

ALL HANDS MEET
An initiative of the Department of Social Work, University of Delhi

The Department of Social Work (Delhi School of Social Work), University of Delhi (DU), along with its Alumni Association, responded to the second wave of the pandemic by reaching out to those in need during the present crisis of COVID-19. It started as an alumni initiative of the Department. Today, a team of large number of volunteers comprising the Department faculty, alumni and students have come together online and through various social media to reach out to those seeking information about available medical services. Together it was decided to call this campaign **All Hand Meet (AHM)**. Today this campaign has spread over a few states and have volunteers from various organizations, educational institutions and universities.

The team of volunteers maintain database and offer verified leads/information to those who reach out to them and assist the patients and relatives who are affected by the unprecedented health crisis by providing information related to availability of hospital beds, plasma, medicine and oxygen. The work is divided among the team members. Some members collate information available through various sources such as government websites, social media platforms, software developed by other groups/ institutions while others work towards verification of the sourced information which is shared with those who seek assistance. Most of the times the information asked is regarding the availability of hospital beds, vaccine, plasma, testing, treatment, hospitalisation, oxygen and ventilator support, psychiatrist, medical counselling, food services. The outreach strategy is to share about the campaign and the personal numbers by word of mouth and with various groups.

The student volunteers from Masters in Social Work Programme are devoting few hours daily along with their classes and other academic engagements and are joined by faculty members. Members of the campaign also share positive thoughts and videos to generate positive vibrations at large.

There are moments of success and moments of no response. The process is mentally exhausting when after working for hours in collating information the volunteers get no response and are not able to help those who reach them in desperation. Every life saved gives the volunteers the energy to carry on. While addressing the queries of patients and their relatives, the volunteers come across cases which require immediate attention such as small children left alone when

their parents succumbed to the disease or a student having to leave the rented house after testing positive. This is where networking with other institutions and NGOs and resource persons helps the volunteers in extending support.

Voluntary work in such times is unique in its own way as there is no time for planning; no face to face contact and a new experience every day. But the domino effect of youth and civil society organisations coming together is something to feel proud about. The All Hands Meet Campaign has started to expand its horizons by holding talks, music programmes and comedy shows for all. The talk on menstruation and COVID 19 was organised by AHM in collaboration with Hempstreet with the idea to break the myths around menstrual cycle and provide expert advice, as the pandemic has impacted women in varied ways including menstrual issues. AHM is also collaborating with other another projects/ initiative, to extend tele-consultation services by Ayurvedic doctors.

The students of the Department have also independently taken up the initiative to distribute ration to the workers who are unable to support their families, due to the tough times, resulting in their illness or loss of job. They not only are distributing ration, but also trying to make the community aware of the vaccination, precautions to be taken and their entitlements. They are mobilising resources through crowdfunding, to meet the expenses. Such partnerships are contributing to the ongoing efforts towards supporting the people impacted by pandemic. The aim of the campaign is to gradually reach out to remote areas and offer widespread access of correct information and services to people in need.

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