

Dears Sponsors and Well Wishers,

The Gujarat Team wholeheartedly wishes you and your families a Happy New Year! Our wish is that all the darkness, pain, sorrow, and suffering of last year stays in the rearview mirror. And we focus on our path forward through a clean and clear windshield glass visualizing bright, healthy, lockdown free, and joyful days ahead. Allah willing.

For the last 16 years, we have travelled to India, but COVID-19 has made us change our plans. Therefore, our annual Journey to Gujarat will not be undertaken this year. Currently, we are in the process of obtaining updates from the students and families. We will be sharing these with you as we receive them.

Due to the increased infection rates in Gujarat, there has been a delay in opening the hostels to the later part of January 2021 for students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and higher. All other students will continue with online learning.

2020 tested everyone's patience and resilience. The Gujarat Team had its fair share of challenges and stresses in the work we do. There are programs and activities we are presently involved with, which were never in our playbook until COVID hit us! Below is an update.

**Students Provided Shelter in our Hostel**

We currently have 11 students that have been staying at the hostel while it is officially closed. We have provided them with clothing. These students are looked after by hostel staff, some of whom were called back to work for this very purpose. We have also reengaged unemployed teachers to teach these students.



Hostel Students with the Teacher



Hostel Students with the Teacher

### **Continued Economic Fallout Mainly Due to COVID Driven Hardships**

The Gujarat Team continues to be inundated with requests from families finding themselves in dire straits due to loss of jobs and livelihoods. Those who barely lived from paycheque-to-paycheque pre-COVID face many challenges in present times and are unable to provide food or shelter for themselves and their children. Many borrow money from lenders charging exorbitant interest rates and eventually are unable to make the payments. Monsoon rains and other natural disasters have also exacerbated harsh conditions experienced by many poor families. The Gujarat Team has been helping many such families.

Medical emergencies are also driving many families to seek help from us. So far, many life-threatening situations have been averted because of our intervention. We envision increasing demands on us for help for medical emergencies as Gujarat is one of the hot spots in India affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Following are three medical cases that we have been providing assistance.



Medical Case 1 - Anwar Bhai broke his jaw in a rickshaw accident



Medical Case 2 - Minaz Bhai - Body paralyzed due to stroke



Medical Case 3(a) - Amina Bai - Both kidneys are failing



Medical Case 3(b) - Abdul Bhai (Husband) - Cooking and taking care of himself

**English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes – some good news!**

We are pleased to report that we have now expanded the ESL program to include Malia Hatina teachers and students who have already graduated from high school. Malia Hatina is in an area where English is not much in use. There are no English programs on television or radio, and English newspapers are not easily accessible. English is not widely spoken. Many of the Girnar School teachers lack confidence in communicating in English even though they are well educated and teach higher grades.

The Principal and the Board requested the Gujarat Team start a program whereby volunteers are paired with either teachers or students. They converse in English for

45 to 60 minutes weekly via WhatsApp. It has been well received by the teachers and students alike, and within a few weeks, good progress has been made.

This has been a monumental task that involves 13 teachers and 26 students taught by 15 volunteers. We appreciate the time and effort offered by many volunteers from across Canada and the USA.



Online Teaching by Gujrat Journey Members

Our work in Gujarat has been possible due to Divine Grace, many generous and kindhearted donors and our very hardworking team members and partners in

Gujarat, Canada, and the USA. With your continued support and generosity, we will continue to assist our brothers and sisters and help them get through and beyond this Pandemic!

**P.S. We are looking for experienced teachers interested in volunteering. If you have the skills and are interested then [please click this link to email Razia.](#)**

The Gujarat Team.