

## **Phenomenal generosity of spirit on Sewa Day 2014**

*100,000 donate their time on the International Day of Volunteering*

Sewa Day, the International Day of Volunteering which took place on Sunday 5th October 2014, saw approximately 100,000 people donate their time in 'selfless service' with more than a third of volunteers collecting for food banks up and down the country. Residents in North London awoke to BBC Eastenders star Nitin Ganatra knocking on their door to ask for food donations for Barnet Refugee Services and Homeless Action in Brent. The actor joined a group of young volunteers raising issues about homelessness and hunger by going door-to-door in the local area.

Food poverty in the UK is at a shocking level and is set to get worse, according to new research by Kelloggs\*. It has found that at least 4.7 million Brits could be described as being in food poverty, having no choice but to spend 10 per cent or more of their household income on food and making bad nutritional choices.

Of the 350 projects taking place globally on Sewa Day 2014, more than a third were food banks/food related collection drives, with the largest projects taking place at Asda stores in Feltham and Hounslow, at Sainsbury's in West Hendon, at the Tesco store in Edgware and other locations around the country.

The situation was similar elsewhere in the world with many projects cooking and delivering meals too. In Hong Kong, 1500 meals were delivered to underprivileged and elderly residents in a Sewa Day backed by the Deutsche Bank Food for Life initiative. The Food for All UK project delivered meals to nine homeless shelters in London and surrounding counties.

Other food bank projects included:

- The Women Empowered network, working alongside Asian food stores V&B sons carried out three food collections at stores in Harrow , Wembley and Greenford on behalf of The Trussell Trust.
- In North West London, the local Asda store helped to feed 400 homeless people in the Charing Cross area by hosting a food collection drive and working together with SWAT the (Sikh Welfare Awareness Team) to provide meals.
- In North London, shopping stalls at Sainsbury's in West Hendon collected items that were distributed to Barnet Refugee Services and Homeless Action in Brent.
- In the West Midlands, volunteers collected for the Birmingham Central Foodbank which provides emergency food parcels for people experiencing a temporary financial crisis.
- In New Jersey USA, Sewa Day volunteers prepared bagged lunches for a local food shelter in New Brunswick, NJ.
- In the United Arab Emirates, GEMS World Academy sold 400 boxes to provide 150 workers in the Sharjah Labour Camp with a relief box of staple items.

Sewa Day 2014 clocked up millions of hours of selfless service involving around 100,000 volunteers from

teams in Asia Pacific, North America, USA and Africa. In the UK, people participated in community social action projects in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leicester and Bristol and scores of towns across the country.

Voluntary and community organisations, schools as well as companies, such as Deutsche Bank, Ernst & Young, Royal Bank of Scotland, Asda, Sainsbury's, Tesco and others were involved with projects to build thriving local communities.

Arup Ganguly, chair of Sewa Day, said "It's amazing that so many volunteers have taken up Mahatma Gandhi's saying of 'Be the change that you wish to see in this world' and have become the change under our 2014 motto #IAMTheChange – organising so many projects throughout the UK and the world. With the food bank drives and meal delivery projects, I think that this year we have reached more people than ever before. It's a great way to celebrate Sewa Day's 5th anniversary"

To date Sewa Day volunteers collectively generated well over £16m of added value for Britain. Acts of selfless service fulfilled the key principles of the initiative: to relieve hardship and poverty, to help the environment and to bring a little joy.

For more information, please contact Sanjay Mistry on 07810 368 772/ [sanjay@prlimited.co.uk](mailto:sanjay@prlimited.co.uk)

\* Based on the 'Hard to Swallow: The Facts about Food Poverty' 2013 report by Kellogg's (compiled in association with the Centre for Economics and Business Research).

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