

KERALA'S TRAUMA

Relevant for: Environment & Disaster Management | Topic: Disaster and disaster management

The unprecedented [deluge in Kerala unleashed by heavy rain](#), overflowing rivers, brimming dams and massive landslips has overwhelmed the State government and rescue agencies, as they struggle to make a complete assessment of the devastation. More than 160 people have died since August 8, and several are missing. The State government faces the challenging task of rescuing people who are marooned in far-flung houses in several districts and providing them food and water until the teams get to them. About 2,23,000 people had been moved to more than 1,500 relief camps as of Friday, with more waiting to join. A respite in rainfall has aided the relief efforts, but as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan acknowledged, it will take a major effort, using a combination of boats and aircraft from the Air Force, the Navy and the Coast Guard and legions of rescue personnel, to get all the stranded people to safety. The reduction in rainfall should help the National Disaster Response Force, which has committed 55 teams, intensify its efforts to reach those who are stranded. In fact, disaster management units in other States too should assist those working on the ground to deal with Kerala's catastrophic floods; apart from helping, they will gain valuable experience as well. Going forward, the task of reconstruction will have to be addressed, covering public buildings, residential homes, roads and other infrastructure. A subsidised housing programme may be needed in the worst-hit areas, with tax breaks offered to residents.

Help us help Kerala

There is an outpouring of goodwill and support from across the country and even abroad, and the State government has acted quickly to make online contributions to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund possible through a dedicated portal. Liberal donations will help the government in large-scale [relief and post-flood rehabilitation initiatives](#). Support groups from neighbouring States such as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have begun sending relief material, although the disruption to road connectivity has left a lot of it stranded at the inter-State borders. These volunteer efforts can be better targeted if the district authorities in Kerala put out advisories on the nature of relief needed, and the locations and the modalities of transfer. More immediately, it is important to continue with the air-dropping of food, water, candles, matches and other essentials to the worst-hit areas. Many control rooms have been opened, but integrating the mechanism by merging the various phone numbers into three or four, at one per region, and allocating sufficient phone lines, will help citizens use them more easily. Hopefully, the worst is over. With full dams and overflowing rivers, Kerala desperately needs a benign shift in the weather to be able to cope with a disaster on a scale it has never seen before. It indeed needs all the support it can get.

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