HOW TO FORM YOUR #COVIDSQUAD?

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Prepared for: *Mobilisers : people who are inclined to lead action, who have worked in high-stress environments in the past, who have access to and influence over youth groups and can develop trust within your community*

WHAT?
A #CovidSquad is a small, focused, working group of volunteers who use social media to resolve emergency requests laid forth by friends and family members of affected patients.

WHY?
Due to the cataclysmic failure of the government to curb the spread of Covid in India and to set up centralised and effective systems in place for such a spike, there's an acute shortage of oxygen, ventilators, ICU beds, medicines etc. and a booming black market thoroughly exploiting the marginalised. People have resorted to social media to find leads to get care for their loved ones; in most cases, it's a matter of life and death.

However, social media efforts have been incoherent and slow due to rampant misinformation, disorganisation and outdated data in circulation.

Until a centralised, effective end-to-end ticket system exists in the capacity with which it can take the current load of cases, a #CovidSquad gives volunteers a chance at forming a microcosm of this system and provides verified, quality leads for a small but significant number of emergency requests.

WHO?
A #CovidSquad could consist of 8 people in 3 teams:

1. Sourcing Team
A team of **2 volunteers**- a **Leader** (ideally, you!) who is preferably active on social media and has influence to put out open calls to receive emergency requests and a **Coordinator** to handle the tracker. The leader is responsible to relay the request, keep track of the progress, relay the lead back to the person who raised it and resolve the request. The coordinator is responsible for monitoring the whole activity through a simple excel tracker. Added bonus if the Coordinator is your tech-support (someone who is well versed in MS Excel) so that excel modification, data organisation and automation through code can be done as you go along.

2. Data Team
A team of **3 volunteers as Leads**- preferably those who are well versed with social media to search and sort through enormous amounts of data out there - largely on twitter, covid-resource databases and instagram- and identify the relevant leads to pass it along for verification.
Each lead to have 4-5 volunteers managed by them.

3. Verification Team
A team of **3 volunteers as Leads**- preferably those who have good social skills as this involves calling the leads passed on by the data team, procuring detailed information to avoid scammers and speaking with people in stressful environments until you get a confirmation.
Each lead to have 4-5 volunteers managed by them.

HOW?

The simple **9-step process** is as follows:

1. Sourcing team Leader puts out an open call for emergency requests in required format and upon receiving, passes it on to the Coordinator.
2. Sourcing team Coordinator registers the request on the tracker.
3. Verification lead takes up the said request by marking his/her/their name against it on the tracker.
4. Data lead picks up the request and works with subgroup of volunteers and passes on information to Verification lead.
5. Verification lead works with subgroup of volunteers and verifies the data.
6. Verification lead passes along the qualified leads to the Sourcing team.
7. Sourcing team relays the qualified leads to those who raised the emergency requests and monitors the status.
8. Sourcing team marks the status on the tracker.
9. Sourcing team also shares the curated information publicly by stating who verified it with timestamp so that others can also make use of it.

To note:

- The #CovidSquad works on a **trust cycle.** Please note that the Leader in the Sourcing team is the public facing team of your squad and is someone who will be responsible for the work of the whole squad. Please ensure all volunteers are sincere and trustworthy.
- Access the **#CovidSquad Tracker- Template here** : feel free to replicate or improvise according to your needs.
- The **number of volunteers** specified are a tried and tested number for a Leader with a capacity of 10 full hours a day. In case you have more capacity, feel free to experiment with more than a squad of just 8.
- In cases of high volume of requests, **pairing Verification and Data leads** are useful. Those 2 can work together to resolve request after request.
- Doing a **daily efficacy check** is useful to see what's working and what's not and how best to improvise.
- Recognise that everyone's capacity is different at different points of the day and **mental health check-ins** are vital. A bunch of volunteers who are strangers off the internet, coming together in a high-stress working environment, engaging in tasks that one isn't trained for, with death and distress all around will take a toll on mental health. Ensure to take compulsory breaks and do what you love. Tip: A 15min video call with everyone works wonders :)

To remember:

The Talmud states,
"Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.
Do justly, now.
Love mercy, now.
Walk humbly, now.
You are not obligated to complete the work,
but neither are you free to abandon it."