

KERALA FLOOD 2018

INTERVENTION REPORT

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK, NIRMALA NIKETAN MUMBAI



INTERVENTION IN COLLABORATION WITH:
**KOTTAPURAM INTEGRATED
DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY**

Prepared by
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Introduction

The state of Kerala faced one among the most terrific disasters ever of its time in the year 2018 during the month of August. The showering clouds were no more beautiful or romantic after two days. Slowly the nature who was a provider, started replying to the mankind for all the mistakes and harm they have done to her. She was voracious and almost took the face of a predator. Entire mankind, no matter rich or poor, no matter what your religion is, no matter what was your gender, were shattered and became helpless in front of the rising water levels. What the state saw in the following days was something unusual. The neighborhood culture in the state showed its strength once again. The government machineries, public administration, police, army and the fishermen community and whoever possible came out to help their brethren in distress. Relief camps were set up in different high altitude areas. People were accommodated in the houses which was at a higher altitude. Help flowed in the form of cash and kind to help the God's Own Country to recover from her trashes. Volunteers from all over the state came forward to collect and supply relief materials to the people in camps. Churches, mosques and temples offered space irrespective of their religious differences. People forgot their politics and all other compartmentalization when nature showed its terrific phase. Colleges were one of the most important suppliers of volunteers for relief work, after the youth wings of the political parties.

College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan



College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan is a one among the pioneer institutes of social work in the country. From its origin in 1956, it has always been upholding its passion and charisma of being with the people in distress. Offering Bachelors, Masters and PhD courses in Social Work, College has been grown over these 64 years as a national destination for social work education. Disaster management is one among the very important aspects of the institute since its inception.



The college not only has a paper in its Master's level but also has shown willingness to intervene in major disasters which have happened across the country. College has extended its helping hand during Uttarakhand Floods, Tamilnadu Tsunami and various other natural disasters and now recently the institute has offered its helping hand in the flood affected areas of Kerala.

Three Phased Intervention

College of Social Work Nirmala Niketan, has a very good history in providing extremely competent social workers to the country. With its alumni all over the country, the college has a very good access in almost all the states of the sub-continent. In the recent Kerala Floods, the institute collaborated with KIDS (Kottapuram Integrated Development Society) a Non- Profit organization working in the districts of Trissur, Ernakulam and Palakkad. From the day flood waters have affected the stretch of Kerala, KIDS has been completely involved in the flood relief activities in the affected areas of Kottapuram and nearby villages.



KIDS had ample number of volunteers from different parts of Kerala for the post disaster intervention. Volunteers helped the people in cleaning of houses, wells and other areas which was covered by mud which the flood water brought with it. The administrative building of Kottapuram Integrated Development Society became one among the relief camps in the area since it was not affected by the flood waters and it provided shelter and food for around 4000 people in the nearby villagers whose homes were submerged under the water. The volunteers and the staff of KIDS started concentrating solely in flood relief by keeping aside their activities for time being. The staff members need to be appreciated since majority of the staff (almost all women) were either affected by the flood directly or were accommodating the relatives at their home in large numbers and was also in the field simultaneously.

First Phase of Intervention

From 24th August 2018 to 31st August 2018 a group of 11 members including a student volunteer from College of Social Work took up the cleaning activities of Gothuruthu, Kurumbathuruthu areas which badly bore the scars of torrential rain and flood water. Fr Paul the Director of KIDS Fr. Sibin Francis Kallara, the Assistant Director of KIDS and Sr. Mercy Thomas the Administrator of KIDS guided us throughout the cleaning activities. The cleaning activities mainly included cleaning of the wells, houses, and removal of debris and sediments from the surroundings. As the days passed the group grew from 10-18 so it divided itself into smaller groups consisting of 4 members. The total number of wells cleaned is 50. The people also extended their support and help in carrying out the cleaning activities. 50 wells and 15 houses and its surroundings were cleansed. The people of the locality made all the arrangements for carrying out the cleaning activities and also volunteered through out to take up cleaning activities

Second Phase of Intervention



It was during that period when the volunteers including one student volunteer from Nirmala Niketan were helping the population in cleaning their wells and houses that KIDS realized the need to measure the depth of the disaster in the Panchayat of Puthanvelikkara and the nearby villages so that they can plan long term interventions. College of Social Work, with its very experienced research unit, helped the organization in developing a tool for the survey and immediately a team of 16 members was formed which included students and one faculty in charge, all of them good at handling the language and moved to Kerala (Kottapuram) with the relief materials.



The team reached Kottapuram on 2nd September 2018 and the very next day started the work in the area. The team was divided into different groups and with the help of animators of KIDS, started the survey in different wards of Puthanvelikkara Panchayat. The team was also assisted by students from different nearby colleges which made the work much easier.

The team, covered almost 3500 families in the survey. Moving around in the villages and speaking to the people about the depth of losses they faced not only enriched the data collected, but also gave an experience of catharsis to the people who have experienced the wrath of the nature.



Divided into various small teams students collected data and ensured that they spend some time with the families who required a venting out and a listening ear. It was a heart lightening experience for the people and also a great learning experience for the students as a crisis intervention. Students from College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan also helped Loyola College Chennai in organizing Focus Group Discussion with women in the area to understand their perspective on disaster as well as an art therapy session with the children in the nearby areas in order to help them come out of the trauma of the disaster. Students were a really great help for the college since the institute sent students who could handle Malayalam language really well, which was a barrier for the students from Loyola College where majority were Tamil speaking students. Students also helped in a sample survey done by UN to assess the depth of the disaster.

Third phase of Intervention

Kottapuram Integrated Development Society (KIDS) was into providing relief and rehabilitation to the people affected by the natural disaster. The agency understood that living condition of most of the poor people affected by flood was really pathetic. Most of them who had houses which were more than 10 years old were severely affected since the flood water has damaged the entire structure of the house. These homes were no more in a position to live in. KIDS recognized that help should be provided in demolishing and reconstructing these houses especially for people who are poor and have no economic stability to afford a reconstruction of their home.



College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan intervened in the situation. Another team of 16 members including one faculty was arranged by the college for the second phase of intervention with relief materials which was collected by the college from Mumbai. The team attended the National Conference on Disaster Management by Bharatmata College in Aluva, Kerala on 2nd and 3rd of November and started work in KIDS on 4th November for their second phase of intervention. The team helped KIDS as a labor force in demolishing and constructing dilapidated houses of people who are from a lower socio – economic background.

The work started with the team helping in the construction of a toilet which belonged to the house where there was only a widow and her daughter resided. Flood waters damaged the existing toilet and the roof of the toilet fell down damaging the entire floor of the toilet. The team had to remove the debris, demolish the damaged structure and help in building the new one. Students completed the work in one day and helped the construction workers by digging the basement for the toilet.

After the work of the toilet the students had the task of digging the basement for a new 600 square feet house. The house belonged to a poor family and was damaged completely by the flood waters. The task required intense labor since the location was such that there were no roads through which heavy vehicles could reach. All the works which are otherwise done by the JCB's were done manually by the students. The big stones which were used in construction of the house, especially the basements were unloaded at a distance of 200 meters from the location and the students carried the same to the construction site.

Construction of the basement of another new house was also a task done by the students. Arranging the correct stones for the work and carrying the same to the construction site and so on were done by the students manually. The location of the house which did not allow heavy vehicles to reach the work site also made the work difficult.



Demolition was also an important work which was very labor intensive and requires a lot of expenditure. The houses which were severely affected and were not in the condition to live in were to be demolished. The economically backward communities were not able to afford the same because the work requires a lot of labor and risk involved in it. People used to charge high amount for this work. Team from College of Social Work also helped in demolishing a house which was not in a condition to dwell in. ittook a lot of effort and skill from the team's side because due to floods there were no required equipment in the nearby households and the team had to make use of whatever was available to them in the immediate surroundings.it was also important to protect the wall from collapsing which was very close to this dilapidated building.

From the Team Members

Ms. Antara Mukherjee
MSW Student

Working in Kerala was an experience that cannot be expressed in mere words. We experienced joy, spontaneity, responsibility and sheer satisfaction in learning to do a task we had no knowledge about. For a lay man, constructing house foundations may sound tedious and not something you expect a social worker to do. But I'd say this is exactly where a budding social worker must be behind their work, such grass root level experience helped us to understand the people better. Those 10 days taught us more than a lot of our field work days combined. We realized in order to understand the needs of the people, we must primarily be with the people as a part of their lives, as one cannot preach what they do not practice.

With the relief team in Kerala was a beautiful experience which has helped me look at life with a new found value and respect. It taught me that life isn't solely about the grand achievements we attempt to make, but those numerous smiles we share. I thank KIDS and NN to provide us with such a great opportunity and hope to see their support for similar endeavours in future.

Ms. Meena Tigga
MSW Student

02It was an enriching and humbling experience in Kerala to be there after the floods and help people rebuild their homes. While the well off people had got their lives back on track at the time we went, the poor people were still struggling, their houses were in shambles and they were living in makeshift homes. The smile of joy on the woman's face of the first foundation that we dug when the foundation stone was laid was the best reward. Laying of the foundation meant the release of money from the government for building the house. Another unforgettable memory was the artist whose house had collapsed and his artwork was inside. He did not want the house touched because of this and we dug a foundation behind the original house. His resilience and his artistic ingenuity in building a two-storey makeshift tent with innovative shelves and other requirements was inspiring. It was also great to be featured in the media so that it inspired the local people to join in this effort of joining together to help those who were still struggling. It was hard work.

carrying stones and digging and suffering minor injuries in the bargain but we also had fun while working together and staying together and enjoying the hospitality of our host as well as the people of Kerala, eating paramporis, appams, puttu and other delicacies and enjoying the fresh verdant nature, especially the rivers and waterfalls. We are grateful to KIDS organization for giving us this opportunity.

Ms. Aqsa Chiplunkar
MSW Student

I would say that because of this opportunity I learn more about my self, My hidden potentials , My determination towards Work. And most important 'Help' doesn't need particular language or a identity it needs sensitivity and respect towards diversities.

Ms. Navya Venugopal
BSW student

I was a part of both the relief work that happened in Kerala. Both had different impact on the students who had attended it and for the people we were working for. The first visit was to take surveys where the students would go to houses that were effected by the flood. The experience bought a great impact on me. Even after loosing a lot of their asset the people were still confident, did not loose their hope, yes they cried while talking because they had lost is what they have treasured, but inside their will to built it again was high They were happy when they saw new faces around them, because they were free to speak their heart out. Their sorrows, their difficulties that they had bottled up inside them, just because they thought if they loose themselves their family will be effected. Other than this the students who were from completely different classes and background joined together and had just one mission in their mind to help as many people as possible, and nothing else. We also shared our experience with each other. The smallest change that we bought in them, even if it is to make them smile, is a great achievement in our lives. The second visit had a different agenda all together. We worked together in great coordination to build houses for the people. We were injured, in pain and tired but never complained about the work. The strong will power to complete the reason why were in Kerala never let us stop from working. This time the bunch of students were different we were from students from different places, different background, culture, but our team work never made anyone think that we were different from each other. The efforts each one of us had put were the same. The over all experience is something that I would want to keep close to my heart. I myself had bought a lot of change in myself even if it is just to listen to the people and letting them talk.

Mr. Bibin Chacko

MSW Student

Wide campus, laughter everywhere, colorful programmes, student loving faculties have certainly been great expressions of a great college. But the catastrophe that shook God's own country and having played our role in the lives of the flood affected people, established beyond doubts that even the soiled clothes, reckless actions and the foul stench of the filth and dirt have better platforms for testing the social orientation and be in the 'University of life'.

It is needless to say that during those many days of being with the shattered people of Kerala, it was an extraordinary experience of living out the mission of our college. We were with the little ones of humanity, traumatized by the unexpected tragedy caused by the flood. All that help and physical labor we extended to the unknown and unfamiliar people of different creed and caste, we could really feel that we as NN students living out its vision and mission in concrete life situations. Hats off and heartfelt thanks to all those ventured to help us in this endeavor.

Ms. Swapna Mathew

BSW Student

It was a golden opportunity that I have received to be with the people for the relief works who have affected the flood in Kerala. It was a sudden tragedy for everyone. There was no difference between poor & the rich. The disasters have brought every one equal level. We have offered our services for 10 days through KIDS organization to kottapuram dioceses'.

The chance was given by Nirmalaniketan College of Social Work. It was a UN forgettable days. When I decided to go to Kerala I had no idea what am I going to do for the people, I had the great desire to have an experience of the people who are in need of someone to listen to them. As a BSW 2nd year student it was my Golden opportunity to be with the people who are affected by the disaster, & to listen to their heart breaking experience of disaster.

Mr. Albin Thomas
Accompanying Faculty

Teaching in a social work institute always brings bunch of experiences and memories. Being in a disaster intervention team by the institute was a great opportunity to have an on - field experience of theoretical aspects. Facilitating the learning of the students in a critical condition like a disaster was a challenge. the Cooperation of the students who showed immense maturity in handling the situations and constant support from the institution and colleagues helped me as a teacher in accomplishing the responsibilities assigned to me in the field. It was a great experience watching the young learners portraying emotional maturity and being concerned not only about the survey forms but also dedicating their time for the stories of the people. Cooperation and support of KIDS (Kottapuram Integrated Development Society) is to be sincerely appreciated. Right from converting their space as a relief camp and serving food to thousands of people to providing accommodation and support to our team, KIDS portrayed the professional rigor of an organisation interested in the welfare of the people. Thanking the institute and management for the learning experience.

From KIDS



KOTTAPURAM INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (KIDS)

(DIOCESE OF KOTTAPURAM)

(Regd No. 64/1988 under T.C.L.S.C.R. Act 12/1956)

KIDS CAMPUS, KOTTAPURAM - 680 667, KODUNGALLUR, THRISSUR DIST., KERALA, INDIA.

President

Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Karikkassery
(Bishop of Kottapuram)

Secretary

Rev. Dr. Nixon Kattassery
(Diocesan Director for Social Action)

KIDS/floodkerala/18/58

12 September, 2018

To,
The Head of the Department,
Master of Social Work
Nirmala Nikethan.

Dear Sir,

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

We, Kottapuram Integrated Development Society (KIDS) express our heartfelt gratitude and sincere thanks to you and your team for sending the students from your Social Work Department to give support and consolation to the flood affected victims of the Kerala Floods 2018 in the Kottapuram area especially in the islands of Kurumbathuruthu. We really appreciate your timely intervention and the attitude of empathy that you have channelized through your students. We hope to have your support in future too.

With warm regards,

Sincerely yours,



Fr. Paul Thomas Kalathil
Executive Director

Conclusion

India, with its geographical diversity across its area, faces different kinds of disasters every year. There are states which face flood, drought, cyclones and similar types of disasters every year. College of Social Work understood this need of intervening in various disaster affected areas and has been proactive in various occasions when the country faced severe destruction due to the wrath of the nature.

In 2018 it was the Kerala floods which the college took up for intervention and it gave a holistic intervention towards the issue. The college not only gathered relief materials and sent to Kerala, it also tapped the monetary resource through its contact all over the country and provided adequate amount of money to support the agency directly involving in affected area. When identified that the monetary and material benefits are not enough and they need human resource to conduct baseline study and other interventions in the area, the college also prepared teams of students under a faculty and supported and guided them in their interventions and works in the flood affected areas of the state. College has once again showed the nation that their success lie in the direct grass root intervention and that still remains the legacy of the institution no matter it is academics or an emergency situation like a disaster. In this venture College of Social Work is indebted to KIDS (Kottapuram Integrated Development Society), Kottapuram, for their massive support and arrangements they have provided to the relief team and making them feel at home. We appreciate and acknowledge your dedication you have shown to the people in distress.