

Five mobile health clinics put to action

Isha's sustained aid project for tsunami-hit

NT Bureau

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Jaggi Vasudev, founder of Isha Foundation, Dr S Thanickachalam, head, department of Cardiology, SRMC, and Sudha Raghunathan, carnatic vocalist at the inauguration of the rural mobile health clinic set up by the foundation to help the tsunami-affected.

Five mobile health clinics have been pressed into service Isha Foundation, founded by Sathguru Jaggi Vasudev, as part of its Action for Rural Rejuvenation (ARR) project, for sustainable medical assistance programme in the tsunami affected villages in and around Chennai.

ARR project first launched in Gobichettipalaym in 2003 is a holistic approach through many extension services to improve the health and quality of life in rural poor in Tamilnadu. It aims to reach out to 17 million rural population in 54,000 villages in two phases over the next 15 years. As of now ARR has been implemented in 900 villages across Coimbatore, Erode, Salem and Cuddalore districts of Tamilnadu and in Chamaraj Nagar in Karnataka covering 750,000 villagers.

With a view to overcoming remoteness and cost of medical assistance for rural poor, nine mobile clinics have been servicing 483 villages so far and now five more clinics have been added into the ARR project that would cater to the tsunami affected villages in Chennai and its suburbs.

Each mobile van has a pharmacy unit, a clinical lab, power and water supply with a physician, nurse, qualified assistant and pharmacist that would visit remote villages for delivering medicare free of cost.

Coming together from different background, the volunteers of Isha Foundation were passionate to reach out to rural people for if India had to achieve sustainable development, health, education and other benefits should reach the rural populace, said N Kumar, vice-chairman, The Sanmar Group, which has sponsored a mobile clinic.

Emotional investment by the foundation's volunteers in rural development would lead others too toward fostering growth in rural India, said C R Rajan, director of AMM Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Murugappa group of companies, which donated a mobile clinic.

As a newly-floated pharmaceutical company, Sanofi Aventis Group was aware that unless better health was a reality in rural India, 'we could not build solutions in healthcare,' said Alexandre De Carvahlo, its managing director, after inaugurating the mobile van.

Even as Isha Foundation was striving hard for rejuvenating rural India, 'Times of India group will be with them as part of its social responsibility in reaching out to tsunami affected regions,' said Lakshmi Narayanan, regional head, TOI group.

Genius did not necessarily mean talent, but was really about what must be done as illustrated in ARR projects of Isha Foundation, said Carnatic vocalist Sudha Raghunathan. 'Isha is a fusion of beautiful values that life could offer. And even as 200,000 volunteers worldwide and 400 full-time workers of the Foundation reach out to villages, they need more financial support and workers,' she said.

Malini Thadani, senior vice-president of HSBC, and M R Swaminathan, a US-based philanthropist, donated a mobile clinic each to the ARR project.

ARR projects also include Yoga classes, community games, promotion of herbal gardens among villagers and free computer training for rural children. The multidimensional project has also set-up rural development centres that include a library, computer lab, crafts training and production facilities.

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