endowment from Prof. (Retd.) Ram Gehani, of Washington DC.

The Sewa train keeps chugging along in high speed. Enjoy the ride! This could not have happened without you, dear Donors, Volunteers, and our MoS. Happy New Year in advance!

**Prof. Sree Sreenath**  
President





Relief material distribution after Kerala Floods

local partner organization, *Deseeya Seva Bharathi Keralam*, in rescue and relief efforts. Sewa sent five truckloads of relief material from as far as New Delhi to Kerala. Sewa also mobilized a team of doctors who travelled to Kerala and conducted medical camps across the flood-hit region for an entire week. The rehabilitation phase has started, and the first project of installing three community-owned *Reverse Osmosis Water Treatment* plants at three locations in Alleppey district has commenced. This self-sustaining project will benefit 3,800 people from 735 families over the next five years.

## Some of the key ongoing projects in India include the following:

### 1 Kutch Arts and Crafts

To preserve and promote arts and crafts traditions of the Kutch region in Gujarat, Sewa setup a *Design and Development Center* in 2012 that was inaugurated by Narendra Modi, the current Prime Minister of India, who was then the Chief Minister of Gujarat.

The Center provides training in tailoring and traditional Kutch handicrafts to unskilled rural women. To empower local Kutchi artisans, Sewa provides support for marketing their products. Today, 25 women from nearby villages are directly employed by the Center and over 600 are on contract work, based on their specific skills.



Rural women trained in traditional Kutch handicrafts





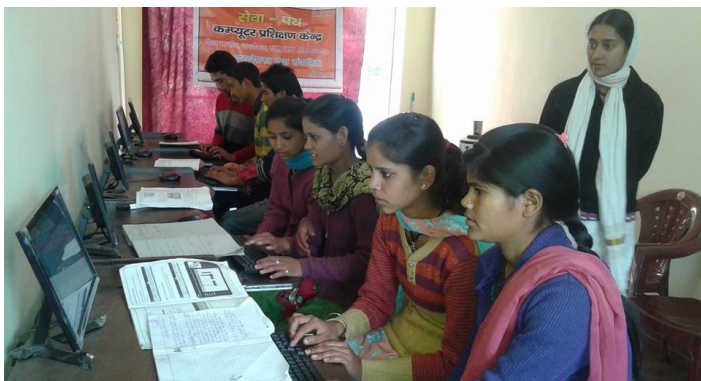
*A woman agriculturist in the field*

To help underserved communities of Rudraprayag and Chamoli districts in the State of Uttarakhand recover from the devastating floods of 2013, Sewa initiated various interventions over the last five years.

In the area of agriculture, training and support was provided for organic farming, horticulture, and cultivation of herbs. Sewa set up 163 women Self Help Groups (SHG) with 1,650 members. To enable the SHGs to benefit from higher profit margins, by direct access to end user markets, Sewa has now set up *HIMSAMPADA*, a Farmer Producer Company (FPO) with 500 members representing all SHGs. By December 2020, *HIMSAMPADA* will have over 2,000 members.

To take healthcare to far-flung villages, Sewa commissioned *Sewa Aarogyam*, a mobile medical van (MMV) in November this year. Together with a 10-member medical team that includes a general practitioner, a nurse, lab technicians, a pathologist, a pharmacist and administrative staff, the MMV, which is equipped with facilities to take X-rays, ECG tests, and conduct pathology tests, reaches 25,000 homes in 250 villages.

The MMV treats an average of 100 patients every day. While medicines, physician's consultation, and telemedicine (in pilot phase) are offered completely free, X-ray, ECG and pathology tests are charged at a fraction of standard rates.



*Computer training center, Guptakashi*



*Mobile Medical Van – "Sewa Aarogyam"*

To promote eco-tourism, Sewa organized training for local young men and women to become tourist guides. Sewa also offered training in adventure sports and helped them discover new / less travelled trek routes that would be a source of their livelihood.

Ten computer training centers offering various computer courses have benefited hundreds of youth, and increased the chances for these young men and women in landing a job.

Model Skill Development Centers (MSDC) under the *Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra* (Prime Minister's Model Training Centers) scheme have been set up in seven districts of Uttarakhand that provide training and placement assistance. At present, there are 20 active groups undergoing training in Information Technology/ Information Technology Enabled Services, Electronics, Tourism, Agriculture, Apparel Manufacture, and Healthcare services.

### 3 Sustainable Interventions in Northeast India

Despite its strategic location, as it shares borders with three countries -- Bangladesh, China and Myanmar -- Northeast India is arguably the most neglected part of the country. In 2016, Sewa began sustainable interventions in skill development, healthcare, and education.



*Bru tribe members making bamboo furniture*

To help the 35,000 Reang (Bru) tribe members who are forced to live in refugee camps on the Tripura/Mizoram border since the ethnic clashes of 1996, Sewa constructed three multi-skill training centers offering specialized training on bamboo crafts and traditional handloom weaving for making marketable local products. Specialized courses in tailoring are being offered as well as remedial education to children in relief camps. Two computer training centers set up in Tripura are running successfully and two more are planned to be set up next year.

Construction of one secondary school is nearing completion at Raga in Kamle district of Arunachal Pradesh, and a multi-purpose skill development center is under construction at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh with support from a benevolent donor, *Sachin Kulkarni*, in the United States. With his support, Sewa has a target to build 100 schools in North-east India.



*Sachin Kulkarni (center) in front of the multi-purpose skill development center at Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh*

In the immediate future, Sewa is poised to expand its footprint in the Northeast by opening more computer training centers, constructing schools, conducting after school tuition centers, and skill training in weaving and bamboo crafts to promote and popularize local skills.

### 4 Swachh-Shikshit-Kushal Kashi (Clean-Educated-Skilled Kashi/Varanasi/Benares)

Kashi, also known as Varanasi, the spiritual capital of India is one of the oldest continually occupied cities in the world, dating back to eleventh century BCE. Under its flagship project -- "Swachh-Shikshit-Kushal Kashi" -- Sewa International focuses on three areas to bring about holistic development in the city and its surroundings. Under *Swachh-Swasth Kashi* (Clean-Healthy) program, Sewa organizes and promotes regular cleanliness drives in line with *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Mission) of the Government of India. This is supplemented by installation of toilets in villages and organizing periodical medical camps. Free medical kits are distributed and replenished at community centers. Under the *Shikshit Kashi* (Educated Kashi) program, Sewa has set up Learning Centers, is providing academic and career guidance to underprivileged students, and distributing school supplies to students -- all aimed at reducing school dropout rates.

programs. Promoting traditional Kashi handlooms, handcrafted with beautiful brocade designs fused with Kutch embroidery, has brought out a unique product range for consumers.



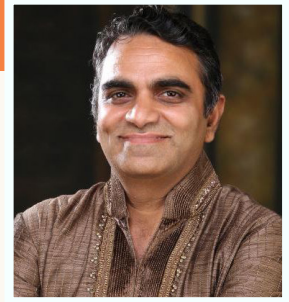
*Participants at a weaving workshop in Varanasi*

Under the *Kushal Kashi* (Skilled Kashi) program, to empower the weaver community and revive the ailing handloom industry, Sewa has set up centers to train handloom weavers and re-skill them with new techniques, designs and technologies, and run Master Training

To market these products, Sewa has helped set up pavilions at exhibitions and helped artisans access niche markets. Twenty-five weavers work regularly with Sewa and ten more will join after training this year.

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Sewa International Chapter Coordinator Vikas Arora says he is the happiest man on Earth. Born and brought up in India, he came to the United States in 2004. Before starting life in the US, Vikas was not involved with any social or volunteer organizations and had not done any social service work.

He happened to become friends with Swadesh Katoch, Director, Disaster Relief and Bhutanese Empowerment Project, who introduced him to Sewa International and took him to a couple of Sewa projects, where he volunteered. In 2008 he realized that though he was in his 30s he had not done much to help anybody. He realized that there are a lot of people who need help and support – from monetary support to emotional help, and from day-to-day support to emergency help. He saw that there were people who needed assistance in going to the doctor or being referred to one. He had a somewhat distant understanding of these matters but since 2008 his life changed as he began to involve himself actively with Sewa work. He is now the Sewa Atlanta Chapter Coordinator.



## THANK YOU DONORS

This #Giving Tuesday, Sewa raised \$ 75,000 towards various projects. A big THANK YOU from Sewa International to all our donors for taking this positive step and contributing this #Giving Tuesday.

### 5 Swachh Urrja (Clean Energy)

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With the aim of providing rural India with access to renewable and reliable energy, Sewa International initiated this project to reach the most inaccessible areas in India. Solar projects have been commissioned at *Krishna Devi Vanavasi Vidyalyaya* at Chitrakoot in Madhya Pradesh, and *RIWATCH Institute* in Arunachal Pradesh -- both meeting the energy requirements of the two centers.

A five-KW solar plant meeting the lighting and drinking water purification requirements of 200 students of the *Vanavasi Sewa Prakalp* has been installed in Odisha. The success of this project led to its replication in six other schools in rural Odisha. The project was executed in collaboration with the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) of India. Innovative concepts like “*Solar Village*” with grid/off-grid plants are being explored.



Solar panels installed at Chitrakoot, Madhya Pradesh

For more information on Sewa projects in India [watch the video](#) OR visit [www.sewainternational.org](http://www.sewainternational.org).

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