

# Sevaks bring ray of hope to rural Gujaratis

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Vadodara:** This group of 31 people from rural Gujarat call themselves 'Sevaks' named after a pilot project of the same name, which is making a difference to the lives of over 20,000 villagers in 26 villages of Gujarat.

A collaboration between Vadodara-based NGO Bhartiya Sewa Samaj and three doctors from the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPIO), the project is helping villagers in early detection of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and hypertension and their monitoring and treatment.

On Sunday, 26 volunteers—one each from the 26 districts of Gujarat—and six coordinators met two doctors of AAPIO, Thakor G Patel

and Ranjeeta Misra to give their annual report of data collection and intervention in the city. The report showed that a large number of patients did not even know they were harbouring such life-threatening conditions in their body.

"Sevak project is an excellent model for screening dis-

## FIGHTING LIFESTYLE DISEASES

eases and lifestyle modification in rural India. Such a model can be replicated anywhere and can help alleviate the shortage of doctors for early identification of diseases and subsequent education and monitoring. In addition, rural population would also develop awareness

about their health and would stay on jobs by staying healthy," said Dr Patel, a former US Navy veteran.

The project also includes a demographic survey of the rural population with parameters like health, education, access to basic amenities and hygienic conditions, which can help policy makers to make direct and immediate intervention for improving the quality of life in these villages.

The 'sevaks' were trained by the doctors to take readings of BP and recognize symptoms of diabetes by reaching out to every resident of their village. They are not allowed to make any prescription or hand out drugs. The volunteers are paid stipends from the donations that Dr Patel raises in US.