ItsRainingRaincoats:

Migrant Worker Welfare and Medical Support

ordinary setting, rain or shine, you'll probably see them working on the roads, construction sites or even resting under a residential block. There is a probability that they have helped build the roof above your head as you're reading this but yet, we're so often caught up with our own lives, that unintentionally



Our migrant friends receiving care packs from donors Image source: ItsRainingRaincoats Facebook

grow oblivious to their presence.

Our migrant community comprises about one-fifth of Singapore's population and also forming a substantial and indispensable portion of the nation's workforce. Despite this, they do not often always have people to look out for them. With the pandemic locking in its stay since early 2020 and community restrictions changing in accordance with the situation, not much has changed for our migrant friends who are living in dormitories. Largely confined to their dormitories, migrant friends whom we have spoken to have shared the increasing feeling of isolation and despair among themselves and how their daily routine see them heading to work and straight back to their living quarters after.

Unfortunately, the pandemic had also shone a spotlight on their poor living conditions, lack of access to health care, unpaid salaries and more. Ironically, these issues have always been there.

Working the grounds since 2015, ItsRainingRaincoats, founded by Harvard educated lawyer Ms. Dipa Swaminathan, was formed with an intention to improve the lives of our migrant friends by building bridges to strengthen their integration into our broader community. The yellow raincoat in the logo symbolises the protection that the organisation can provide our migrant friends from their metaphorical thunderstorms.

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With over a thousand volunteers to date, the team has been constantly evolving to mould the groundorganisation into a more holistic avenue where our migrant friends can readily get assistance from, exchange values, interests and learnings with one another. A few successful initiatives include, "Starbucks

Initiative" — a year-round initiative where volunteers pick up unsold food from nearly 50 Starbucks outlets weekly and distribute them to our migrant friends, "SG Flyer Rides" — where locals donated their SingapoRediscover vouchers so that our migrant friends can have an opportunity to get on the Singapore Flyer and 'MAD Wish' — a skill-up virtual English programme where the migrant community can learn basic, conversational English from our volunteers.

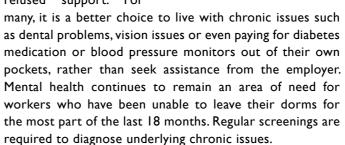
Given all the available resources within reach, it still takes more than just an organisation and volunteers to bring about consistent support and positive changes to the lives of our easily-contented migrant friends. It is known that most of them sacrifice their own comfort just to earn money and bring food to the table for themselves and their loved ones. At times, they are forced to make silent sacrifices like neglecting their own health as they fear having to spend money at the expense of the well-being of their families.

> Choosing a day off or throwing a medical leave may not be a given privilege for some and most times, our migrant friends do

> > not have a choice to decide. For our migrant friends, their employers are responsible for ensuring they are properly taken care of. More critically, it is whether they are given adequate health care services and if they being well-informed of their healthcare privileges.

ItsRainingRaincoats volunteer being part of an initiative | Image source ItsRainingRaincoats Facebook

Prolonged hours under the sun or rainy conditions seem conditions they are immune to and braving them is part and parcel of their job. A common trend for them seems to be the hesitance in bringing up a medical problem with an employer, for fear of being viewed burdensome employers or to being historically refused support. For



We noticed that many migrant workers were silently suffering with dental problems, excruciating tooth aches, broken glasses, headaches etc. Dental work and eyecare are items that are typically not included in insurance claims and it is very hard for migrant workers to afford to take care of such problems for themselves. Migrant workers are also petrified of voicing such matters with their employers



ItsRainingRaincoat's Founder, Dipa Swaminathan, leading the 'Starbucks Initiative' | Image source: The Straits Times

of having work permits cancelled, and choose to suffer silently instead. Realising this gap, we have stepped up to offer them help with dental and vision problems. We have successfully galvanised not just plenty of volunteers, but also dental clinics and optometrists have come forward to support us in supporting our migrant brothers. Since these programmes launched,

over a hundred workers have sought help, which is telling on the real need to start including such care into their

Such programmes are not possible without the help of many medical professionals who have come forward to support migrant workers in need. While plans are in motion to provide better access to medical care to migrant workers on a larger scale which will address many of these concerns, we believe every individual can make a difference.

If you would like to support ItsRainingRaincoats in providing help to the migrant workers, do write in to us at itsrainingraincoats@gmail.com

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Remembering Dr Richard Geeves (1925 - 2020)

Dr Geeves, a great friend learnt this while researching the history of the College Sydney Morning Herald on delivered by Member of Parliament, Mr Julian Lessner on 15th March 2021.



Dr Geeves was a GP in Tasmania and New South College Mirror in 2003, Dr



