

GNLU students & Alums extend help to the migrant workers stranded in Maharashtra

GNLU launches crowdfunding drive to raise resources to help migrant workers

To rope in other NLUs to convert this into a national movement

Gandhinagar, May 26, 2020: Students and alumni of Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) are helping the migrant workers hailing from Madhya Pradesh and currently stranded in various districts of Maharashtra. The primary objective of this initiative is to ensure the safe home-coming of these workers and their sustenance until they reach their homes.

GNLU Campus has been shut down as a part of the nationwide lockdown and students are now in their hometowns across the country. More than 100 students and alumni of GNLU have come together to provide help to the migrant workers hailing from Madhya Pradesh and currently stranded in the state of Maharashtra (primarily in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Pune, Sangli, Nagpur, Amravati and Nashik districts). These students work in close coordination with the Government of Madhya Pradesh through Zenith Legal Aid Clinic. They coordinate with the migrant workers on one hand and with the Government authorities in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, NGOs & other voluntary organizations on the other. While this is primarily an initiative by GNLU students and alumni, around 30 people from the different walks of life have also volunteered to work in this field.

Speaking on their modus operandi, Abhishek Vyas, fifth-year student said: “We get data (Name and phone numbers of the migrant workers) from the Government of Madhya Pradesh and contact these workers, find out their current location and their destination in Madhya Pradesh. We coordinate with the Maharashtra Government authorities to find out whether these workers are booked on Shramik Special trains. If so, we provide help to these workers in reaching the respective boarding station through local NGO and/or local police authorities. If they are not booked on any train, we track and map the labourers who are not provided with a seat on any train, aggregating their current locations as well as their destination locations to Government so that they could make informed decisions on where and when to ply trains to maximize their impact.”

Another student, Saumya Rawal, said: “In our experience of the last two weeks, the major problem that we have come across is that of hunger. In such cases, we ask migrant workers to approach the nearest grocery store and connect us with the owner over the phone. We request the grocery store owner to give a kit of essential food items of a certain value to the worker and send us a photograph of the items supplied. After ascertaining the actual delivery with the worker, we instantaneously

make payment to the bank account of the grocery store via Google Pay, Paytm or IMPS transaction. We also work with local authorities and local NGOs to ensure medical assistance, where required.”

Dr Saurabh Anand, faculty Coordinator of this initiative said: “To ensure that these students are not constrained by financial resources, we have launched a crowdfunding drive to raise resources a couple of days ago. I am happy that GNLU alumni in India and abroad are positively responding to our appeal by generously contributing to this noble cause.”

Ms Apoorva Patel, Faculty Convener of GNLU Centre for Law and Society, said, “while our teams are at present working for migrant labourers hailing from Madhya Pradesh, some labourers hailing from other states such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha and now stranded in Maharashtra, who came to know from their neighbours about our work, have also approached our volunteers for the similar help.”

GNLU Director Dr Shanthakumar said, “We are indeed proud of our students and alumni doing this noble work. We intend to take his initiative further and convert the same into a national movement by roping in students and alumni of other national law universities as well as premier academic institutions in other fields.”

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