

## Present situation of Kerala after the Flood

The recent floods in Kerala caused absolute devastation and massive loss of life and infrastructural damages. Kerala is experiencing great flood in different districts such as Kannur, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Malappuram, Palakkad, Trissur, Ernakulam, Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta. The flood affected approximately 4 million people in Kerala. As per the preliminary estimate there was Rs. 4,441 Cr losses to the government following the damage to roads and bridges. The flooding has affected hundreds of villages, destroyed an estimated 10,000 km of roads. At least 220 bridges have been damaged and 59 were still under water.



According to National Disaster Management Authority (**NDMA**) there were more than 38000 People have been rescued by different agencies. Over 4,000 relief camps have been opened at various locations to accommodate the flood victims. It is estimated that 1,028,073 people have found shelter in such camps. More than 373 people lost their lives and almost 17,343 houses are damaged due to flood and landslides. Around 8,46,680 people have become homeless by devastating flood in Kerala.



The Departments of Food and Public Distribution (**DFPD**) have provided 50,000 million of food grains to the flood affected regions in Kerala. However it is not sufficient to meet the worsening conditions. It is noticed that 1098 Schools have been closed and are being used as flood shelters in ten districts of Kerala. A number of water treatment plants were forced to cease pumping water, resulting in poor access to clean water, especially in northern districts of the region.

The situation in Kerala's Wayanad district is particularly grim due to the floods in the state. Many villages in the area are completely submerged in water and rescue and relief operation have been met with many hurdles due to poor connectivity and accessibility. The Adivasi population in the region is close to 15 percent and they stay in 'urus' which are isolated and difficult to access. Still, some of them have been rescued while efforts are being made to reach the others. Small landslides are also regularly happening across the region, especially around Vythiri.

Many hospitals cancelled routine operations and OPD on Aug. 16<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> to cope with a surge in patients from neighbouring hospitals that were waterlogged amid severe staff shortage being reported from these hospitals. Kochi hospitals stopped surgery, OPD due to floods.

Kochi International Airport, India's fourth busiest in terms of international traffic, and the busiest in the state suspended all operations until 26<sup>th</sup> August, following runway flooding. Tourists have been dissuaded or banned from some districts due to safety concerns. The Kochi Metro closed briefly on August 16, and has since begun offering free service to aid those affected by the flooding.

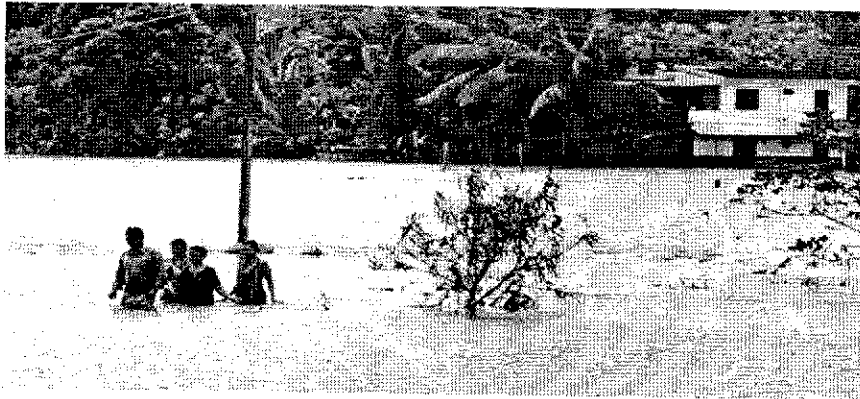
Due to heavy rain and rising water levels the southern railway has suspended train services on Thiruvananthapuram-Kottayam-Ernakulam and Ernakulam-Shoranur-Palakkad sections. The Government has cancelled Onam celebrations, the allocated funds for which have been reallocated to relief efforts.

The biggest challenges immediately ahead are cleaning of the flood-hit houses, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of damaged houses and prevention of water-borne diseases, etc. There is a requirement for different medicines.

**"I wish the flood had taken my life"**. I have lost everything I had. My house is damaged. I have no money to repair it. If the government does not help me repair it, I don't know where I will go," says Sarojini *amma*, who is languishing in a relief camp in Alangad near Aluva in Ernakulam district.

The 65-year-old woman was brought to the relief camp after floodwaters from the Periyar River ravaged her single-room house in Karumalloor. Sarojini, a childless widow, sells fish to make a living. She says she doesn't have anything other than the dress she is wearing left to see her life through.

There are hundreds of thousands of such people languishing in relief camps across Kerala, unable to imagine how they will rebuild their lives.



The people who lost their houses are worried about where they will go after the relief camps are closed. A majority of them have been accommodated in schools and colleges, which will re-open after the Onam holidays if the monsoon does not unleash a fresh wave of fury. The Kerala government has not made any arrangements yet to accommodate people who have lost their houses.

If people are allowed to return home without this cleaning and sanitizing process, Kerala may face yet another disaster - this time in the form of communicable diseases and an epidemic. There are also a chance of breakout of malaria, diarrhea and leptospirosis, which are the most common diseases triggered by floods. It points out that flood-affected people are also likely to suffer psychological problems. We need to advise local authorities to conduct special camps for them wherever necessary.

#### Conclusion

As the victims have to be constantly motivated towards rehabilitation activity, it is vital that a team of community organizers work constantly with the victims. Improvements are needed in the characterization of all hazards because there are inconsistencies in the amount and quality of data available for each hazard. A model methodology for risk assessment for all hazards should be established for the development of victims in Kerala.

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