

## Rains and Floods Devastate Kerala: Sewa Pitches in to Help



Torrential monsoon rains in the South Indian state of Kerala led to unprecedented flood damage bringing the entire state under water. The biggest calamity over the past century has left the people of Kerala in a state of shock, with estimated losses of over \$3 billion.

It will take years, may be a decade, to recover from the material losses -- but the trauma caused to victims of the flood calamity will take much longer to heal. While some lost all their life's savings and possessions, a few lost their kith and kin. Some unfortunate ones lost their entire family, leaving them bereft and alone. Over 370 people lost their lives, and a million people are

displaced. Rains and floods resulted in 221 collapsed bridges, 537 landslides, and damaged over 6,000 miles of road. 57,000 hectares of crop were destroyed, affecting over 260,000 farmers.

Support is pouring in from across the globe – both financially and materially. Sewa International, for its part, has also been working in the rescue and relief operations in collaboration with its India partner, Sevabharathi Keralam. Sewa has set a target of raising \$1 million, of which \$250,000 has already been raised. Apart from releasing a grant of \$50,000 towards immediate rescue and relief operations, Sewa volunteers set up and monitored a 24x7 US hotline number, while a complementary round the clock help desk was set-up in Thrissur district with constant communication with the US counterpart.

**Contd. on Page 3**

## Executive's Corner

*Dear Sewa Supporter,*

As we know "Helping Humanity in distress" is one of the main mission of Sewa International. Time and again our organization will rise to mitigate the challenges created by natural disasters throughout the world. We are fortunate to have the generous donors and selfless volunteers to respond to the urgent needs of natural disaster.

We are completing one year of the unfortunate event of "Hurricane Harvey" and tireless efforts of our volunteers, generous donations of our donors and grant making institutions, we could make the difference on ground with the affected community.

Again in this August, we were faced with the task of responding to the unprecedented calamity created by floods both in Kerala and Karnataka, two South Indian states, due to very heavy monsoon rains. Our intrepid team, led by Swadesh Katoch, Director, Disaster Relief, quickly stepped in, setting up 24-hour hotlines, establishing communication with Sevabharathi Keralam - our partner organization in Kerala, Youth for Seva, - our partner organization in Karnataka, engaging the Sewa leadership and media teams to set up the necessary mechanisms for raising and receiving flood-relief funds, and channeling it to the on-the-ground volunteers and rescue teams. The rains have begun tapering, and the

initial rescue phase is about to be wound up, but the relief phase, which will last for the next three to four months, and the rehabilitation phase, which could last three to four years, will demand our attention and continued support, and I therefore ask you – each Sewa supporter, volunteer, member – to share the news and reports we generate on your personal social media pages – Facebook, Twitter, etc. – because, in these times, our best publicity and communication happens via social media, and we need to spread the word both of the good work that our volunteer teams are doing as well as the urgent need to raise money to support their efforts, as we seek to bring some normalcy to the lives of the hundreds of thousands affected by the floods. We have a target of raising one million dollars, and your help and support will be much appreciated.

Please read this newsletter carefully, share it with your friends and family, and please, don't be shy about asking for money to support the relief and rehabilitation of people in these flood-affected areas.



**Venkat Santhanaraman**  
Vice President, Finance



## Rains and Mudslides Ravage Picturesque Kodagu



The South-west monsoon paralyzed 11 districts and wreaked havoc in six of the 30 districts in Karnataka, India. Several districts of coastal and Malnad regions of the state faced the brunt of incessant rains. As per latest reports 161 people were killed, 2,200 homes damaged, and over 350,000 affected.

Over 1,000 rescue team members from the army, navy, fire, and civil defense department evacuated more than 5,000 people and housed them in 51 relief camps. Kodagu, located on the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats was one of the most affected regions. The five-member Sewa International team from Bengaluru, led by Jayant Bhat, visited Kodagu for distribution of relief supplies and to assess the damage in the area.

Relief supplies were distributed at Madenadu village in interior Kodagu, 14 miles from Madikeri city. The team distributed 1,200 sanitary napkins, inner-wear for women, and T-shirts and shorts for men, as well as basic toiletries. Landslides have brought down power lines and telephone lines, putting many parts of Kodagu in the dark and leaving people with no way to communicate. Essential food items are running out with supply trucks stuck on the roads because of landslides, and shops unable to replenish supplies. After a three-week-long break, schools have reopened in some areas. The power supply board is working hard repairing and laying fresh power supply lines. The municipal corporations are doing their best clearing landslides, debris and reconnecting the roads, but it would take a while before normalcy is restored. At present, the authorities have restricted private organizations and nonprofits from distributing any relief material directly to the victims. These have to be deposited at the office of the District Collector and distributed based on their recommendation.

### Sewa International Partners in USA



Kannada Sangha of Arizona



Tri Valley Kannada Sangha



Kannada Koota Northern California



Portland Kannada Koota

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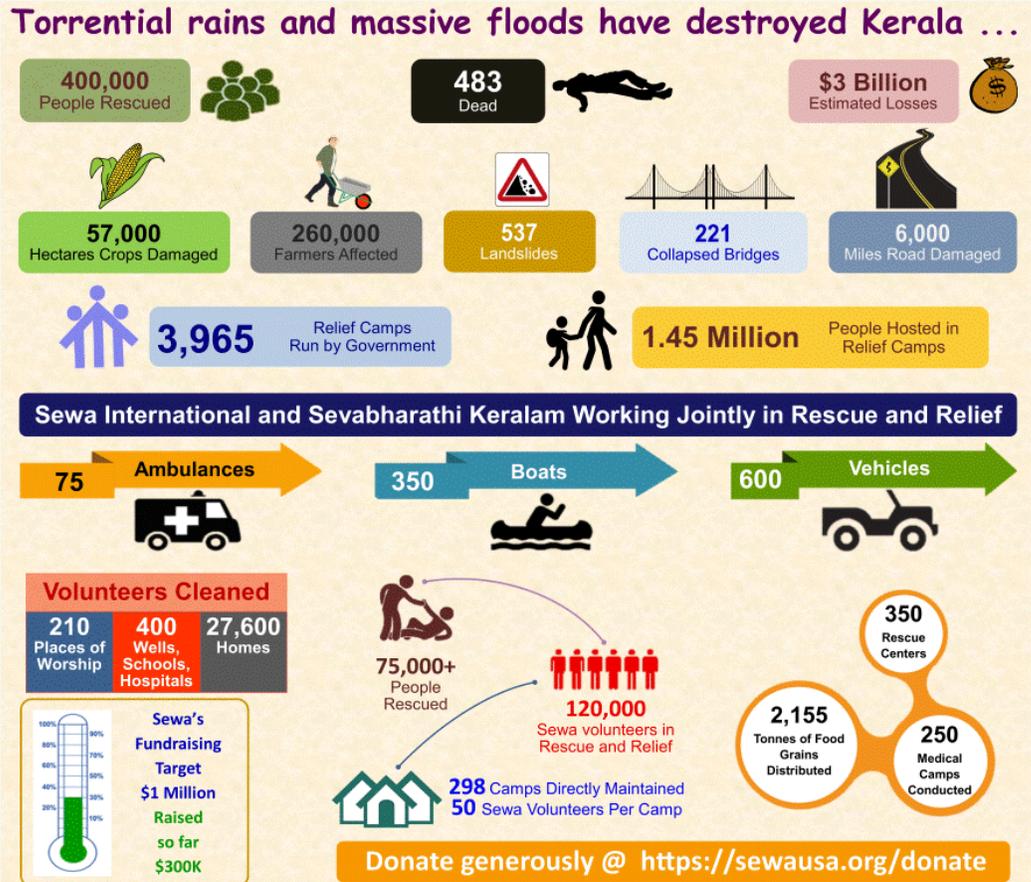


Sewa volunteer Jayant Bhat (left) distributing relief material to landslide victims in Kodagu

In the coming weeks, Sewa plans to distribute family relief kits to the affected families. Each family relief kit, costing \$70, consists of a tarpaulin sheet, plastic mat, a set of bed clothes, a saree set, a set of men's clothing, boy's dress, girl's dress, two cooking vessels, and 10 pounds of rice. Sponsor one or more relief kits for as little as \$70. Donate on <https://www.sewausa.org/donate>

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Efficient use of technology and social media tools helped sharing real time data between the Indian and American teams. Requests were triaged to Indian Military hotline in Kerala and also to volunteers on the ground in the specified location by mapping the GPS coordinates of victims and rescue teams. On the ground, Sewa's partner non-profit organization, Sevabharathi Keralam, has deployed over 120,000 volunteers in rescue operations, offering medical services, helping at community kitchens, and cooking and serving meals. Of the 3,965 rescue camps run by the government, 298 of them are directly managed and maintained by Sevabharathi, with 50 volunteers exclusively dedicated to each camp.



Sevabharathi volunteers, together with the local fishermen community, rescued over 75,000 people, using 350 boats. Medical camps were organized across different districts in Kerala. Altogether, 250 medical camps were conducted across the state. Medical teams, with experienced doctors from different hospitals and Sevabharathi units, are providing services in these areas. The medical camps are organized in the affected areas, as well as at relief camps run by Sevabharathi.

Seventy five ambulances of Sevabharathi were engaged in the rescue activity ferrying doctors, rescue teams, medicines, and medical equipment. More than 600 other vehicles provide service transportation of food grains and other transported materials in the state.

Three major warehouses catering to the state's needs are being run by Sevabharathi at Trivandrum, Palakkad, and Kasargod districts. An additional 210 warehouses and sub-centers are operational across all districts to mobilize grocery, clothes, sanitation materials, and medicines.

Special district-wise teams are constituted to coordinate the activities. The collected materials are transported to the relief camps, and the rest of the materials are distributed to households in the flood affected areas. Supplies in the form of dry, and ready-to-eat food were distributed by Sevabharathi and other sister nonprofits such as the Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission. To cater staple/local food, community kitchens were opened to serve food to victims as well as to the 85,000 volunteers working in rescue activities. One such kitchen is run by over 500 volunteers at the Shiva Temple, Ernakulam, where 22,000 pounds of food is cooked, three times a day.

With over 120,000 volunteers working on the project, Sevabharathi has spent over \$172,000 in the rescue and relief operations as of September 1. But there is much more to be done, and Sewa will continue its efforts in rebuilding Kerala.

"Sewa will continue to engage for several months through the relief phase, and 3-5 years in the rehabilitation phase. We commit 100% of donations to the victims of Kerala floods with only 3.3% overhead expenses -- the lowest among NGOs in our category", said Prof. Sree Sreenath, President, Sewa International.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Prasad Koranne has been associated with Sewa International since November, 2015. Being the Chapter Coordinator for Phoenix, Arizona, he is engaged in building the chapter resources and supporting initiatives. He has led numerous Sewa projects, implementing innovative ideas with the support of an enthusiastic team. He is passionate about connecting and working with people from different communities.

Prasad is influenced by Swami Vivekananda's teachings on *Advaita* (non-dualism/monism) philosophy. His most important credo is "*Sewa bhav*" (spirit of service) – helping those deserving in society. His life changed when his parents invited a beggar into their home and treated him with great love, respect, and compassion. This incident changed Prasad's outlook on life and motivated him to serve the needy with selflessness and compassion.

Prasad believes that when we pray for universal happiness and peace through prayers like "*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*," we should do so through our constant, honest efforts and humility. If we are committed to this work and this philosophy, we will have the support of divinity, he believes. Since our mission is universal happiness and peace we can't pursue this work alone and therefore organizations are important, he believes.

Prasad works as a Systems Administrator in an information technology company focusing on infrastructure operations. He has an engineering degree from the Institution of Engineers, Kolkata. A native of Nagpur, Maharashtra, he moved to the US thirteen years ago. He lives with his wife Mrunal and their two children – 7-year-old Gargi, and 5-year-old Atrey. In his spare time, he loves to play with his children, do yoga, and cook for family and friends. He is a keen student of philosophy, history, and geo-politics.

## Sewa Awarded 4-star Rating by Charity Navigator

Sewa International has been awarded a 4-star rating -- the highest quality rating -- by Charity Navigator - the largest evaluator of charities in the US. The evaluation is done on two major dimensions of a charity's operations -- Financial Health, and Accountability & Transparency. With a score of 96.46 out of 100, Sewa International was awarded an "Exceptional" quality rating -- meaning the operations exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause.



## Upcoming Events

- Sept 8-9 & 15-16 2018 : Sewa NY Metro Sports4Sewa Cricket 2018, Lincoln Park Cricket Ground, Jersey City, NJ.
- Sept 8 2018 : Sewa San Diego 2018 Fundraiser – enchanting Krishna, Lincoln High School, 4777 Imperial Ave, San Diego, CA
- Sept 9 2018 : Sewa Cleveland – Run For Sewa 2018,, Weiss Field, 33401 Webber Road, Avon Lake (Near weiss field parking lot entrance / exit), OH
- Sept 14 & 23 2018 : Sewa Houston: Stop Diabetes Movement Camp – Sep 2018, Katy, Sugarland, West Houston and others, TX.
- Sept 15 & 30 2018 : Sewa Atlanta: Spring Tennis Tournament 2018, Fowler Park, 4110 Caroline Way, Cumming, GA
- Sept 15 & Oct 7 2018 : Yoga for Diabetes Workshop – Sep 2018, Santan Dharma Kendra, San Jose, CA
- Sept 16 2018 : Sewa DC Ganesh Utsav 2018, Centerville High school, Centerville, VA
- Sept 22 2018 : Sewa Atlanta: Volleyball Tournament, 811 Brogdon Rd, Suwanee, GA
- Sept 29 2018 : Annual Fundraising – Garba for Sewa, Jain Society, Bartlett, IL
- Sept 29 2018 : Sewa Raleigh: Spike for Sewa 2018, 1100 Norwell blvd, Cary, NC
- Sept 30 2018 : Help 2018, Sewa Houston Annual Fundraiser, Stafford Convention Center 10505, Cash Road Stafford, TX

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