



Kerala Floods -- Rescue and Relief



Join Hands With
SEWA INTERNATIONAL
To Rebuild

KERALA

Ten Day Ground Report



Rescue Operations

In the aftermath of the severe southwest monsoon that devastated the South Indian state of Kerala, over 370 lost their lives, and a million people are displaced. Torrential rains and floods resulted in 221 collapsed bridges, 537 landslides, and damaged over 6,000 miles of road. About 42,000 hectares of crop were completely destroyed, affecting over 260,000 farmers. The biggest calamity over the past century has resulted in estimated losses of over \$3 billion. But together we can rebuild Kerala, and we will.

Volunteers from [Sewa International](#) and its partner organization [Sevabharathi Keralam](#) continued to work round the clock, running a 24x7 hotline in the US and multiple helpline centers across Kerala. Over 85,000 volunteers -- 60,000 men and 25,000 women, and thousands of children and youth are involved in rescue operations, offering medical help, helping at community kitchens, cooking and serving meals. Sevabharathi has spent over \$172,000 so far in undertaking various rescue activities.



Fig 1. Sevabharathi volunteers rescuing a flood victim.



Fig 2. Heavy rains have submerged buildings and bridges.



Fig 3. Uprooted trees and a collapsed house.

Rescue Operations

Of the 3,965 rescue camps run by the government, 150 of them are directly managed and maintained by Sewa's partner nonprofit organization with 50 volunteers exclusively dedicated to each camp. About 20 volunteers are deployed to each of the remaining rescue camps. Volunteers take up various responsibilities that include rescue, logistics and support, distribution of relief material, cooking, serving, transportation, etc.

Volunteers from all districts, especially the fishermen community from Kozhikode, Thrissur, and other coastal areas are actively engaged in the rescue work in Ernakulam, Pathanamthitta, and Thrissur districts. More than 70,000 people were rescued by Sevabharathi volunteers from the flood affected areas.



Fig 4. Sevabharathi volunteers carrying a flood victim to safety.



Fig 5. Sevabharathi volunteers rescuing a victim.

Sewa International Coordinates Rescue of 100 People from Hospital Rooftop

"Please help.... No response from the authorities," was the distress call received at 3:10 pm EST, August 18 by Sewa International volunteers in the US. Over 100 people had been stranded on the rooftop of the Thiruvalla Chethenkery Government Hospital in Chengannur, Kerala, with no food or water. The stranded victims had spent hours trying to contact the authorities, to no avail. Some of them needed urgent medical treatment, and the flood waters were rising by the hour, as was their anxiety and desperation.

On receiving the request on the Sewa Hotline number, Akansha, one of the many volunteers handling the 24x7 communications in Houston, TX, USA, contacted the Tiruvalla Indian Military Naval Team hotline through our volunteer team on the ground in Kerala per established protocol. She also shared the GPS coordinates with them. On hearing this, the Naval Team communicated back that they were getting a big boat ready for the rescue. Within an hour they texted back with the good news -- the rescue operation was successful, with no casualties. Across 10,000 miles, with real-time communication by a dedicated Sewa volunteer in the US, one hundred people were rescued from impending tragedy in Kerala.

Kudos to these dedicated volunteers.

Help Desk

Sewa volunteers 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. 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.

The team helped rescue activities in the entire state including supporting government officials in identifying isolated people in the flood affected areas across various locations. Sevabharathi volunteers were also deployed at help desks in each district.

Sewa volunteers in the US coordinated the requests that came over the 24x7 hotline and dedicated WhatsApp group.

Rescue Vehicles

A major challenge faced by all government agencies is surface water transportation to rescue people from isolated places. Sevabharathi mobilized 150 boats from the coastal areas for the rescue action. Together, with volunteers from the fisherman community who are well informed of the local terrain and geography, thousands of people were rescued. About 70 ambulances of Sevabharathi were engaged in the rescue activity ferrying doctors, rescue teams, medicines, and medical equipment. More than 300 other vehicles deployed provide service transportation of food grains and other



Fig 6. Sevabharathi volunteers handling queries at the helpdesk.



Fig 7. Arrival of relief material for distribution to the flood victims.



Fig 8. Sevabharathi volunteers after loading a truck with supplies.

Warehouses

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.

Community Kitchens

Supplies in the form of dry and ready to eat food were distributed by Sevabharathi and other sister nonprofits such as Swami Vivekananda Medical Mission. To cater to staple food, community kitchens were opened across Kerala to serve food to victims and also 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 (Fig.10).

Medical Camps

Sevabharathi is conducting medical camps across different districts in Kerala. Altogether, 25 medical camps have been conducted at Kuttanadu region, one of the most affected areas in the state (Fig.11). 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



Fig 9. A district warehouse with relief material stocked up.

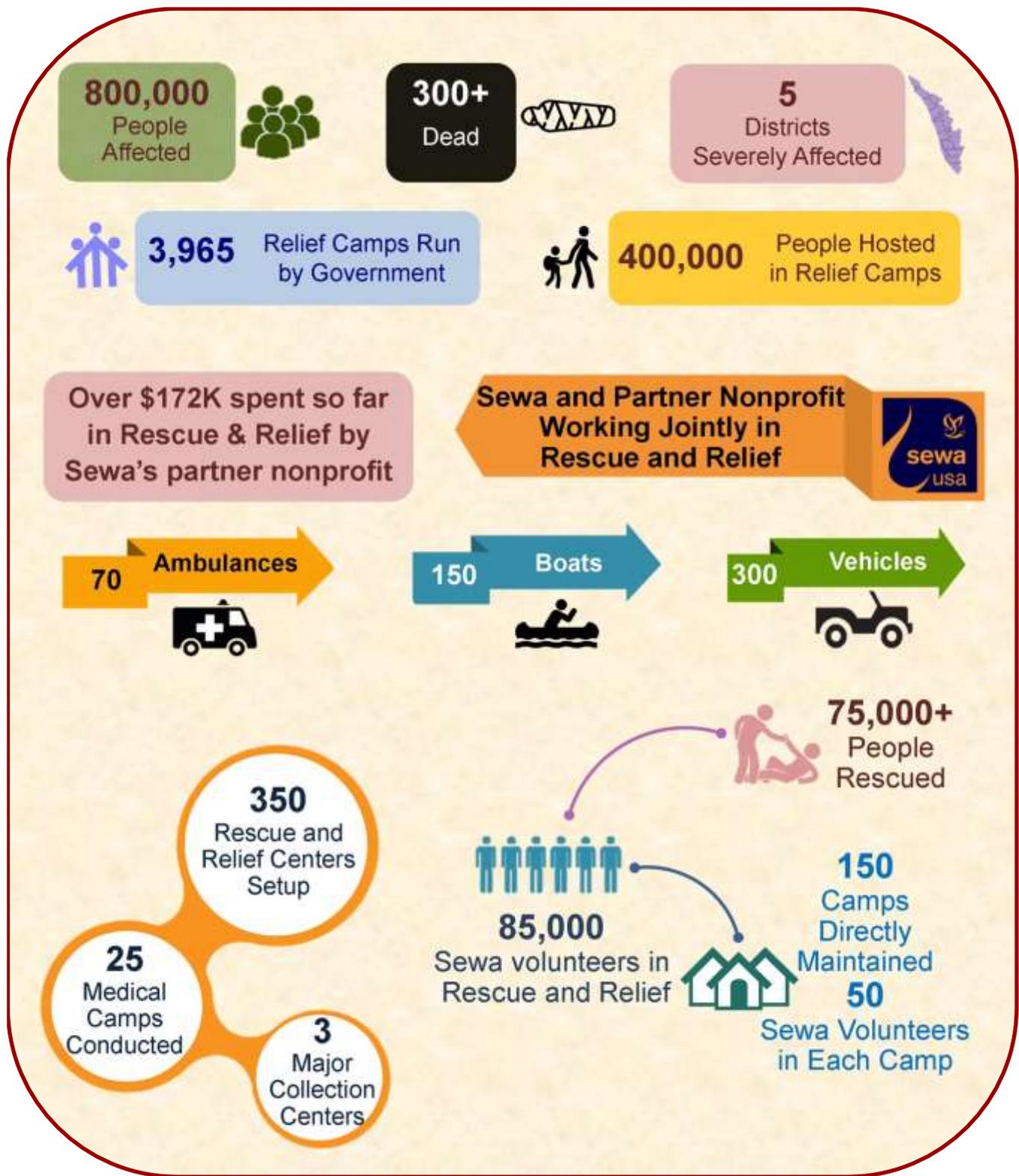


Fig 10. A Sevabharathi volunteer cooking at the community kitchen in Shiva Temple, Ernakulam.



Fig 11. Patients consulting physicians at a medical camp.

Kerala Floods - Rescue & Relief at a Glance





Appeal

- Sewa International has already released \$10,000 for immediate relief
- Sewa has set a target to raise \$ 1 Million towards Kerala flood relief, and has raised \$185K so far
- 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”

-- Prof. Sree Sreenath, Ph.D., M.B.A. President, Sewa International

In this hour of need, Sewa urges everyone to donate generously

1. Online: <https://sewausea.org/donate>
Select “Kerala Floods” in the projects dropdown
2. Checks:

Make to “Sewa International” and mail to:
Sewa International,
P O Box 820867,
Houston, TX 77282-0867

Many employers in the US match donations of their employee doubling or even tripling them.

Your contribution may qualify. Please check with your employer or contact us.

Sewa International is a nonprofit organization registered under the Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3), and all your donations are tax-deductible. Tax Id # 20-0638718

Contact: 708.USA.SEWA or info@sewausea.org



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