



Children have inalienable rights in all circumstances - including during disasters - when they are the most at risk. Ensuring that children participate in decisions which impact them is mandatory. Hence, the United Nations Child Rights Convention and Disaster Risk Reduction are essentially mutually reinforcing.

Through its work, Save the Children is contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals by ensuring that child-centered resilience is promoted with a strong focus on marginalised children, families and communities.



**BUILDING BACK
BETTER FOR CHILDREN**

**Building Back Better
for Children**

Kerala Floods
A Child-Centered Response



Save the Children

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guardian/parent. The people and areas depicted in the photographs are
from Save the Children's intervention areas.





Foreword

Kudumbashree extends its gratitude to Save the Children for their support in rebuilding Kerala in the aftermath of the floods in 2018. This photo book is an overview of the efforts led jointly by us. As we revisit the work, we feel proud to have helped communities, especially children in far-flung remote areas, to rebuild their lives. Along with providing immediate relief from the damage caused, we truly believe that our efforts have made communities more resilient and disaster-ready.

The purpose to document our efforts and stories is to help stakeholders across the country to learn from our experience, and use this knowledge to address such challenges in the future.

Save the Children has been an ideal partner and we wish it success in all its endeavours.

A Unique Response Beyond Humanitarian Relief



Mounting Quick Response

On August 16, 2018, the southern state of Kerala witnessed the worst floods in over a century, affecting 13 out of 14 districts of the state. In addition to a death toll of 370, over a million people (of which 0.3 million were children) were compelled to take shelter in relief camps.

To assist the children affected by the floods in Kerala, Save the Children started large-scale operations on August 29, 2018. We targeted the three most affected districts: Pathnamthitta, Wayanad and Alappuzha. Post a thorough assessment of needs, Save the Children planned a 12-month long intervention, implemented in three phases - **Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation**. The objective was to build a better and disaster-resilient Kerala for children.



Partnering with the Largest Women's Network

With sustainability at the core and abiding by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, we partnered with children and their communities and the local government bodies. Working with the largest women's network Save the Children built capacities of Kudumbasree - poverty eradication and women empowerment programme of the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) of Kerala - our local government partner. With Kudumbasree at the front of the response, the community led us to reach 64,483 children with critical support out of the 138610 highly affected people whose lives we touched.





Children First, Always

With the objective to meet the survival, learning and protection needs of children we held women and children at the heart of our response. We helped rebuild safe homes for children; we rebuilt Anganwadis and schools and ensured that children went back at the soonest; we prioritised the livelihood needs of women while also ensuring proper nutrition for children by re-constructing microenterprise units, catering to the needs of pregnant and lactating women, and young children. We also provided alternate livelihood means to women and families who lost it all in the floods. At the same time, we partnered with the government at the panchayat, district and state levels to strengthen child protection, disaster resilience and school safety in Kerala.



First to Reach, Last to Leave

Prioritising Child Centred Disaster Risk Reduction, we continued with our operations much beyond the relief activities and ensured engagement of children to build resilience of the communities while entrusting Kudumbashree to keep the rights of children central to their work much beyond the crisis. The testimony to creating lasting change is that the sewing units installed under our sustainable livelihoods intervention for women are now producing life-saving masks to combat the COVID-19 crisis. This photobook shares a few glimpses of one of our most unique humanitarian responses in India.

Save the Children is one of the largest independent child rights organisations. Through our work in around 117 countries, we put the most deprived and marginalised children first, helping them survive, learn and reach their full potential. Founded during the First World War, the Save the Children movement has been advocating the rights of children for a 100 years now.

A Trail of Devastation

According to the Government of Kerala reports, the floods affected **21** million people of which **7** million were children. The one million people who took shelter in relief camps returned to their homes to salvage remaining belongings, if any, clear debris and rebuild their homes.



The Aftermath:

A tonne of debris or a reminder of a past life, a place where families were raised, children grew and memories were made.

People who returned to their flood-ravaged homes said their toilets and other sanitation facilities were completely destroyed and water in wells was contaminated with waste. The government also identified, disposal of e-waste as a challenge. Tons of electronic items like televisions, computers, mobile phones, refrigerators and air conditioners were found strewn around in the streets of affected towns.



We have lost all our belongings. Our Aadhaar cards, property documents, rations, furniture, children's toys. I couldn't tell my three year old son our house was destroyed

- Survivor from Wayanad

“

We have lost all our school books and uniform. We are sure that our houses and all our belongings have been badly damaged. We stayed in relief camps for two weeks which was a very difficult time for us. We know that our parents will not have the money to buy us any study material or uniform, so we are hoping that the government or NGO would help us get it before school reopens.

”

Cleaning the Slate

Responding to Immediate Needs



Save the Children joined hands with Kudumbashree - the largest women's network in Kerala - to set up a response which kept the most vulnerable women and children at the core. One of the first steps was a massive cleaning drive of houses, schools and Anganwadis. Simultaneously, we supported community centres and gram panchayats with restoring safe drinking water and repairing toilets.



A glimpse of Kudumbashree volunteers carrying out the cleaning drive in the streets.

5203 households,
83 ICDS centres and
3 schools were cleared of debris.

After a needs assessment exercise, Save the Children started distributing relief kits to the most vulnerable households, which included essentials, such as mosquito nets, solar lamps, and hygiene and dignity kits, especially to families with women, children, girls, elderly, disabled people, and those living with prolonged illnesses.



Distributing relief kits to those in need in Alappuzha. Through our work, we successfully provided **9270** hygiene kits, **7870** utensil kits, more than **7000** blankets and mats, over **5000** bed sheets and more than **3000** solar lamps.

Leaving No One Behind

“When the flood water receded there were high chances of spread of diseases like malaria, diarrhoea and others. My children suffered from fever. Family conditions was terrible. We did not have work for three months. I was struggling for food and health service. My children were not getting sufficient meals. I was worried about their future. One day our tribal leader informed me that my name has been identified and selected for receiving relief materials. Kudumbashree members contacted me took my family details and informed me about the location of the distribution. I received utensils kit, kitchen utility things like a bucket, mug and hygiene kit from Save the Children. That support was needed. Now I have a full set of utensils. The hygiene kit in particular was very useful.”

Sarojini with her one year old daughter, Krishnenia





While most families lost their documents, there were some who did not have any. Mani and Balamurugan rent a one-room shelter in Ponnurthottam, the third one in a row of 20 shelters occupied by migrant labourers from Tamil Nadu. Mani, 33, works as a mason and Balamurugan at the local butcher's. They plan to eventually get their children (now two, living with their grandparents in Tamil Nadu) to live with them. When floods wrecked the state, their dreams appeared to shatter. They lost all their belongings they had painstakingly acquired to sustain in their one-room shelter.

Mani cooking dinner and chatting with Balamurugan, in her one room shelter. Precariously perched next to her is the Solar Lamp. She has neatly arranged all the utensils from the kit in an overhead shelf.

“

We work hard to make a livelihood and provide for our children. We bought one household item at a time and built a small home for ourselves. When the rainwater started rising, my husband was at work. It was three in the morning. By eight, there was water inside our house. We took shelter in a church premise. On returning after six days, we started cleaning and bought some scrap to use as utensils. We had no expectations as we are outsiders and have no documents. When a volunteer from Kudumbshree, came to our alley asking questions, we were surprised. We received four kits that contained utensils, soaps, buckets, mattresses and a solar lamp. We even received two school kits for our children. We could not have asked for more. They provided for all the essentials that we lost and the shelter feels like home again. We have gone back to living our dream of building a fulfilled home for our children”

Children Can't Wait



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When the families were collecting relief kits, the children were engaged in the "children's corners" set up at the distribution sites. The purpose was to minimise the psychosocial impact of the flood on the children. Child Friendly Spaces were established at three locations to provide children a safe shelter and also engage them in educational and recreational activities when the schools were to be re-opened.

The CFS was appreciated by the community as they could see that children were returning back to normalcy quickly. The facilitators also engaged children in recreational activities to help them overcome the trauma and fear. Sessions were organised for the Kudumbashree staff and volunteers on child safeguarding to ensure there were no risks faced by children.

Rebuilding Safe Spaces Anganwadis & Schools

83 centres were selected from three districts which needed minor repairs and renovations. Fully or partially damaged AWCs were chosen which were made functional after repairing and renovation. After construction and repair, the buildings were painted with murals for children. The paintings depicted numbers and alphabets in English and Malayalam. Pictorial representations of national figures, stories and others things were also added to make learning fun.





The flood took away the children's companions – toys, puzzles, charts. Save the Children collaborated with the government and based on the need provided playing and learning kits to 30 Anganwadi centres. These kits were for children between the ages of 3 to 6 years and had books, puzzles, puppets and other supplies to cater to their social, emotional, and cognitive development.

“After the floods, the floors and walls were damaged and the compound was damp. It was not safe for the children to be here. There were threats of insects, mosquitoes and even snakes. Storing food grains was not possible as the area was damp. We were wondering what to do, when we were told by Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) officials that Save the Children would support in rebuilding our centre. It came like a blessing and we couldn't be happier. The centre is not only shiny clean now, it is a model structure for other anganwadis,” says Hema Devi, or Ammayi as lovingly called by the children – Anganwadi Worker at Centre 107, Peringara.

Four years old Devananda's world revolves around her grandmother's stories and her friends at the neighbourhood Anganwadi (ICDS) centre. When she was still an infant, Devananda's parents left the country in search of work and left their beloved daughter in the care of her grandmother.

Devananda attends Anganwadi number 107 along with her friend Malu. Devananda, was rushed to a nearby shelter by her grandmother. “She was so frightened that she fell ill. She always talks in her sleep. Before the floods, she would call out for her parents sometimes in her sleep. In the shelter, however, she would call out for Hema Ammayi (Anganwadi Worker). The centre is like second home for my grandchild. She plays, eats and learns in the Anganwadi. My grandchild is scared of water and after the floods she refuses to go to the toilet alone. She missed the centre and was keeping ill. I got her to the renovated centre after a month and all her fears melted away, she was so relieved and glad,” shared Devananda's grandmother.

Devananda with Malu at Anganwadi 107



Ensuring that children go back to school at the earliest, Save the Children repaired schools and provided school kits with books, bag, stationery, water bottles and umbrellas to **12,678** children.

Across three districts, **128** schools received school kits and information and counselling sessions were organised in **30** schools benefitting **8703** children.



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Seven year old Shivani Srikumar's immediate means to be able to restore a sense of going back to routine life was a school bag, books and her drawing book.

“I received a big red coloured school bag filled with stationery, notebooks, an umbrella and water bottle; and a drawing kit .I was given the bag by uncle and aunty at the place where they were distributing a lot of bags to all of us in school. All of us stood in a queue and got bags.”- Shivani doing her lessons at home with her aunt.

Towards Lasting Change

Ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods for Women

In **60** construction units women were provided with masonry tools and **390** women were given agricultural tools to provide for themselves and their families and children.

Led jointly by Kudumbashree and Save the Children, **463** microenterprise units were repaired and renovated, of which, **12** were women-led nutrimix centres. These centres provide supplementary food for children and lactating mothers available at Anganwadi centres.

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Sewing units were set up to provide alternate livelihoods to women who lost it all in the floods. These units are now stitching life-saving masks to extend a helping hand in managing the unprecedented humanitarian crisis we face today - COVID-19. This is a testimony to building sustainable and resilient structures which rebuild a community.



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390 most vulnerable families were connected to livelihood support like fishing nets to fishermen communities, sewing machines, livestock and poultry, plumbing and barber shops.

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Child-Centred Disaster Resilience

Children's group engaged in building a raft from tree barks which would help them keep afloat in case of future disasters with support from their teacher and Save the Children's volunteer.



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Children are central to our work on building resilience. Our approach empowers them to be leaders in their own communities when disasters strike.

17,300 Bal Panchayat members were trained with the support of Kudumbashree and the Gram Panchayats in resilience building for the future. Children's groups were organised and trained by school teachers to be physically and emotionally disaster ready and lead themselves and their communities to safety.

