



THE EXTENT OF INCLUSION OF DALIT AND ADIVASI COMMUNITIES IN THE POST-DISASTER RESPONSE IN KERALA 2018

NATIONAL DALIT WATCH - NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON DALIT HUMAN RIGHTS
& RIGHTS

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**THE EXTENT OF INCLUSION OF DALIT AND ADIVASI COMMUNITIES IN THE
POST DISASTER RESPONSE IN KERALA 2018**

Concept: Paul N. Divakar

Editors: Prasad Chacko, Beena J. Pallical, Ajaykumar VB

Data Compilation, Analysis and Technical inputs:

Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS)

Research and Writing: Catherine Rhea Roy

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8/1 South Patel Nagar New Delhi 110008

www.ncdhr.org.in

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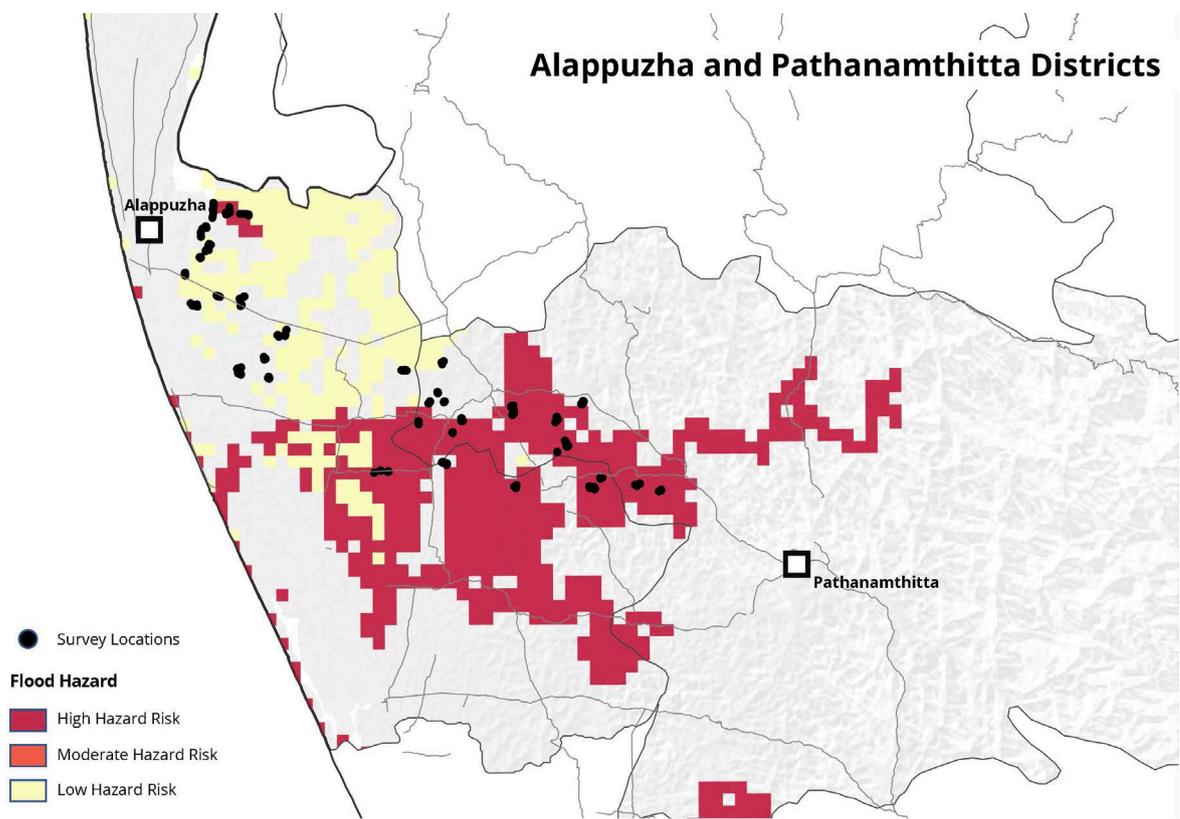
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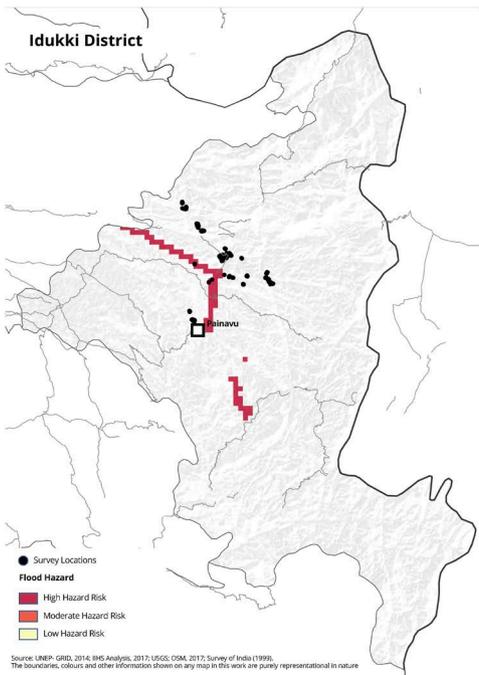
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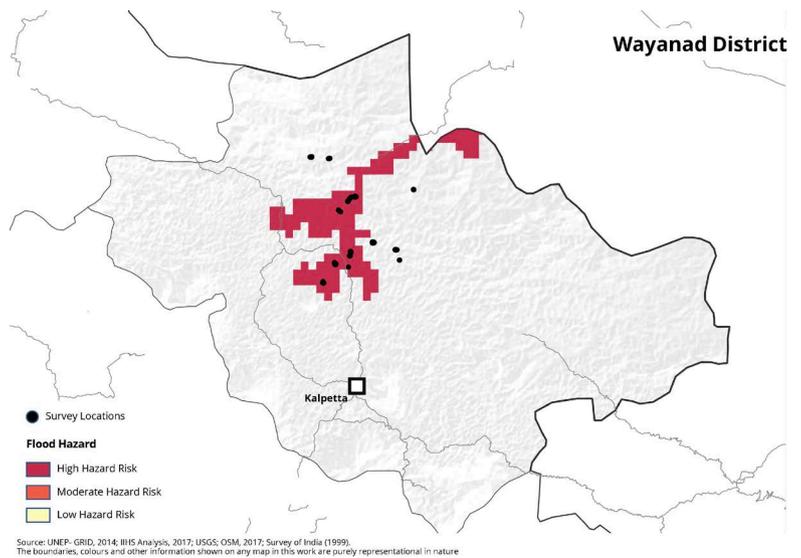
Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta Districts



Source: UNEP- GRID, 2014; IHHS Analysis, 2017; USGS; OSM, 2017; Survey of India (1999).
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been a collaborative effort we undertook along with the people who suffered not just the devastation of the floods but also the exclusion meted out by a caste-based hierarchical social and political system. 1585 respondents contributed their time and energy to participate in this study that once again reveals how Dalit and Adivasi communities are excluded by default as well as by intent from disaster response and recovery, in the specific context of Kerala. It has not been easy for these proud and dignified people to recount these experiences of exclusion and discrimination; and their effort has gone a long way towards asserting powerfully the fact that inclusion of Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized communities in disaster response, risk reduction and preparedness is the non-negotiable duty of any government and civil society.

We are particularly thankful to Paul Divakar for having introduced us to the strategic advantage of using the online data collection (with geo-tagging) technology. This has afforded more precision, credible evidence value and real time analysis to this study. The geo-tagging of Dalit/Adivasi habitations and the data collected was possible because of our collaboration with the experts from the Geospatial Lab of Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bangalore. We acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of the IIHS team in introducing and training us in using the online data collection App and for having developed a dynamic analytical framework that gave us results almost instantaneously.

The process of data collection was enriched by the fact that we had a highly competent team of activists from RIGHTS. Their long experience working on Dalit and Adivasi rights issues and their familiarity with the habitations and the affected communities made it easier for the people to comprehend and respond to the questions with precision. We thankfully acknowledge the services of these stalwarts Raghu Eraviperoor, Nishu, Sunil TK, Praveen SV, Chaithramayi PC, Varsha Shaji, Bijumol, and Sukumaran Chaligadha, Suma Philip, Radhalakshmi DO and Sunita T.

The report has been written by Ms. Catherine Rhea Roy based on the data analysis inputs by the IIHS team and the narrative reports by the RIGHTS team. A special thanks to Catherine for her patient and meticulous writing and editing within difficult timelines.

Christian Aid UK and Oxfam India have been the key partners that made it possible for National Dalit Watch and RIGHTS to undertake and complete this study. We appreciate with gratitude their commitment to inclusive Disaster Response, Recovery and Disaster Risk Reduction. Together we have been able to reach out to hundreds of excluded households ensuring relief and enabling access to state entitlements; as we strive collectively to “build back better”.

Beena Pallical
General Secretary
Dalit Arthik Adhikar Andholan
NCDHR

Ajay Kumar V. B.
Executive Director
RIGHTS

Prasad Chacko
Senior Consultant
National Dalit Watch
NCDHR

FOREWORD

In 2009, the National Dalit Watch (NDW) was established on the basis of the experiences of the National Commission for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) in exposing and countering exclusion during some of the major disasters of our times (Tsunami, 2004 and Bihar Floods, 2007-08) and in recognition of the rampant discrimination and exclusion faced by Dalit and Adivasi communities during disaster response and risk reduction. Since, NDW has been active during every major disaster since 2009 and has initiated studies, which confirm that the menace of caste-based discrimination and exclusion is deep-rooted in wider society and that it is at work even in times of disaster. The exercise to document how discrimination operates was initiated in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean and has been fine-tuned and improved to be more precise and scientific in the collection and analysis of data.

Humanitarian agencies, federal and state authorities, and society at large assume that disasters unite people and bring them together in a show of brotherly camaraderie and resilience, but the evidence and data shatter this misconception. The NDW is dedicated to the development and continuous improvement of a research tool that can effectively capture, in real time, the limits and standards of inclusion of Dalits and other marginalized communities in disaster response, preparedness and risk reduction. This is a dynamic tool that has evolved beyond a study that prepares questionnaires and interview schedules for focus group discussions, towards becoming an exercise to help survivors and take measures to convert incidents of discrimination and exclusion into appeals for relief and recovery that they are entitled to.

Through regular field visits and interactions with the communities over the past 15 years, we have found that people from Dalit and Adivasi communities are more vulnerable to disasters not only by negligence but often also by ignorance. The settlements of Dalits and Adivasis are located in hard-to-reach areas that are the first to be disconnected in the event of a natural calamity. Even in cases where there is no intentional bias, the inadequate norms of disaster relief and operations by the administration, the lack of awareness about their vulnerabilities, and the failure to map these communities in the context of the disaster make it harder for them to access disaster relief and aid. In this report, we examine the Kerala Floods 2018

that began on August 8 and lasted until August 19 was a catastrophic deluge that claimed over 433 lives. The scale of the flood and the humanitarian crisis that followed saw a national-level relief effort that was led by the Kerala government and supported by the armed forces, fishermen, and civil society. However, despite the seeming success of relief operations as highlighted by the media, it is safe to conclude that the floods took a heavier toll on communities that are already vulnerable. Disasters do not affect everyone equally, in fact, the very structures and systems that make the Dalits and Adivasis vulnerable, further marginalize and exclude them from emergency aid and recovery.

In The extent of inclusion of Dalit and Adivasi communities in the post-disaster response in Kerala 2018 study, we believe we have made a methodological breakthrough by introducing the geo-tagging of habitations in Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki and Wayanad, that were affected by the disaster, thereby enhancing the credibility of the data collected, supported with records of visual evidence. We hope that this study would inform the “Rebuild Kerala Development Programme - A Resilient Recovery Policy Framework and Action Plan for Shaping Kerala’s Resilient, Risk-Informed Development and Recovery from 2018 Floods” and contribute to the Kerala government’s ambitious vision of a ‘Nava Keralam’. In the backdrop of the Kerala Floods 2018, we seek reform, that the government authorities, and humanitarian agencies engaged in rescue and relief work recognize the discrimination and exclusion of Dalits, Adivasis and the most marginalized communities and incorporate a proactive conscious approach to ensure inclusion as a non-negotiable principle and strategy.

N. Paul Divakar

General Secretary
Global Advocacy & Networks
National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the advantage of high literacy and public welfare, Kerala is not immune from the indignity of caste, and the social structures of the state is crippled by discrimination that blends into the fabric of society, unapparent and palatable. This veneer of brotherly love and solidarity was put to test during the Kerala Floods, 2018. As the water levels mounted it drove savarna and avarna alike out of their homes and to higher ground, for the first time a disaster had displaced dominant castes who were forcefully evicted and to leave their homes and with their life's possessions. Yet, what they did not leave behind was their caste prejudice, in the face of a humanitarian crisis at a scale never seen before, the insidious truth of Kerala's apartheid had nowhere to hide.

The Kerala Floods 2018 began on August 8 and lasted until August 19. The catastrophic deluge claimed over 433 lives, around 14 lakh people were moved to camps, and nearly 1700 schools were converted to relief camps. The tremendous scale of the floods and the catastrophe that followed was soon at the centre of heightened media coverage – the stories highlighted the efficiency of the Kerala government, the bravery of the fishermen, and helped to mobilise a nation-wide drive to collect material for relief and rescue. However, despite the seeming success of relief operations, it is safe to argue that disasters do not affect everyone equally. For instance, in the aftermath of the tsunami, discrimination on the basis of caste was an unquestionable fact. The testimonies of Dalit victims of the tsunami all along the Indian coast of Tamil Nadu show remarkable consistency, pointing to a systematic and predictable type of discrimination. Or even in the case of Gujarat post the earthquake in Bhuj. In fact, disaster deepens the fault lines and the very structures and systems that make them vulnerable and exposed further marginalise them and exclude them from emergency aid and recovery.

The first case of caste discrimination in Kerala was reported from the Alappuzha district in early August, the first phase of the floods. A group of people refused to stay with Dalits in the camp, they boycotted the camp and refused to share the space or food with Dalits. This narrative of discrimination continued into the

second and major phase, when Alappuzha was submerged and the state of Kerala was flooded. In this period, the narrative evolved into one of caste-based discrimination, segregation and differentiation, some by design and the others by default. In Aranmula, 36 Dalit families were given two classrooms, and each dominant caste family was given a classroom each. These communities are geographically concentrated in rural areas, so when it came to rescue and relief efforts, the Dalit hamlets and tribal communities located in the interiors and made virtually inaccessible by the flood, were left out of rescue efforts or were rescued last, and often did not get relief material or got poor quality goods.

This report takes into account the knowledge and experience that has been accumulated through decades of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation work by the National Dalit Watch (NDW), an initiative of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), Delhi, and RIGHTS, Kerala. This report seeks to map and geo-tag evidence of the historical and current damage, loss and, the extent of inclusion of Dalits, marginalized and vulnerable communities in disaster-prone regions that include Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki and Wayanad. In the backdrop of the Kerala Floods 2018, we seek that the government of Kerala and humanitarian agencies engaged in rescue and relief work recognise the discrimination and exclusion of Dalits, Adivasis and the most marginalized communities and incorporate a proactive conscious approach to reach out to these communities.

While a flood of this scale may occur once in a 100 years, Dalit and other marginalised community settlements are exposed to floods and similar disasters every year, we need to have a framework for disaster preparedness that takes this into account. The social and political correctness of Kerala forces people to delegitimise the issue of caste, resting the onus of proving caste-based discrimination on those who are already oppressed. To that end, disasters disrupt this structure of caste, the hidden discriminatory nature of caste comes out in the open during a natural calamity.

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India explicitly delineates untouchability and caste-based discrimination and outlines measures to uphold the rights of the SCs and STs, through a series of legislation and social policies that prioritise affirmative action. However, these deep-rooted practices continue to exist in various hidden forms of apartheid and the provisions to address such discrimination rarely filter beyond the law and into policies or practice. In the absence of legislative provisions to prevent or mitigate this form of discrimination and exclusion, Dalits and Adivasis are often left with no legal recourse. The prevalence of such discrimination and exclusion needs to be explicitly acknowledged by governments in order to ensure that there are effective steps and measures made towards upliftment, inclusion and representation of these communities in all spheres of governance.

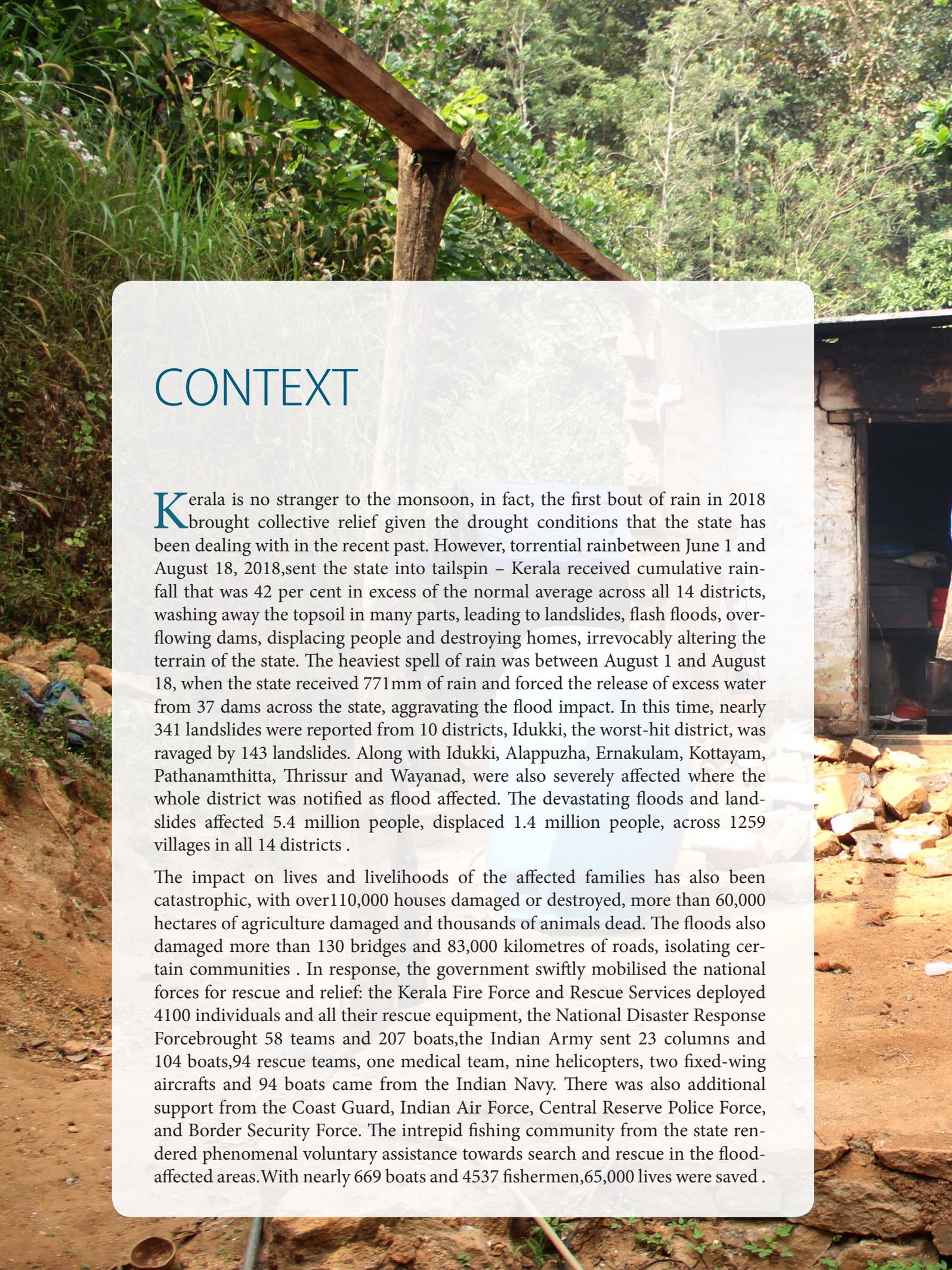
In the disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts that were highlighted by the authorities and the media, the narrative of the Dalits and Adivasis was quashed. For the average marginalised person who is denied what is rightfully his in normal times, disasters can have severe consequences. They endure more hardship and incur greater losses than the average dominant caste person and this disparity must be acknowledged, especially in times of calamities and conflict. In 2016, the Government of India released the country's first ever National Disaster Management Plan. The document was based on the global blueprint for reducing disaster losses, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction that states, understanding disaster risk policies and practices for disaster risk management should be based on an understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of vulnerability (age, genders, caste, ethnicity and religion, disability), capacity, exposure of persons and assets, hazard characteristics and the environment. Such knowledge can be leveraged for the purpose of pre-disaster risk assessment, for prevention and mitigation and for the development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disasters. Building on the existing literature, the Indian government is among the first in the world to release a plan focused on spreading a greater understanding of disaster risk through education and public information, investing in disaster-resilient infrastructure and committing to improved disaster preparedness and building back better in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The endeavour of the National Disaster Management Plan outlines the priorities of the government to build a disaster-resilient India and reaffirms the government's commitment to disaster risk reduction and covers all phases of disaster management from prevention and mitigation to response and recovery. It is designed to be scalable in all phases of disaster management and identifies major activities such as early

warning, information dissemination, medical attention, transportation, search and rescue, evacuation, etc. to serve as a checklist for the agencies responding to a disaster. However, both the government and the document remains silent on the issue of inclusion of Dalits and Adivasis. In view of the still prevalent caste hierarchy and rampant discriminatory practices in India, the document is irrelevant if it fails to address the vulnerability of Dalits during disasters in particular.

In 2016, India hosted the biennial Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in 2016, which was a key event for the implementation of the Sendai Framework in the region. Post the conference, the New Delhi Declaration 2016 was published to highlight the political commitment to disaster risk resilience. The declaration subscribes to the principle of a people-centred and whole-of-society approach and recognises the need for special attention towards the marginalized and vulnerable group like women, children, youth and people with disabilities. The New Delhi Declaration also calls to strengthen inclusive collaboration at the local level to build on community initiative, knowledge and resources, and leverage national policies and programmes to achieve resilience. But it remained silent on the issue of caste-based discrimination, neither the high-profile conference nor the declaration that emerged has considered the mounting evidence of discrimination based on work and descent, especially caste, ethnicity and minority status.

There is an expanding body of knowledge and evidence generated by the National Dalit Watch on the exclusion of Dalit, Adivasis and other minority communities in DRR. Their social and locational vulnerabilities affect their capability to access relief and rehabilitation entitlements, affecting their resilience and therefore their recovery. The Delhi Declaration thus missed a historic opportunity to incorporate the significance of deliberate action towards the inclusion of Dalits, OBCs, SCs, STs, and minorities in DRR, despite the advocacy of national and international humanitarian organisations and the concerns they have raised. Effective and equitable DRR requires inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation, it calls for empowerment and paying special attention to people who have been disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest. To do this, the government will have to adopt a multi-hazard approach that has been built on the foundation of risk-informed decision-making based on the open exchange and dissemination of disaggregated data, as well as accessible, relevant, science-based, non-sensitive risk information, complemented by traditional knowledge.



CONTEXT

Kerala is no stranger to the monsoon, in fact, the first bout of rain in 2018 brought collective relief given the drought conditions that the state has been dealing with in the recent past. However, torrential rain between June 1 and August 18, 2018, sent the state into tailspin – Kerala received cumulative rainfall that was 42 per cent in excess of the normal average across all 14 districts, washing away the topsoil in many parts, leading to landslides, flash floods, overflowing dams, displacing people and destroying homes, irrevocably altering the terrain of the state. The heaviest spell of rain was between August 1 and August 18, when the state received 771mm of rain and forced the release of excess water from 37 dams across the state, aggravating the flood impact. In this time, nearly 341 landslides were reported from 10 districts, Idukki, the worst-hit district, was ravaged by 143 landslides. Along with Idukki, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Pathanamthitta, Thrissur and Wayanad, were also severely affected where the whole district was notified as flood affected. The devastating floods and landslides affected 5.4 million people, displaced 1.4 million people, across 1259 villages in all 14 districts .

The impact on lives and livelihoods of the affected families has also been catastrophic, with over 110,000 houses damaged or destroyed, more than 60,000 hectares of agriculture damaged and thousands of animals dead. The floods also damaged more than 130 bridges and 83,000 kilometres of roads, isolating certain communities . In response, the government swiftly mobilised the national forces for rescue and relief: the Kerala Fire Force and Rescue Services deployed 4100 individuals and all their rescue equipment, the National Disaster Response Force brought 58 teams and 207 boats, the Indian Army sent 23 columns and 104 boats, 94 rescue teams, one medical team, nine helicopters, two fixed-wing aircrafts and 94 boats came from the Indian Navy. There was also additional support from the Coast Guard, Indian Air Force, Central Reserve Police Force, and Border Security Force. The intrepid fishing community from the state rendered phenomenal voluntary assistance towards search and rescue in the flood-affected areas. With nearly 669 boats and 4537 fishermen, 65,000 lives were saved .



A consultation of Dalits and Adivasis held in Thiruvalla, organized by RIGHTS, NCDHR and Change Alliance, brought out several narratives and anecdotes of the nature of exclusion.

Over the years, the NDW has developed certain methods and tools for monitoring the extent of inclusion in relief and rehabilitation work. This monitoring has not only enabled humanitarian and government agencies engaged in relief and rehabilitation work to recognize and understand how discrimination and exclusion of Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalized communities operate in that specific disaster but also incorporates a conscious proactive approach to reach out to these communities. Using the methods and findings of the inclusion monitoring study we also strive to enable agencies and government to mainstream inclusion in their assessment and reporting instruments. Through transparent, disaggregated reporting conducted on the basis of caste, gender, age, disability and marginalization of groups the relief and rehabilitation services provided would go a long way in ensuring that disaster response measures are inclusive, fair and just. A way of ensuring this is to have members from these communities as part of assessment teams and decision-making fora.



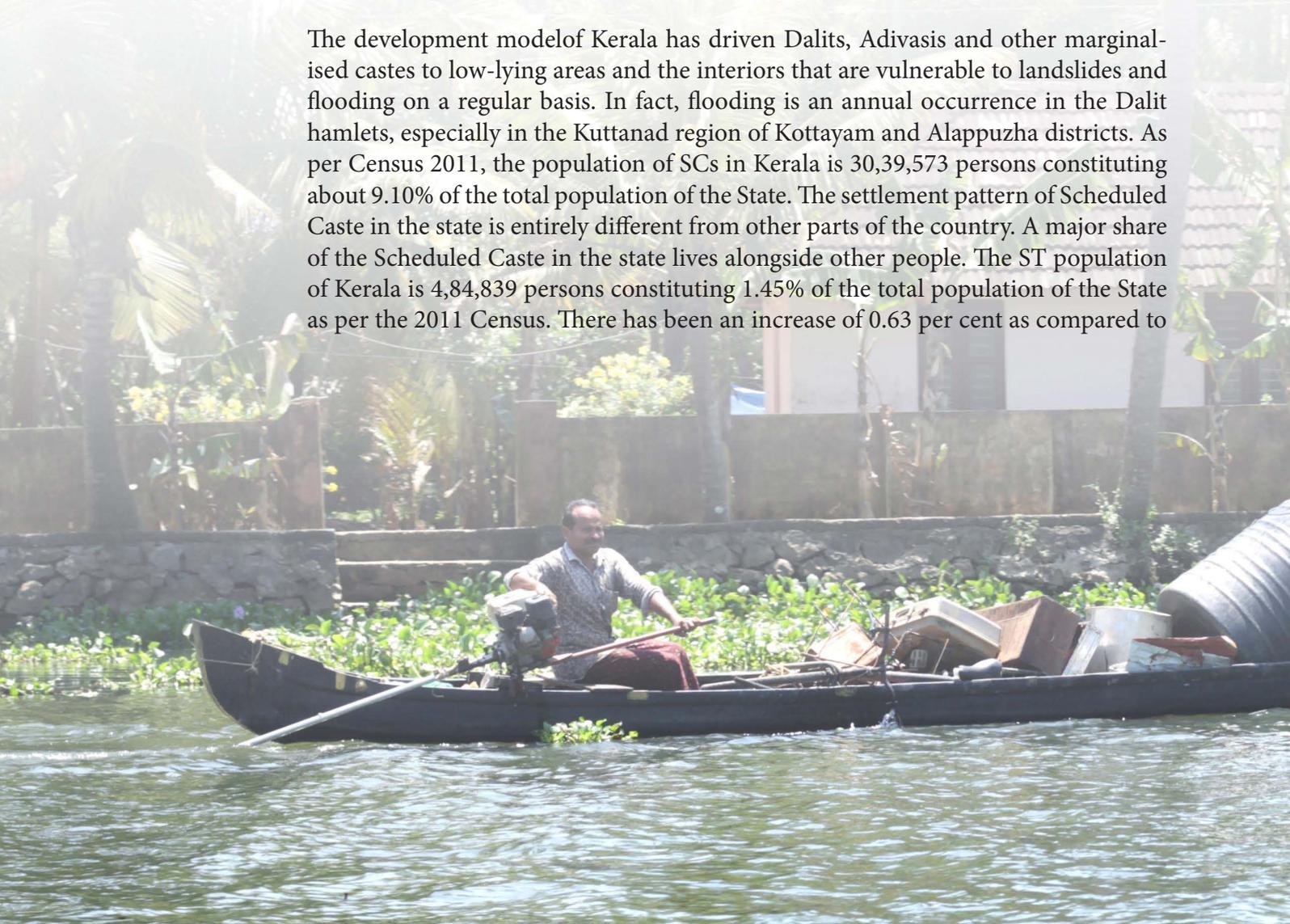
HISTORY OF CASTE-BASED EXCLUSION

To understand why Dalits are the worst victims in a disaster, it is important to understand the background of Dalit marginalisation and social exclusion. Under the Hindu caste system, people were categorised by their occupations, a practice that became hereditary. The Brahmins were the priests; Kshatriyas, the warriors or nobility, Vaisyas, the farmers, traders and artisans; and the Shudras were the labourers and servants. Those born outside of the caste system or 'Dalits' were considered spiritually and physically unclean, therefore, must live in a separate colony, must use separate water and eating facilities, must never come in contact with caste Hindus, and must perform the tasks considered too unclean for caste Hindus to do. Worldwide, at least 260 million people are reportedly affected by caste-based discrimination and inequality. The Dalits of South Asia constitute the majority of victims facing this form of structural discrimination, which leads to marginalization, social and economic exclusion and limited access to basic services, including water and sanitation.

Due to their inherited social status, Dalits and Adivasis, even today, continue to be subjugated, vulnerable to a wide range of human rights violations and multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. These discriminatory practices include physical and social segregation, restrictions on occupation or enforcement of certain types of menial jobs as well as widespread caste-based violence. The pre-existing conditions of oppression and discrimination based on caste are magnified and translate to systemic and societal exclusion during disasters. While several case studies of exclusion of marginalised and vulnerable communities in Disaster Risk Reduction(DRR) practices are recorded globally there is no segregated data on the damages and loss of lives and livelihoods, or of the forced migration of vulnerable communities. Therefore, while the government machinery and authorities may claim that they have rescued and rehabilitated the disaster-affected population, the question of who has been left behind remains, who has been excluded?

The systematic exclusion of Dalits and Adivasis from relief and rescue operations can be traced back to the inherent socio-economic vulnerability, active discrimination, and systemic deficiencies in the system (Gurusamy, 2009). Experiences have been shown that they have almost no opportunity to raise their concerns and very little influence within the corridors of politics and policy. Geographically, Dalits, SCs and STs are situated away from the main village, where there is a concentration of power, this lack of access to decision-making power renders them incapable of claiming their rights during and post disasters. For those who are not able to access their rights and entitlements due to caste-based discrimination, geo-cultural marginalisation, and lack of political representation the impact of a disaster is magnified. Furthermore, neglecting the nuances of caste structures, the lack of knowledge about the vulnerabilities of the Dalit and Adivasi communities, the failure to map them into the framework of disaster response and the administration's blind spot in times of disaster leads to further exclusion. These are the very structures that influence even the humanitarian agencies, which, besides the government, are the primary responders to disasters, from seeing the caste-specific vulnerabilities of a particular community and helping them out.

The development model of Kerala has driven Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalised castes to low-lying areas and the interiors that are vulnerable to landslides and flooding on a regular basis. In fact, flooding is an annual occurrence in the Dalit hamlets, especially in the Kuttanad region of Kottayam and Alappuzha districts. As per Census 2011, the population of SCs in Kerala is 30,39,573 persons constituting about 9.10% of the total population of the State. The settlement pattern of Scheduled Caste in the state is entirely different from other parts of the country. A major share of the Scheduled Caste in the state lives alongside other people. The ST population of Kerala is 4,84,839 persons constituting 1.45% of the total population of the State as per the 2011 Census. There has been an increase of 0.63 per cent as compared to



the 2001 Census. The ST communities are not only geographically concentrated, but are also overwhelmingly rural, with the highest concentration of ST in Wayanad District (31.24%) followed by Idukki (11.51%). Additional data from the Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes of Kerala (2008) of the Scheduled Tribes Development Department, shows that there are 1,07,965 tribal families residing in 4,762 hamlets in Kerala. About 11 per cent (540) of the tribal habitats are situated within the reserve forests and 20 per cent are in the immediate vicinity of reserve forests.

The inclusion monitoring studies of the post disaster response (including the Gujarat earthquake in 2001, the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in 2004, the Bihar floods and the Assam floods over the years, Phailin 2013, Uttarakhand Floods 2013, Hudhudin 2014, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu Floods in 2015, Bundelkhand and Maharashtra Drought in 2016 and the cyclone Vardahin 2016) have highlighted the degree to which, by virtue of their inherent socio-economic vulnerability, Dalits have been systematically excluded from relief and rehabilitation efforts. There are varied forms of discrimination these groups face during disasters, this includes the neglect of authorities to account for their losses; unjust and cumbersome procedures for proving losses in order to claim compensation; exclusion from enumeration for compensation; and low priority to reach out to Dalit hamlets. Even information, early warnings and government relief and rehabilitation programmes remain outside the purview of the Dalit community. The proximity of Dalit and Adivasi hamlets to areas that are prone to flooding and landslides is also what makes them particularly vulnerable. It is also safe to say that the suffering of Dalit and Adivasi communities is compounded by their comparative vulnerability, poverty and invisibility, as a result, it also takes longer for them to build their lives back.



OBJECTIVE

Over decades of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation work, the National Dalit Watch developed certain methods and tools for monitoring the extent of inclusion in relief and rehabilitation work. The far-reaching effects of such persistent and diligent monitoring can enable humanitarian and government agencies engaged in relief and rehabilitation work to recognize and acknowledge the exclusion of Dalits, Adivasis, and the most marginalised communities. It reveals the silent ways in which discrimination operates during disasters and provides the roadmap for a proactive approach to consciously reach out to these communities. Using the methods and findings of the inclusion monitoring study, agencies and government can prioritise inclusion as part of their assessments and reporting instruments.

Transparent and disaggregated reporting on the basis of caste, gender, age, and disability would go a long way in ensuring that disaster response, relief and rehabilitation measures are humane, inclusive, fair and just. For this, we need to have members of the communities that are being excluded or likely to be excluded, as part of assessment teams and decision-making fora. Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized groups in Kerala are organised and ready for representation, and it is imperative that the humanitarian actors, as well as government agencies, seek them out proactively and consciously so that in any relief and rehabilitation endeavour every last person counts. The study enhances the effectiveness of monitoring of inclusion in post-disaster response by accurately mapping the Dalit, Adivasi and other marginalised communities are or could be affected by disasters. This is achieved with a trained task force in all regions to monitor inclusion in the worst-affected regions through location mapping and geo-tagging of the historical and current damages, losses and the extent of inclusion in 40 panchayats across the four districts.

METHODOLOGY

A team from RIGHTS and its alliance partners conducted visits to the affected districts with a clear focus on assessing the situation of the affected communities in the areas devastated by floods. The overwhelming narrative of neglect of Dalit and Adivasi households by the rescue and relief services although unfortunate was not unexpected. In this scenario, RIGHTS made a preliminary assessment of the conditions of Dalit communities in over 90 villages of Pathanamthitta district and the Kuttanadu region spread across Alappuzha and Kottayam districts followed by more systematic documentation and analysis of this condition in these districts along with Wayanad, and Idukki. A questionnaire was developed to collect data in a precise, scientific manner, addressing issues like early warning, rescue, damage, loss of livelihood, water, sanitation and hygiene, assistance, conditions in the camp, compliances and compensation in close detail. The questionnaire was administered through a special application called ODK Collect which was designed for accurate and digital data collection while simultaneously geo-tagging the habitation/household of the respondent. The survey had a total of 1585 respondents with over 632 families from the SC community – the majority, 371 families, hailing from Pathanamthitta, followed by Alappuzha with 185 families. The 379 families from the ST community were split between Wayanad and Idukki with 279 and 100 families, respectively.

Habitations within ten panchayats were selected on the basis of parameters of severity and impact of the disaster. By focussing on geo-tagging the location with basic information of the households in the area, one could provide information on all households that are still reeling under the impact of the disaster. The sample, therefore, would include only the gram panchayats and habitations, while within the habitations the approach would be more or less a Census approach based on the parameters of impact. This would give a cross-section of communities other than SC and ST, particularly OBCs. Those families from the general communities that fall under the parameters also would also thus be included. If the mentioned approach includes a large number of households in a particular habitation, then, a feasible sample would be designed to ensure a scientific and systematic study. The map would be open and accessible to all, making it easier for humanitarian actors to see the incidence of exclusion, allowing them to locate and include the vulnerable populations in the last phase of relief distribution as well as in designing the next phase of rehabilitation. It would also provide real-time updates of relief distribution, gaps in the provision of relief in those locations, and instances of exclusion could be uploaded and made available

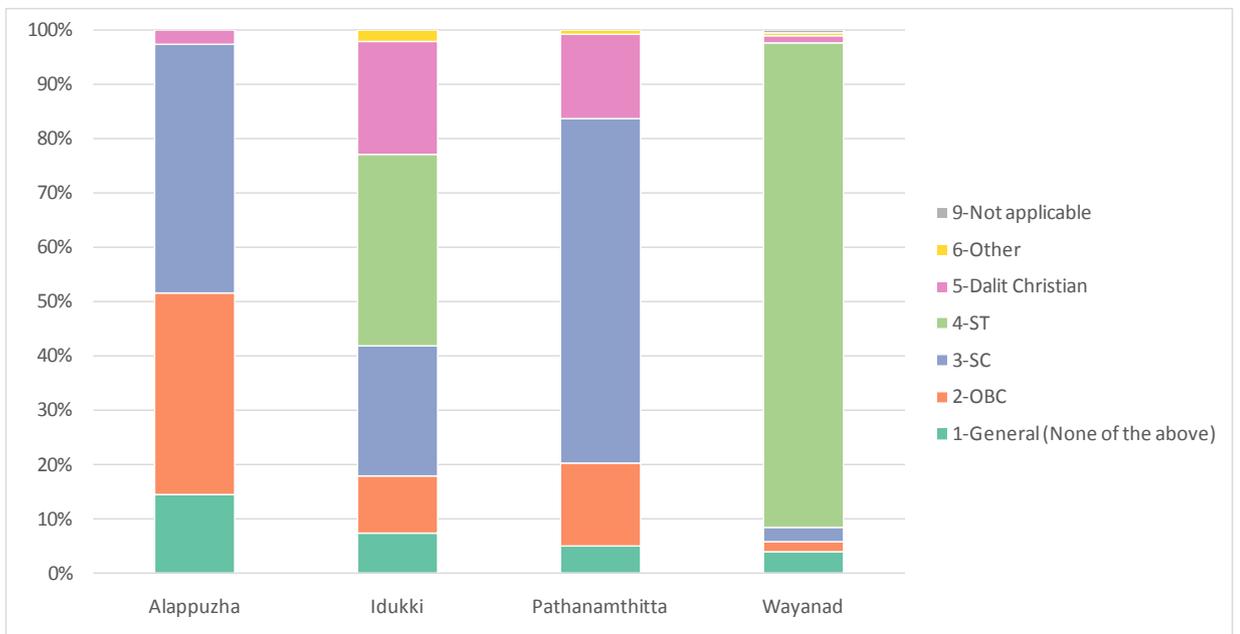


MAJOR FINDINGS

1 DEMOGRAPHICS

Community-wise distribution of Respondents:

DALITS	40.20%
ADIVASIS	24.11%
DALIT CHRISTIANS	10.50%
OBC	17.49 %
GENERAL	7.70 %



- Community-wise distribution of Respondents: Dalits respondents constitute 40.20%, Adivasi respondents 24.11% and Dalit Christians, 10.50% of the total. The sample has 17.49% OBC and 7.70% General communities also. A district-wise overview of the sample shows that the proportion of Dalit respondents are highest in Pathanamthitta district (63.86%) with Alappuzha coming next (45.79%). Expectedly Wayanad has the highest proportion of Tribal respondents (90.29%) followed by Idukki with 35.97%. The Idukki sample has 21.22% of the Dalit Christians while Pathanamthitta has 15.66%.



- Gender distribution of Respondents: Of all the respondents of the study, 56.87% of the respondents are female. This pattern is the strongest in the Tribal community where female respondents amount to 61.21%, with the Dalit community having 58.31% of female respondents and the OBC having 60.73% female respondents. The lowest percentages of female respondents are found in the general community (47.11%) and the Dalit Christian community (41.82%). But on the whole, the representation of women in the response has not gone below 41% for any community, which is quite good because women are more severely affected in any disaster and the responses received in this survey are less likely to be gender biased in favour of men.



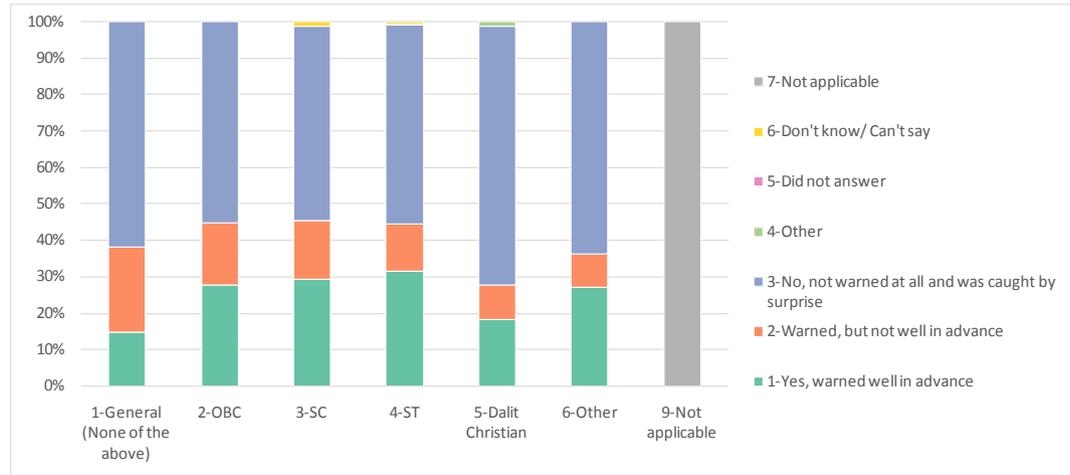
2 EARLY WARNING

- 57.00 % Not warned at all
- 72.42 % Not Properly warned
- 98.93 % In Idukki district not warned
- 92.30 % Primary Source of early warning is Government

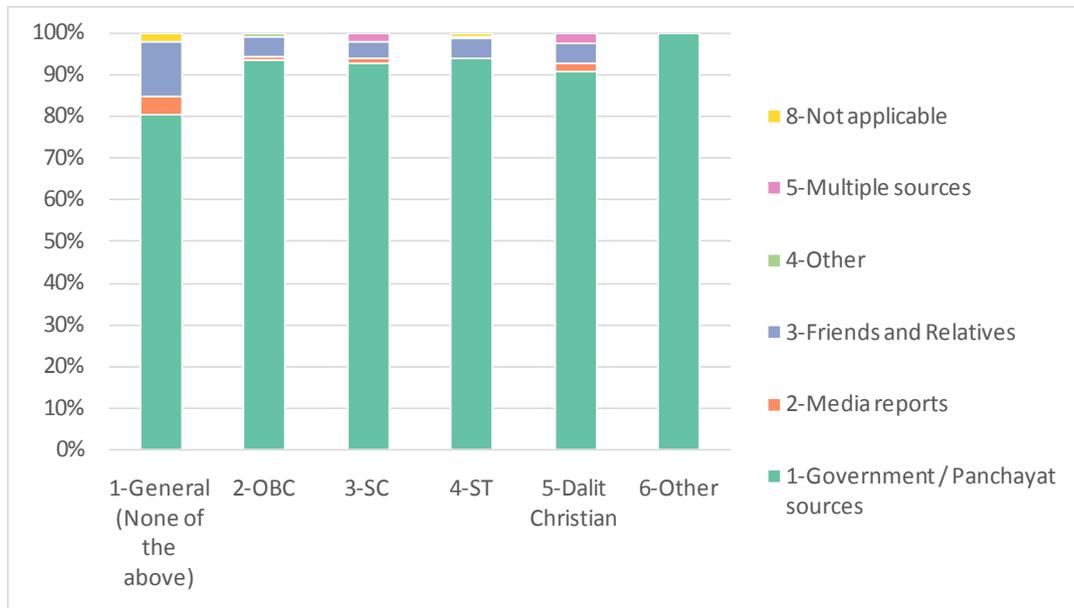
It is alarming to note that 57.01% of the respondents reported that they were not warned early and caught by surprise, 15.41% of people felt that the ‘early’ warning was not sufficiently early. So a total of 72.42% of all respondents reported that they did not receive a proper early warning. The situation in Idukki was particularly serious, where the panchayat was the only source of information regarding the impending disaster, an overwhelming 98.93% of all respondents from all communities did not receive any early warning. The communication systems in these areas were damaged due to the heavy downpour, as a result, people did not receive the early warnings and it hindered the coordination for further rescue.

For a vast majority of the respondents (92.30%) from all districts, the primary source of early warning is still the government or the panchayat. Except for a small section of the general community (20%) that seem to have other sources of early warning, most communities are almost fully dependent on the state authorities for early warning. The data points to major gaps and serious ineffectiveness of the early warning system of the government.

Were you warned of the impending disaster well in advance?



What was the first source of your information / warning?



Only a little less than half the respondents (46.39%) have reported that they were warned less than 12 hours in advance. If we were to add this to those who were warned more than 12 hours in advance but less than 24 hours, then the percentage shoots up to 59.19%. It is the situation of Adivasis in Idukki and Wayanad that stands out starkly – 91.25% of the Adivasi respondents reported that they were warned less than 12 hours in advance. Only 21.74% of the Dalit Christians in Wayanad and Idukki and 15.63% of Dalit Christians in Pathanamthitta received a sufficiently early warning (more than 48 hours in advance). In Idukki, the disruption of communication and transport services meant that certain communities were effectively disconnected, in fact, many people were unable to even reach the camp that was situated at Adimali. Two people lost their lives while trying to walk to the taluk hospital. It was only after paying such a heavy price that a red alert was declared in the district.



3 DAMAGE

66.67 % Partially damaged

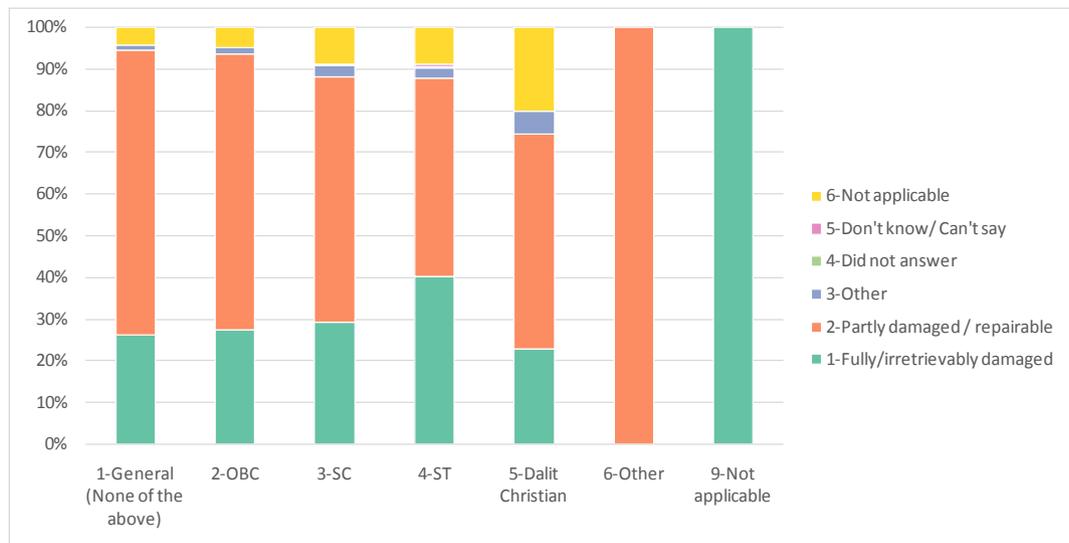
33.33 % Fully damaged

reports of irregularities in the estimation of damages and many houses have not been assessed by the authorities

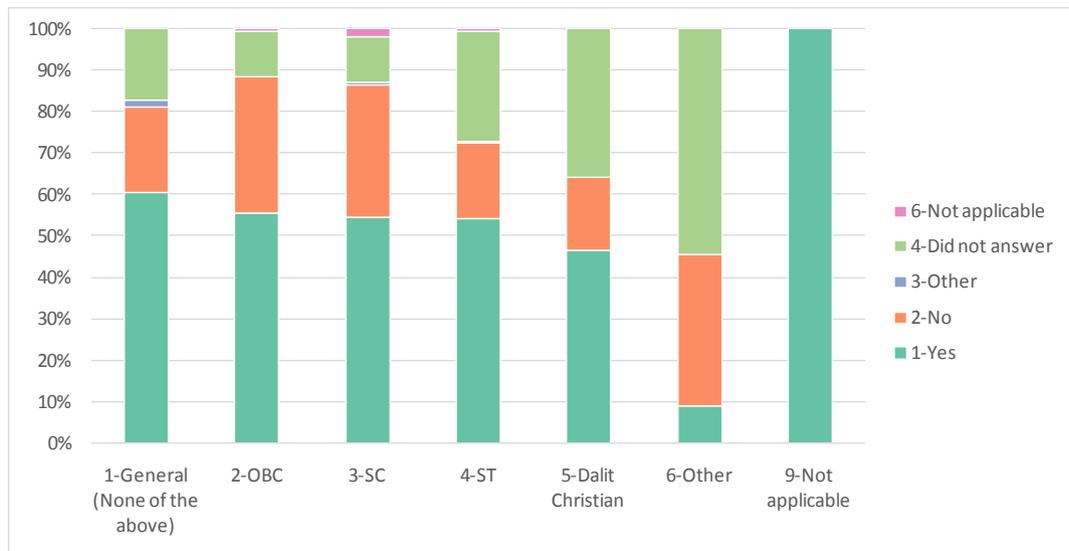
Although the government has made efforts to assess the damage to homes, there have been reports of irregularities in the estimation of damages and many houses have not been assessed by the authorities. Many of the houses are irretrievable yet they have been categorised as 15% damaged. At least 66.67% of houses suffered part damage and 33.33% were fully damaged, this damage was predominantly suffered by the ST community with 45.95% of the respondents reporting that their homes had been fully damaged. In Wayanad, the STs were worst affected with nearly 52.49% homes damaged, 47.51% of respondents said that their homes were partially damaged. The Dalit Christians in the district also suffered 25% full, irretrievable loss to their homes, and nearly 75% said their houses were partially damaged. 87.50% of SCs reported part damage. In Idukki too, the major damage is within the SC community, where 39.58% reported full damage and 60.42% reported partial damage. In Alappuzha, 90.91% of Dalit Christians reported partial damage to their homes.

The deep impact of discrimination in settlements and housing is apparent in the damage to households and property. 66.77% reported that their house was in danger of being hit by a disaster, the burden is nearly the same among all communities – 74.28% among the STs, 73% in general, 72.64% of Dalit Christians, 62.96% in OBC and 62.43% among SCs. In Wayanad, 74.18% reported yes and at least 83.33% of these were from the OBC community and of the 61% that reported yes in Pathanamthitta, 73.63% were Dalit Christians and 62.22% are OBCs.

Is your house in danger of being hit by landslides or being damaged due to excess rains weakening the foundation?



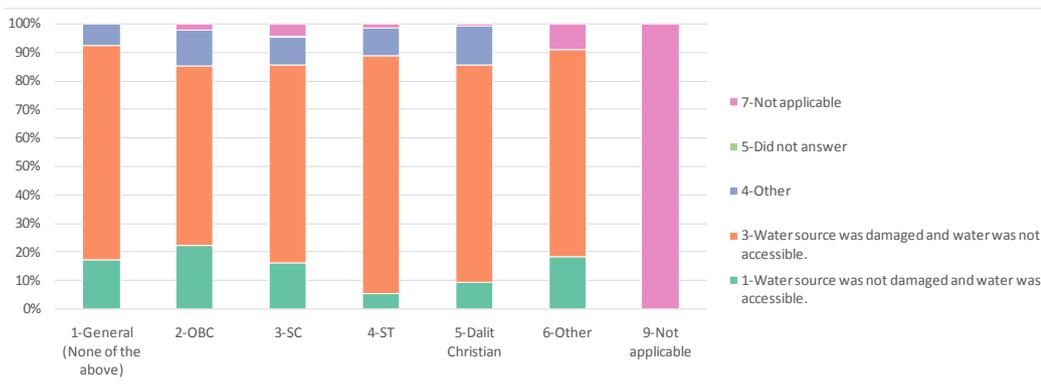
How much of your house was damaged due to the disaster?



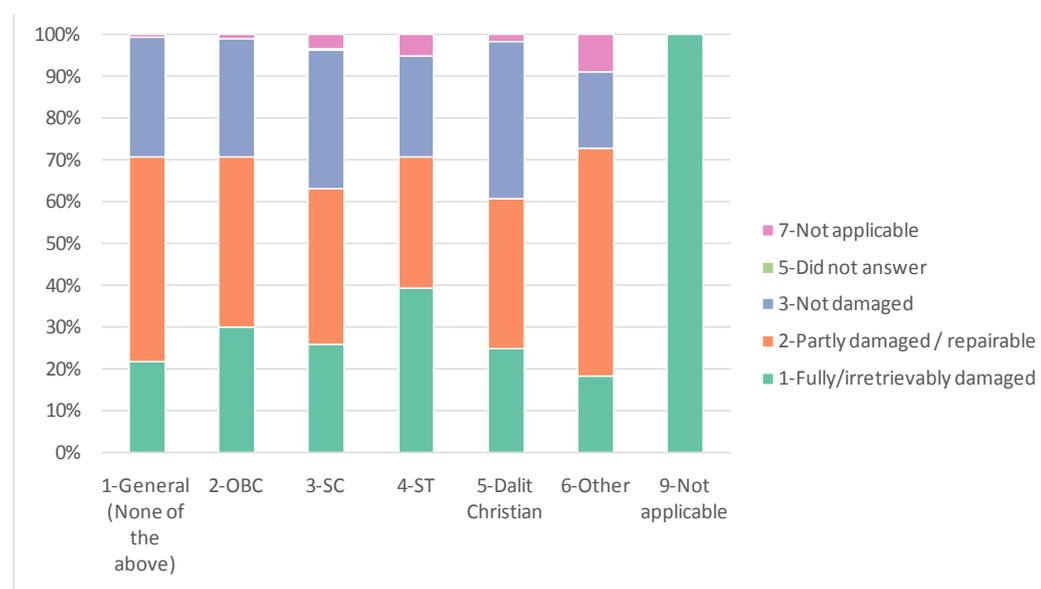
Of all the people that were surveyed, nearly 71.18% reported that water sources were damaged and water was not accessible – with STs at 82.85% being the most affected followed closely by Dalit Christians at 74.55%. In Wayanad, 100% of the Dalits had no access to clean water and 81.72% of STs were affected too. In Idukki too, water sources were damaged for 88.14% Dalit Christians and 86% STs. In Madavana Dalit colony, one mother narrated her experience of catching rain in

spoons due to the scarcity of drinking water and eating coconuts that were floating in the flood water.

62.12% of all respondents reported damage to household assets, over 66.46% of this damage was reported by the SC community across all the districts followed



Were water sources accessible after the disaster?



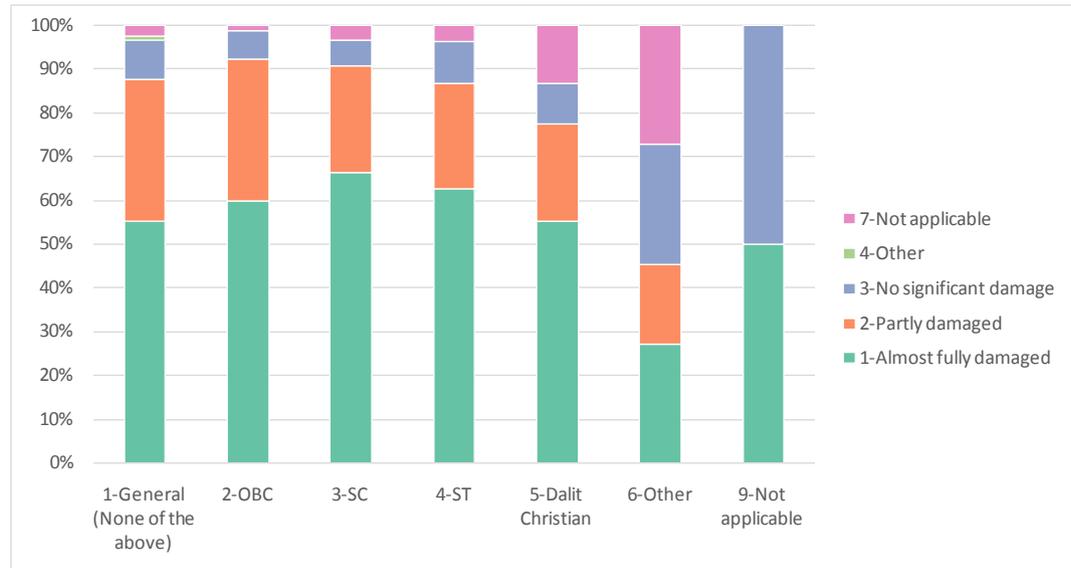
Were sanitation facilities damaged due to the disaster?

by 62.80% in the STs. In Pathanamthitta, 80.22% Dalit Christians in Pathanamthitta and 81.36% STs in Wayanad reported the highest damage. It is also interesting to note that many Dalit Christians said that the question did not apply to them, which could indicate the overall lack of assets in their possession. Preetha who has been living in Pandanadu for seven years is familiar with the annual flooding patterns of the region, however, this time the floods took everyone by surprise. Like most of the Dalit houses in the area, her house is more than 50 years old and was completely submerged and the water destroyed all her possessions.

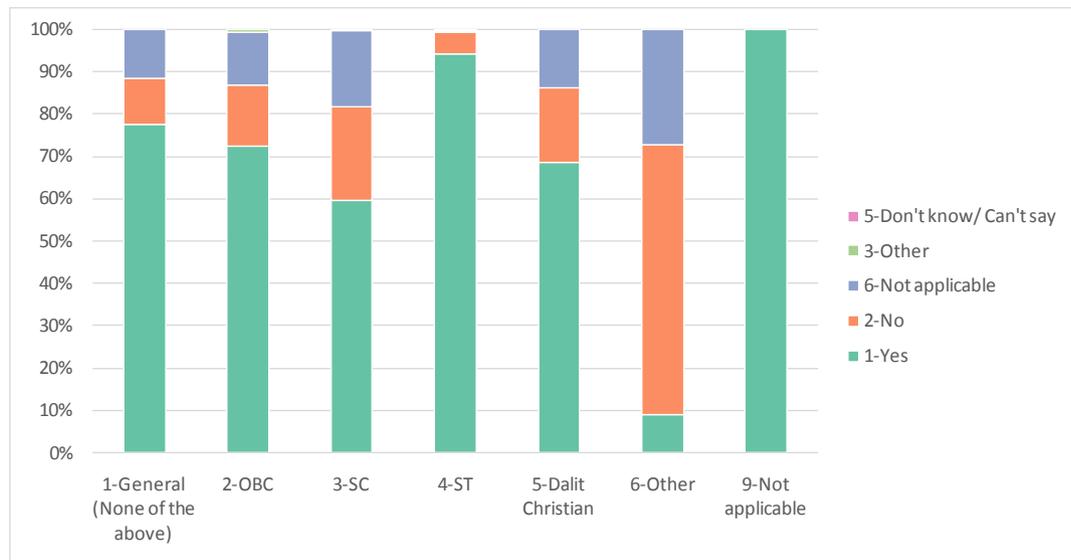
Of the 72.11% that reported damage to livelihood, 94.20% were STs who were put out of work due to the disaster. 89.83% of the general community also suffered damage to their livelihood. In Wayanad, the numbers are high across communities, where 100% of OBCs, SCs, and Dalit Christians lost their livelihood, 97% and 91.67% belong to ST and general respectively. In Idukki too, the disaster had tremendous repercussions on the livelihoods of the Dalit Christians, 88.14% and the

STs, 86.00%. Given the predominance of agriculture in all affected districts, 31.17% of all respondents lost crops on their own land. The ST community suffered the most damage across all districts at 64.91% with the highest losses reported at 83% in Idukki and 58.42% in Wayanad. The Dalit Christian community too lost crops on their own land – 81.36% of which were in Idukki. Damage to livestock too was highest among STs, with 30.08% reporting that they had lost either cattle, poultry, or goats. In Wayanad, 40.86% of STs and 25% of Dalit Christians lost a lot of their livestock.

Were your household assets damaged due to the disaster?

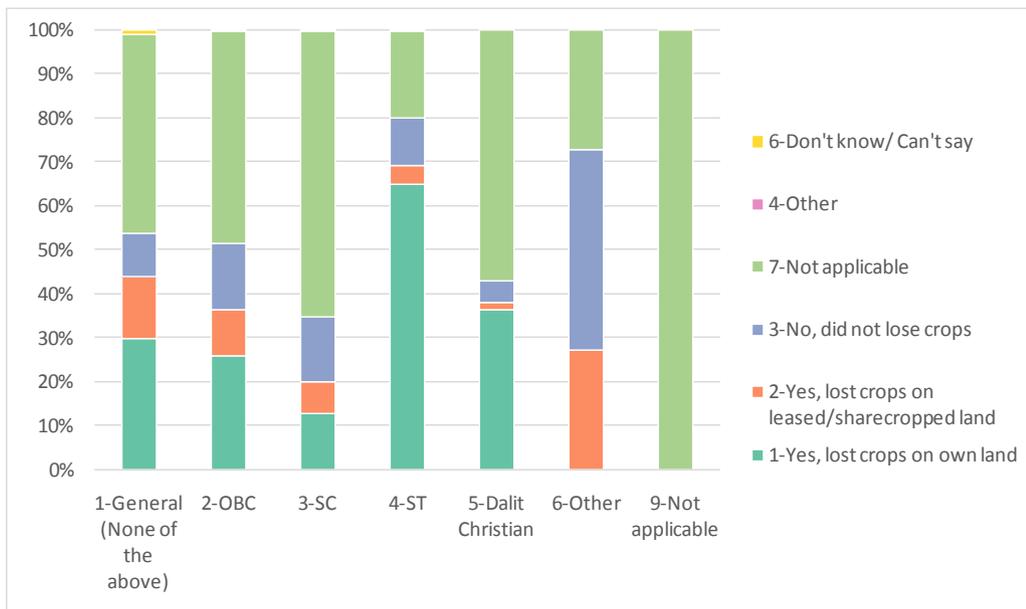


Was your livelihood damaged due to the disaster?

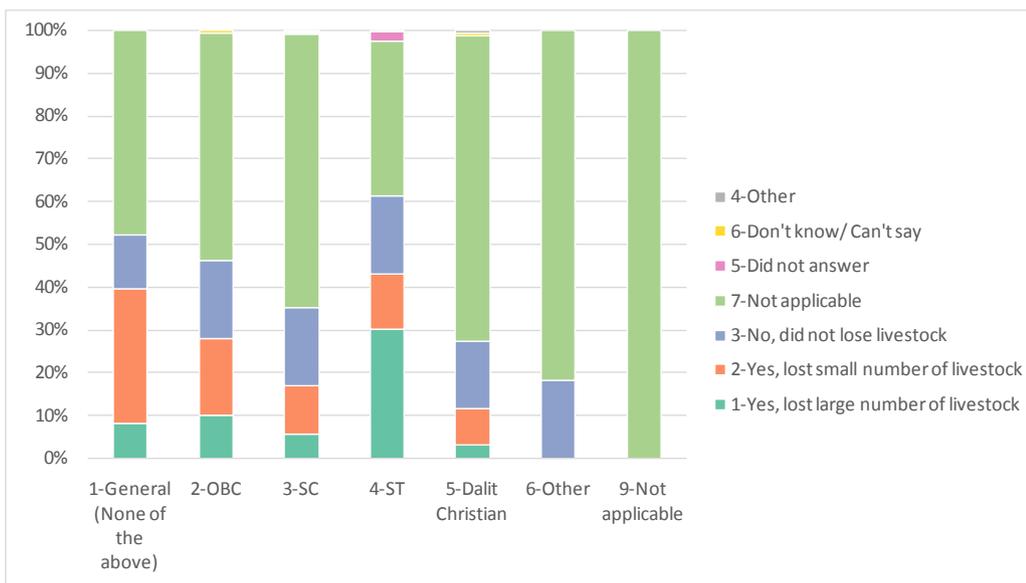


Daily wage labourers are still reeling from the effects of the disaster with many facing difficulties in finding work post the floods. Nearly 91.67% of respondents lost their daily wages due to the disaster with 94.55% OBCs and 94.62% SCs. This can be seen in the district data for Alappuzha, OBCs at 93.29 and SCs at 91.35, Pathanamthitta with OBCs at 97.78% and SCs at 96.77%, and in Wayanad where 100% of OBCs and SCs reported the loss of daily wages. In Idukki, the STs at 97% and the Dalit Christians at 98.31% were most affected. Many have been put out of work as their tools and any other means of livelihood, like fishing nets, carts, looms, raw materi-

als, and machines were either lost or damaged. The highest among this has been reported by the OBC community at 39.27%. In Alappuzha, nearly 53.02% OBCs and 36.36% Dalit Christians reported losses and in Wayanad nearly half the Dalit Christians at 50% reported losses. Many respondents also reported that they had lost their business and inventory. 49.34% reported losses, highest being among the ST community at 54.62%. In Alappuzha, 81.82% from the Dalit Christian community and in Wayanad 75% from the SC community and Dalit Christian community also reported losses. In Kainakary panchayat, a family whose livelihood depended upon their shop lost all their stock in the flood and have been left helpless, struggling to get the shop running again. However, the authorities have overlooked it and have made no record of these concerns. A large percentage of the ST population in Idukki said that the question does not apply to them. This might indicate that they might not be involved in a business or did not have any inventory at the time of the disaster. In Wayanad, only 9.32% from the ST community reported any losses at all.



Were your crops damaged due to the disaster?

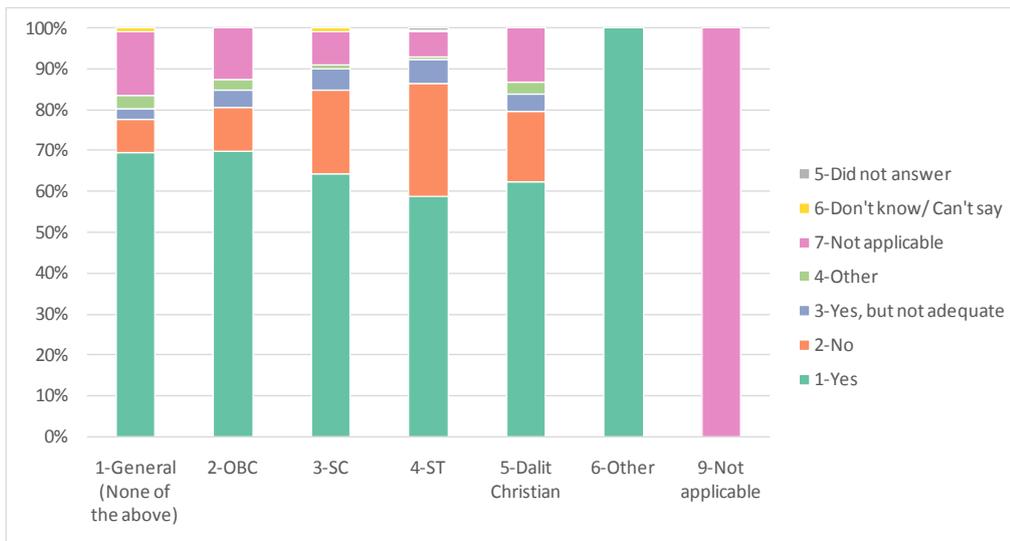


Was your livestock damaged due to the disaster?

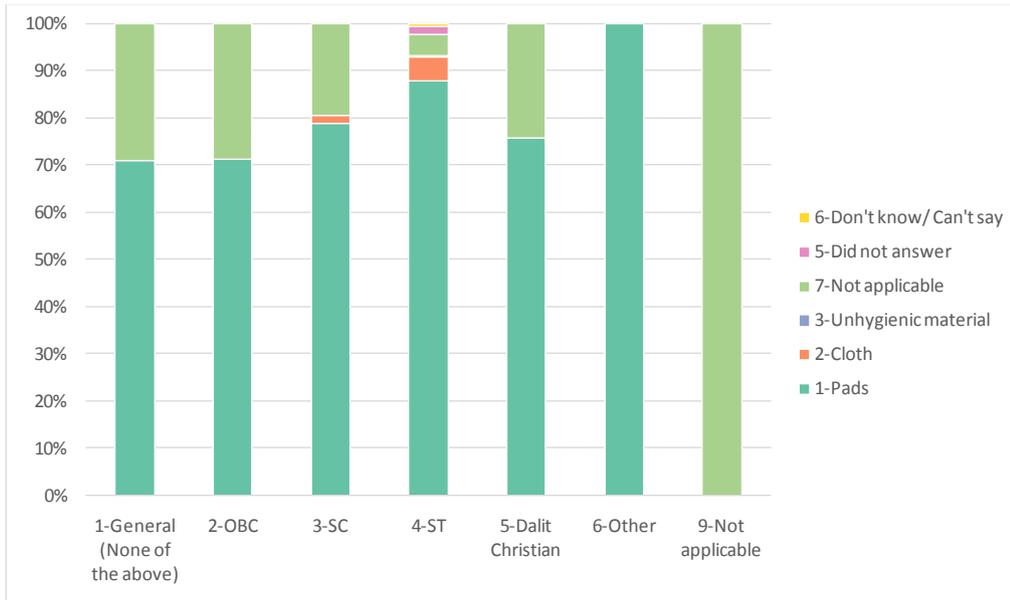


4 WOMEN

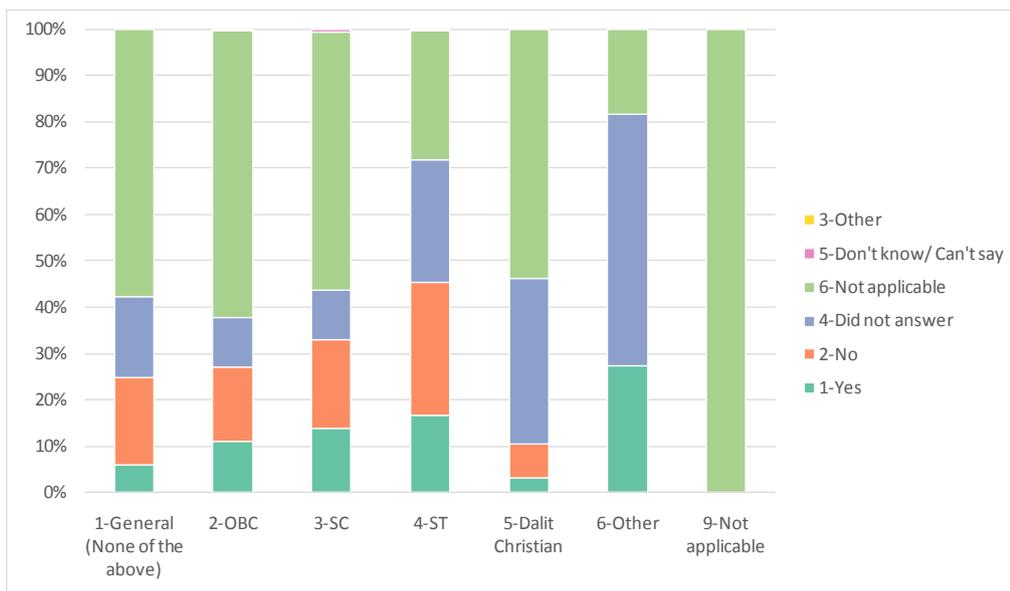
At the Devaswom Board school camp, as many as eight families were cramped into a single classroom with no regard for the privacy and vulnerability of women in such a sensitive situation, there were no separate areas for women and men and women were forced to stay together.



Was there enough privacy for women and girls after the disaster with respect to sanitation facilities?



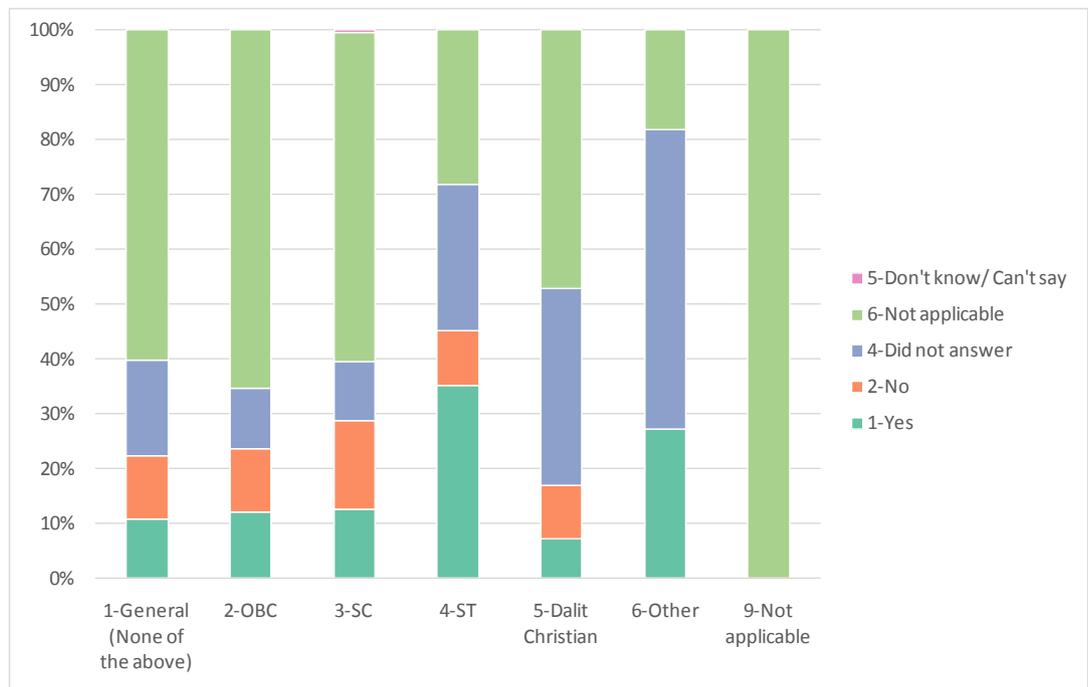
Which menstrual hygiene product did women have access to during and after disaster?



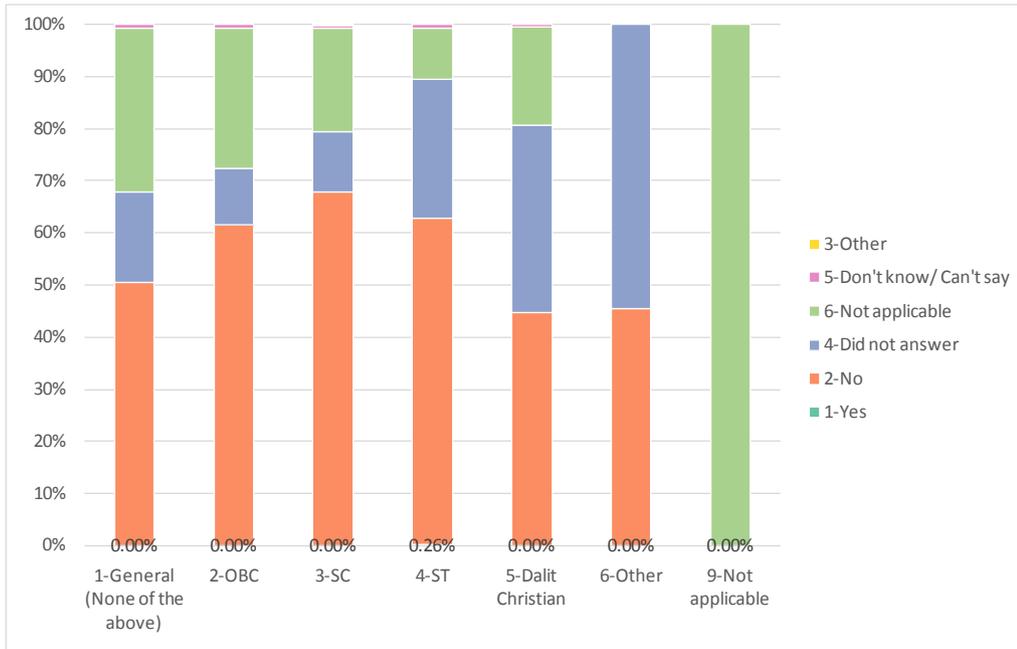
As a pregnant / lactating woman did you receive services from government staff (ANM/Anganwadi worker) - supplementary nutrition, medicines etc?

Most women and girls, (64.35%), reported that there was sufficient privacy with regard to sanitation facilities after the disaster. However, in Wayanad, 30% of the ST respondents and 50% of Dalit Christians said that women did not have enough privacy, which is higher than all the other communities across all the districts. At the Devaswom Board school camp, as many as eight families were cramped into a single classroom with no regard for the privacy and vulnerability of women in such a sensitive situation, there were no separate areas for women and men and women were forced to stay together.

Did the government staff provide services for the infant?



Barring a small percentage of ST (5%) and SC (1.58%) women, all groups had access to pads during and after the disaster. However, nearly 40% of pregnant or lactating mothers did not receive services from ANM or Anganwadi workers. The lowest was among the Dalit Christian and ST mothers in Wayanad where 50% and 39.07% respectively did not receive the care or nutrition that they needed. Mothers with infants also did not receive the necessary care or services, with only 17.29% of respondents saying that they received services from the government staff, the highest was for STs at 35.09%. Wayanad seems to fare better than most districts at 44.87% with at least 47.67% of the ST population and 33.33% of the OBC population reporting that they received additional care for infants. One woman from the ST community in Wayanad and another from the SC community in Pathanamthitta reported lewd remarks from the men in the camp, the men were all from the general category.



Did you face any unwanted / lewd / insulting remarks or comments from men in the camp?

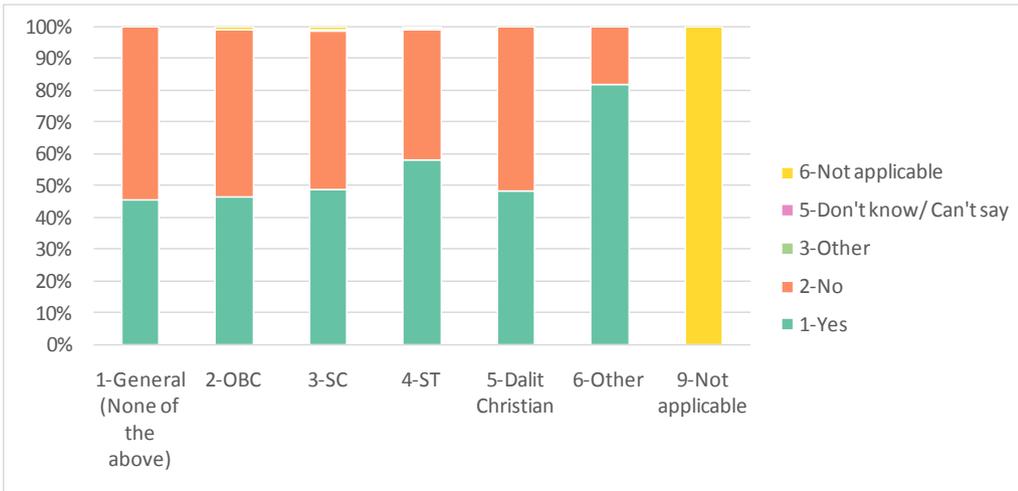




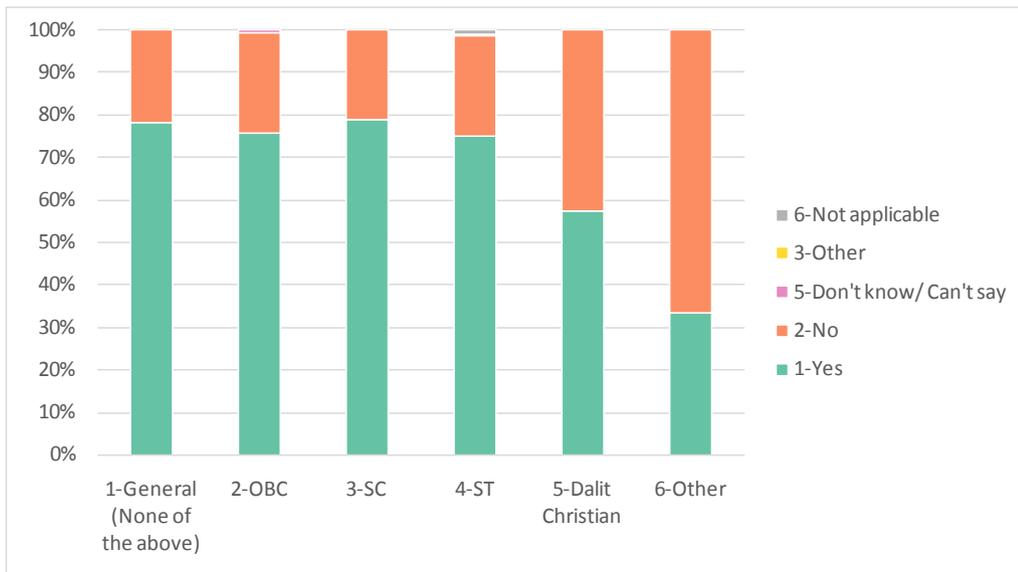
5 CHILDREN

It is also important to maintain a child-friendly atmosphere in the camps, but the camps were not at all equipped for children, having no supplies of books, toys, or even supplementary foods.

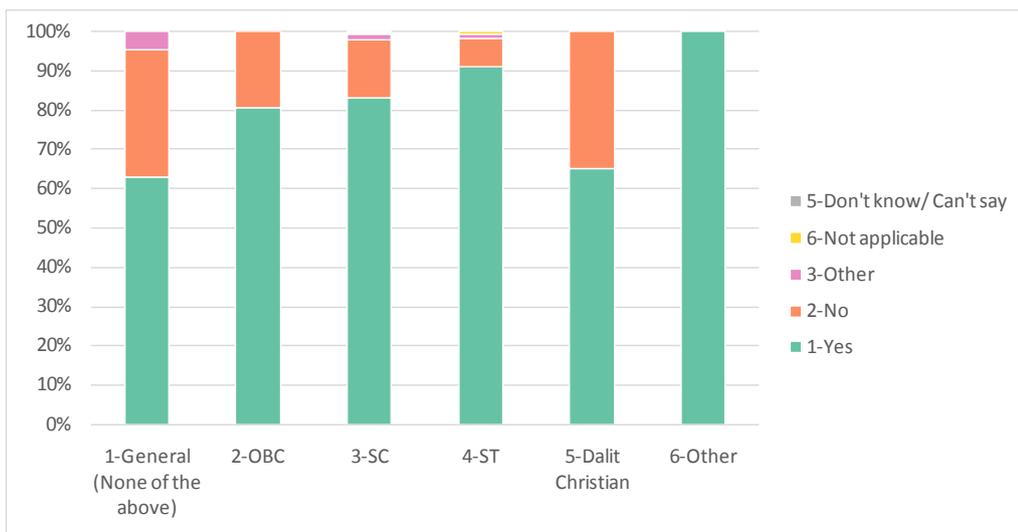
Children are often overlooked in disaster situations, their needs often lumped together with those of women. However, the psychological impact that trauma such as this can have over them is immense, they are also extremely vulnerable to communicable diseases. It is also important to maintain a child-friendly atmosphere in the camps, but the camps were not at all equipped for children, having no supplies of books, toys, or even supplementary foods. . Across communities, around half of those surveyed had children, and almost 75% of these children had lost their school books in the floods. Overall, over 80% of the children have received textbooks, bags and notebooks from the government or other agencies.



Do you have school-going children?

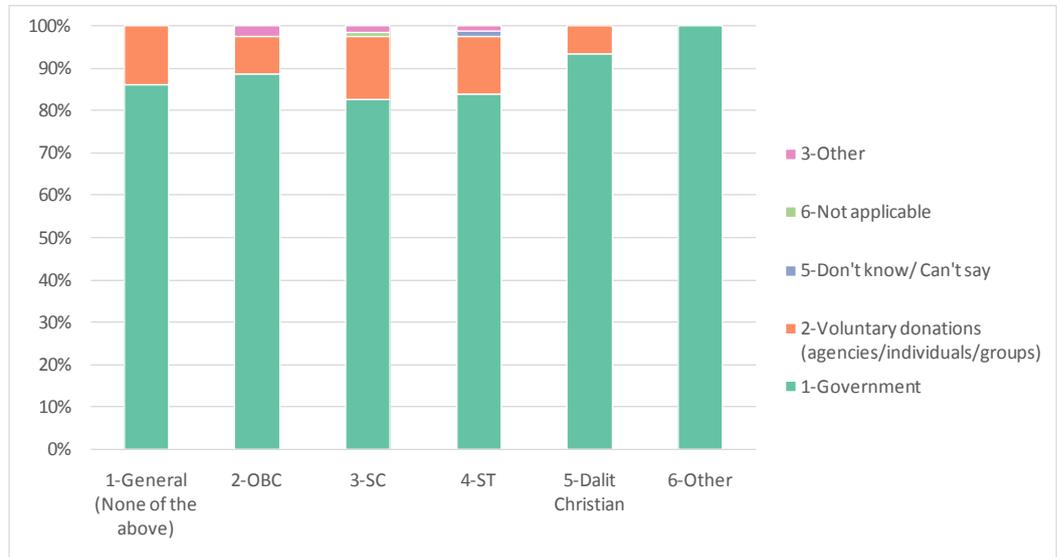


Did they lose their school books in the floods?



Did they receive text books, note books and bags?

Who provided these text books, note books and bags?





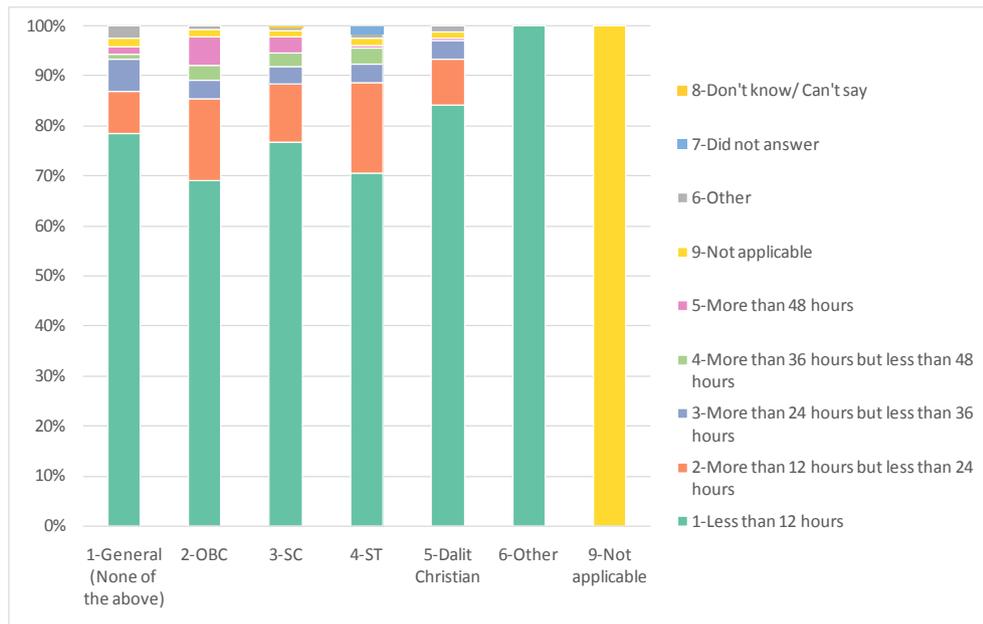
6 RESCUE

In fact, some tribal villages of Wayanad, have reported that no relief efforts were undertaken, and around 87.50% of the SC respondents agreed, that rescue and relief were provided mainly to the residential areas that were more easily accessible, so did 69.23% of Dalit Christians in Pathanamthitta.

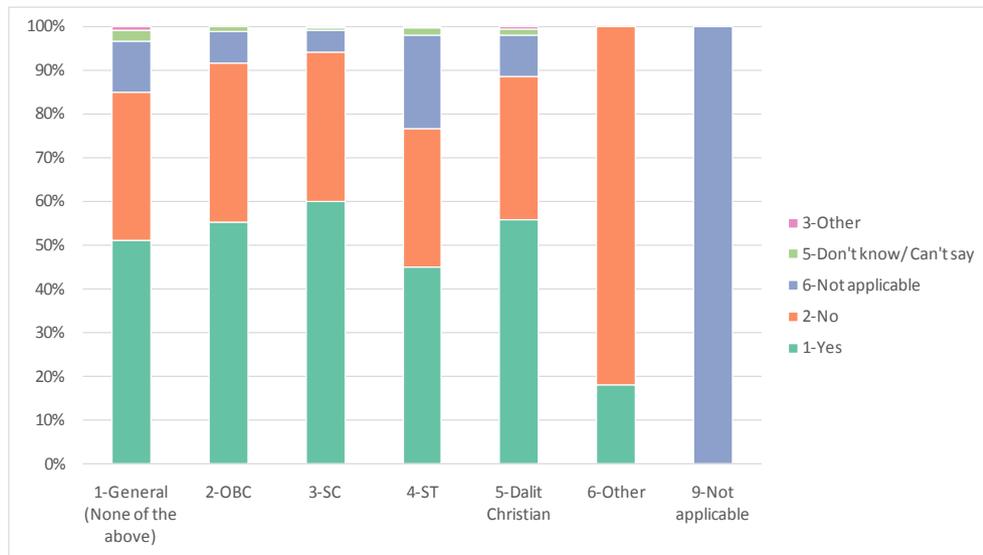
Most of the respondents across communities were rescued less than 12 hours post the floods. A higher percentage of OBC respondents (5.82%) had to wait for more than 48 hours for rescue/relief as compared to others. In Alappuzha, only 63.76% OBC respondents were rescued within 12 hours and 10.7% had to wait more than 48 hours. In Idukki, only 21% of ST respondents were rescued within 12 hours and 12% had to wait more than 36 hours. And in Wayanad, a lower percentage of SC respondents were rescued within 12 hours as compared to others. In Pathanamthitta, however, the figure shows a marked increase in how prompt the rescue services were – 87.9% Dalit Christians were rescued before 12 hours. More than half (59%) of the respondents agreed that rescue and relief were late and inadequate because their residential area was not easily accessible. A significant number

of OBCs (80%) and Dalit Christians (78%) from Idukki and all the respondents from the SC community in Wayanad agreed that rescue and relief were inadequate because their residential areas were not easily accessible. In fact, some tribal villages of Wayanad, have reported that no relief efforts were undertaken, and around 87.50% of the SC respondents agreed, that rescue and relief were provided mainly to the residential areas that were more easily accessible, so did 69.23% of Dalit Christians in Pathanamthitta.

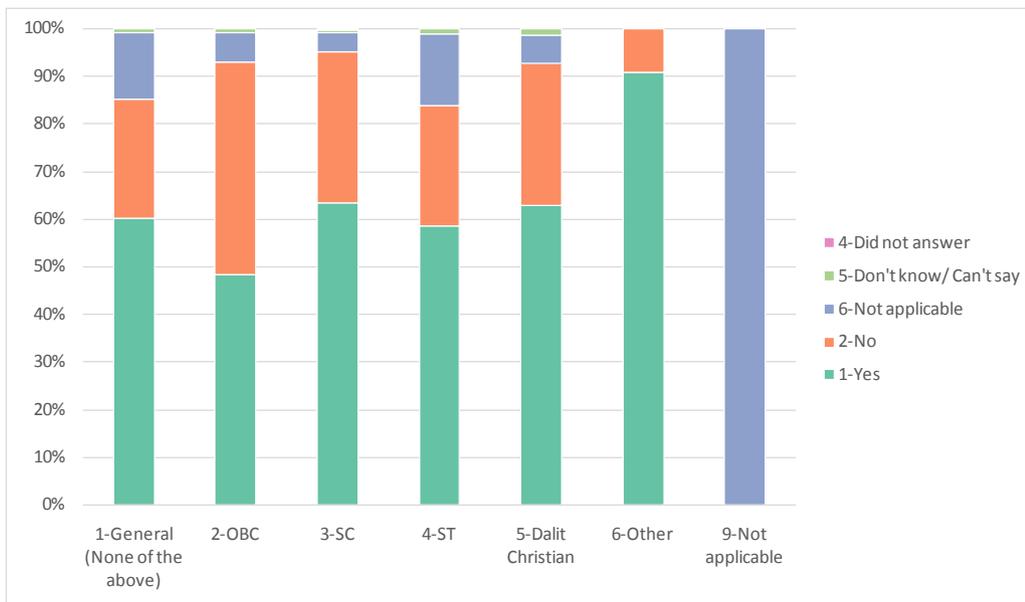
What was the time lag between the occurrence of the disaster and the first rescue / relief intervention?



Was quick and adequate rescue and relief provided mainly to residential areas that were more easily accessible?

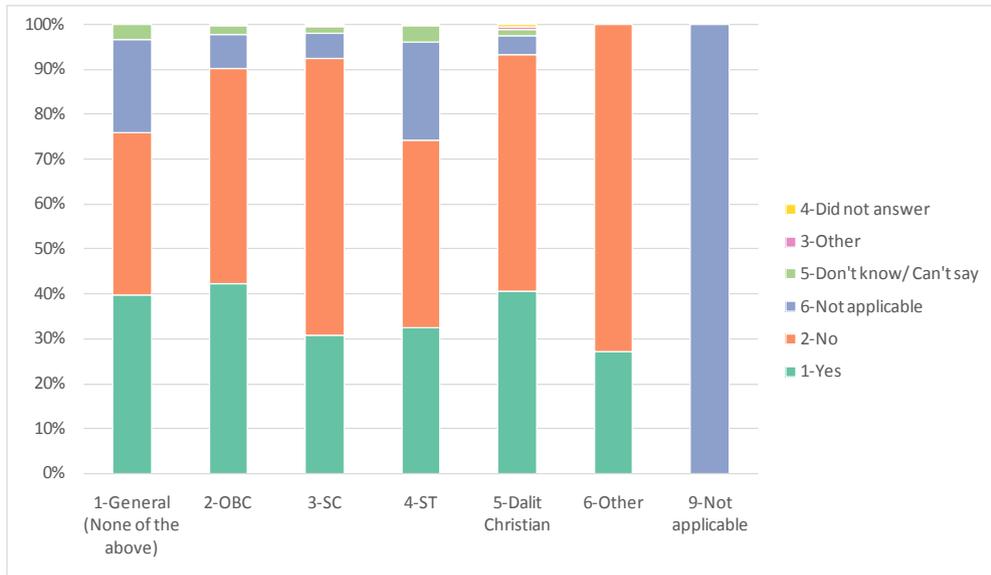


Over 20.57% of all the respondents said that certain communities were given higher priority during rescue and relief activities. At least 37.28% of the ST community in Wayanad have reported incidents of discrimination, and 54.13% agreed that quick and adequate rescue was provided to areas that were more easily accessible. It is important to note that this is a case of discrimination by default since the areas that are easily accessible are mostly occupied by dominant caste families. This discrimination persisted in the case of relief distribution, over 50% of the respondents felt that relief material was not provided uniformly across communities in their area. In fact, vehicles carrying relief material were stopped by people from dominant castes living in the residential area of Thirumoolapuram, Thiruvalla. The OBC population felt more so than others – with 38.26% in Alappuzha, 56.67% in Idukki, 42.22% in Pathanamthitta, and 66.67% in Wayanad reporting discrimination. Almost 35% of respondents also reported that there were differences in the quantity and quality of relief material provided to different communities, especially among the SC, ST and Dalit Christian communities. In Wayanad, 100% of the Dalit Christian community and 87.50% of the SC community reported that there were significant differences in the quantity and quality of relief material provided to different communities.

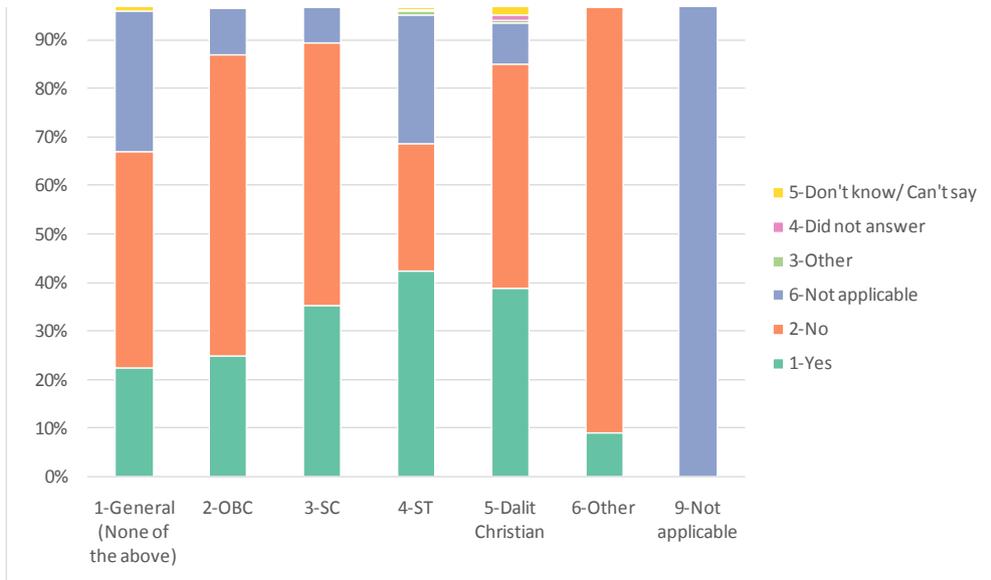


Was rescue and relief late and inadequate because your residential area was not easily accessible?

Were the relief material provided uniform across communities in your habitation?



Were there any significant differences in the quantity and quality of relief material provided to different communities?





7 RELIEF

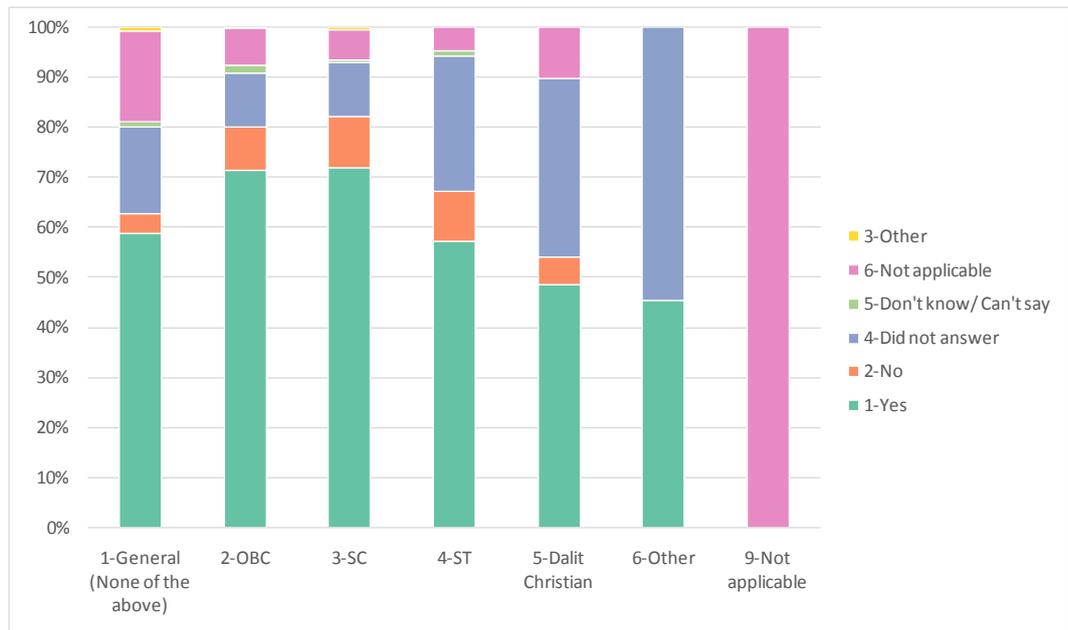
Raghu from Eraviperoor said that after the initial days of the flood, he visited Dalit colonies in and around the village and found that many camps had turned into 'caste camps'.

Almost all communities, 64.76%, said that the respondents were registered together, with the highest being in Alappuzha at 86.39%, 73.49% in Pathanamthitta, and 78.32% in Wayanad. Nearly 57.95% also said that all registered families stayed together at the camps. In Wayanad, however, the STs (32.26%) and the Dalit Christians (50%) reported that all communities did not stay together. A significant number of SCs (43.13%) from Pathanamthitta also reported that all registered families from all communities did not stay together at the relief camp they went to. Raghu from Eraviperoor said that after the initial days of the flood, he visited Dalit colonies in and around the village and found

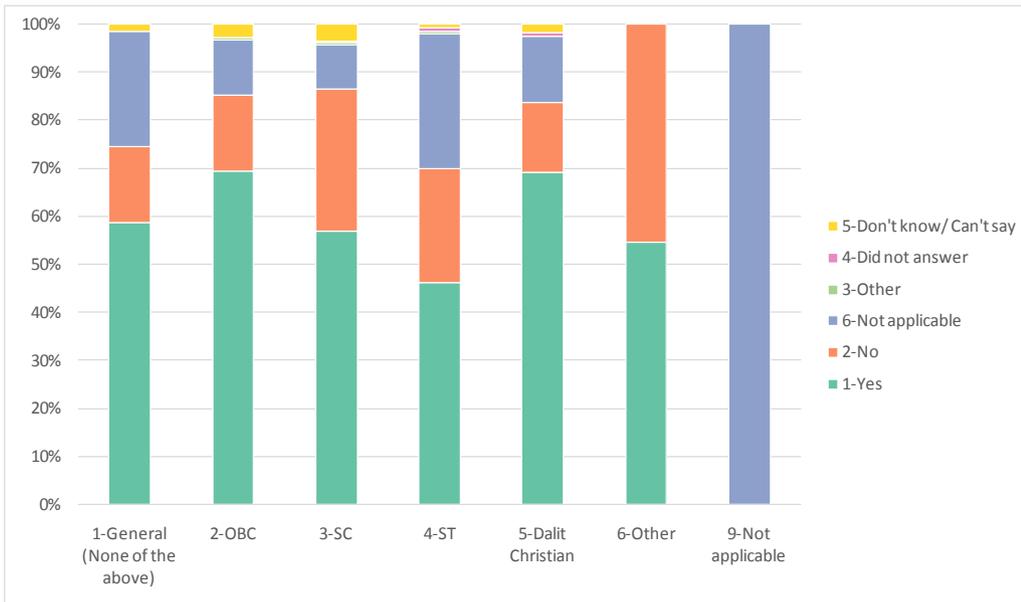
that many camps had turned into ‘caste camps’. While all the flood-affected were registered at the camps together, those who belonged to dominant castes soon moved to take shelter in the homes of their friends and relatives, or they went to camps set up by community-centric organisations like the Nair Service Society for Nairs, and the Syrian Christians went to camps organised by the church.

Over 13% of respondents said that there were separate camps for dominant and Dalits and Adivasi communities. 19.53% of STs reported that the camps were segregated by caste, 46.28% of the general community also confirmed that the camps were segregation by caste. Nearly 35% of the respondents in Wayanad also confirmed the reports of separate camps for Dalits and Dominant Castes. While examining discrimination in other aspects of staying at the camp, the community that seems to have been marginalised the most appear to be the STs. When asked if some communities were favoured by giving them larger and more comfortable spaces, at least 23.48% STs replied yes with 30.47% of the respondents coming from Wayanad. When asked if members of certain communities refused to eat together with the Dalit or Adivasi communities, nearly 24% of the ST community said yes. Once again this figure is highest in Wayanad, with 43% reporting cases of discrimination. Preetha from Pandanad panchayat in Pathanamthittarecalled her experience at Panadnad High school that had been converted to a camp, where she and seven other Dalit families that included toddlers, children, old men and women were crammed into a single room. The camp had only six toilets for over 2000 people who had to live in the camp in unhygienic conditions.

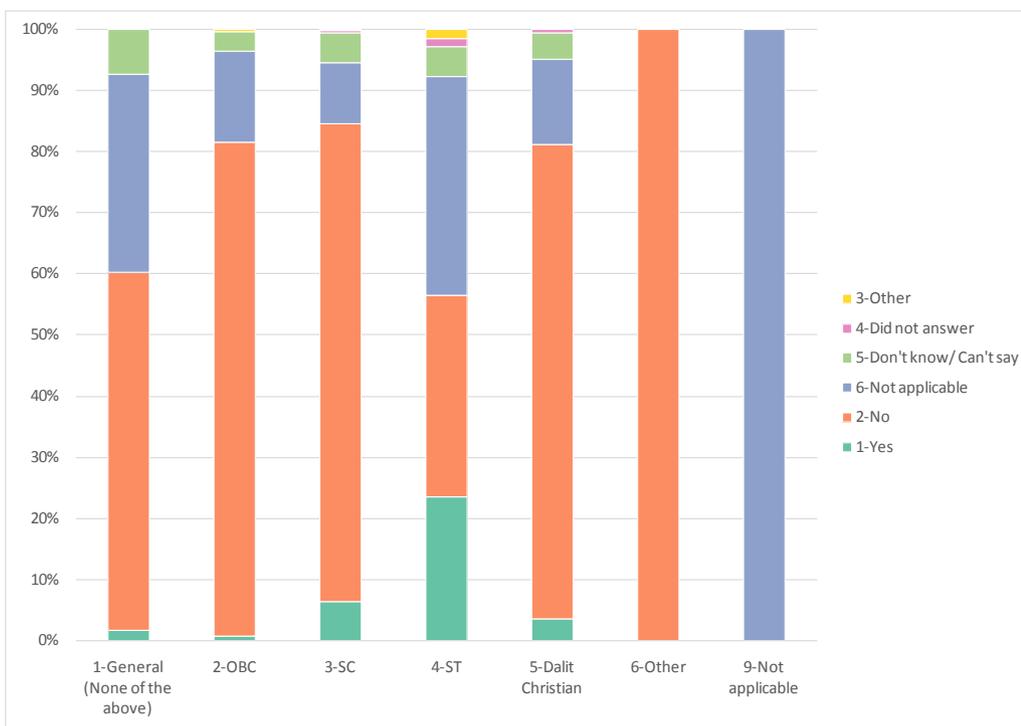
Were affected people from all communities registered together in the relief camp you went to?



When asked if members of a certain community refused to have food prepared by the Dalit and Adivasi communities, 47% among the STs in Wayanad reported that they faced this discrimination. Similarly, when asked if there was a separation of water sources and vessels for Dalit and Adivasi communities, 15.83% of the ST community reported, yes. In Wayanad, 21.51% of the ST community were joined by 50% of the Dalit Christians in reporting this. In Pandanad, Dalit youth risked their lives to rescue an old man from a dominant caste community. The man was stranded in the water for three days, yet he refused to eat food cooked by Dalits when he reached the camp.

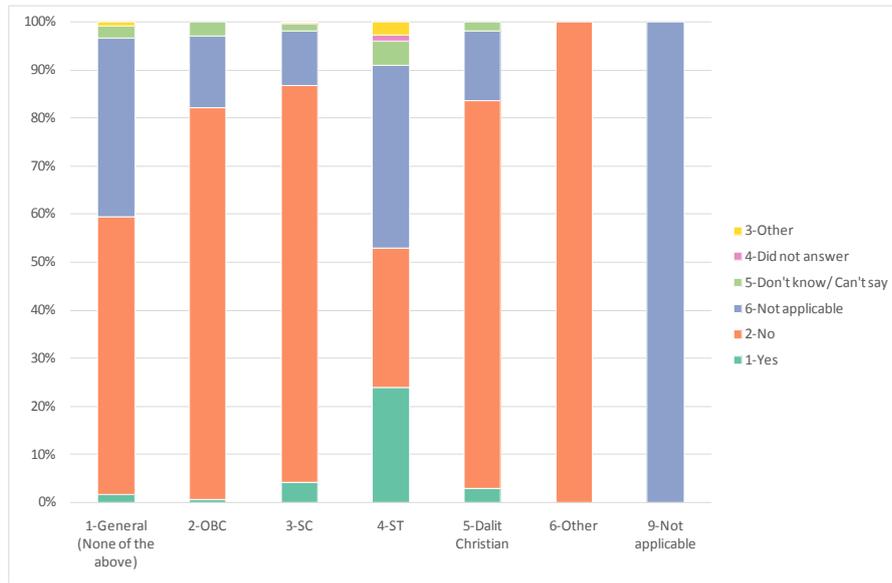


Did the registered families from all communities stay together in the relief camp you went to?

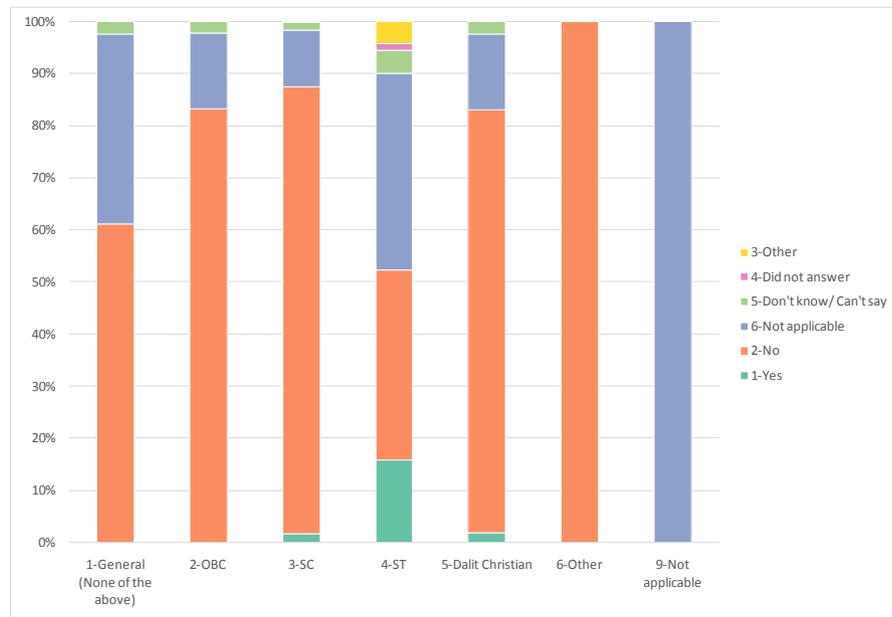


Were there special, larger and more comfortable spaces given to members of certain communities as compared to dalit/ adivasi communities?

Did members of certain communities leave or refuse to have food together with dalit/ adivasi communities?

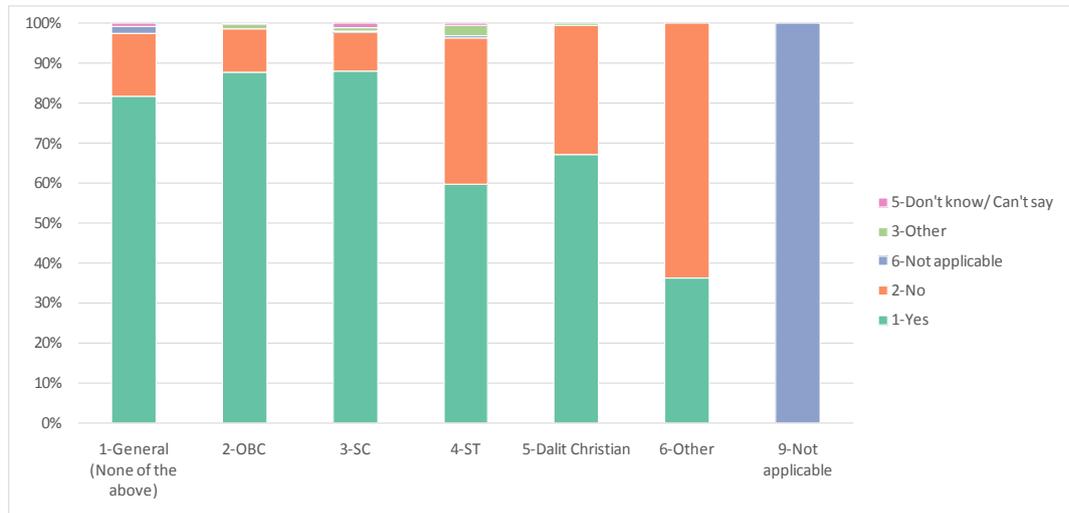


Was there any separation of water sources, vessels etc. for dalit/ adivasi communities and other communities?

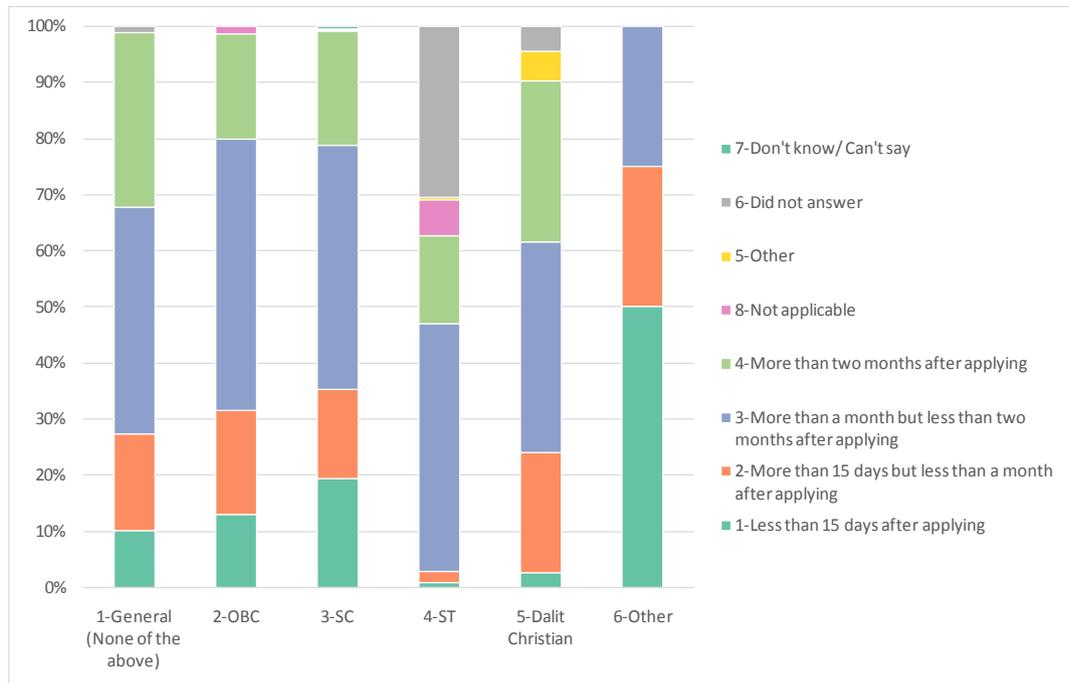


Only 54.15% of SCs and 39.09% of ST respondents across the four districts have received the assistance of Rs.5000 that was announced for all SC and ST households affected by floods and landslides. In Idukki district, the response reveals an alarming situation wherein 83.58% of Dalits and 94.74% of the Adivasis have not received the said assistance.

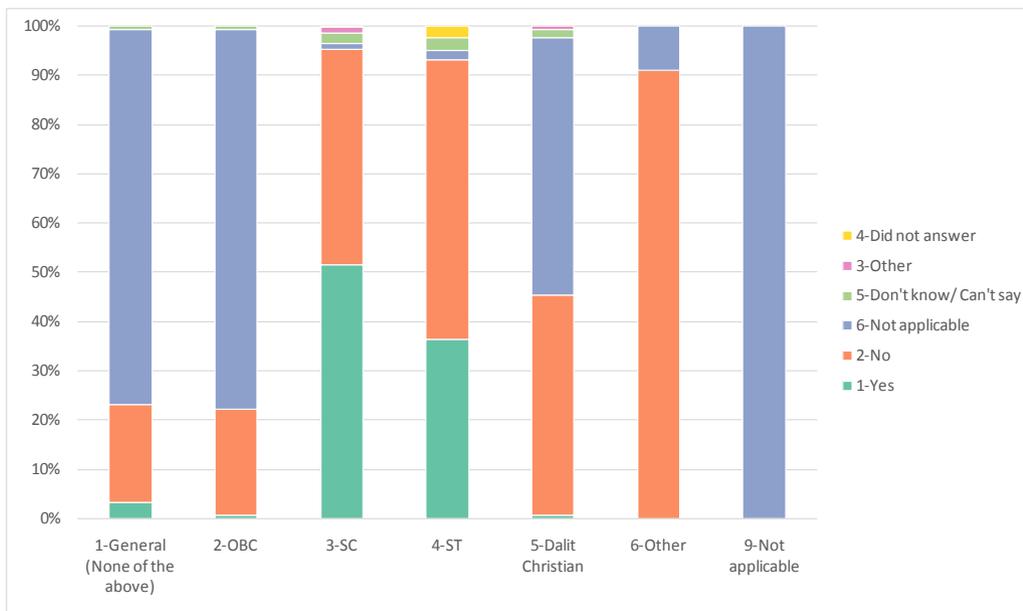
Have you received the immediate financial assistance of Rs. 10000/-?



When did you receive this financial assistance of Rs. 10000/-?



There have also been gross delays in the disbursement of the aid, 92.41% of the Adivasi respondents and 62.42% of the Dalit respondents received the Rs.10,000 assistance only after a month, some had to wait more than two months. Only a meagre 23.29% of SCs and 1.27% of STs received it within 15 days. Given the precarious and unsafe nature of their habitations, the amount prescribed by the government for rebuilding houses should consider the necessary precautions required to mitigate the risks of disaster and should be increased accordingly. For instance, for people who live in Alappuzha, the government should consult with engineers and come up with innovative ideas that will prevent frequent flooding from destroying the lives of the people.

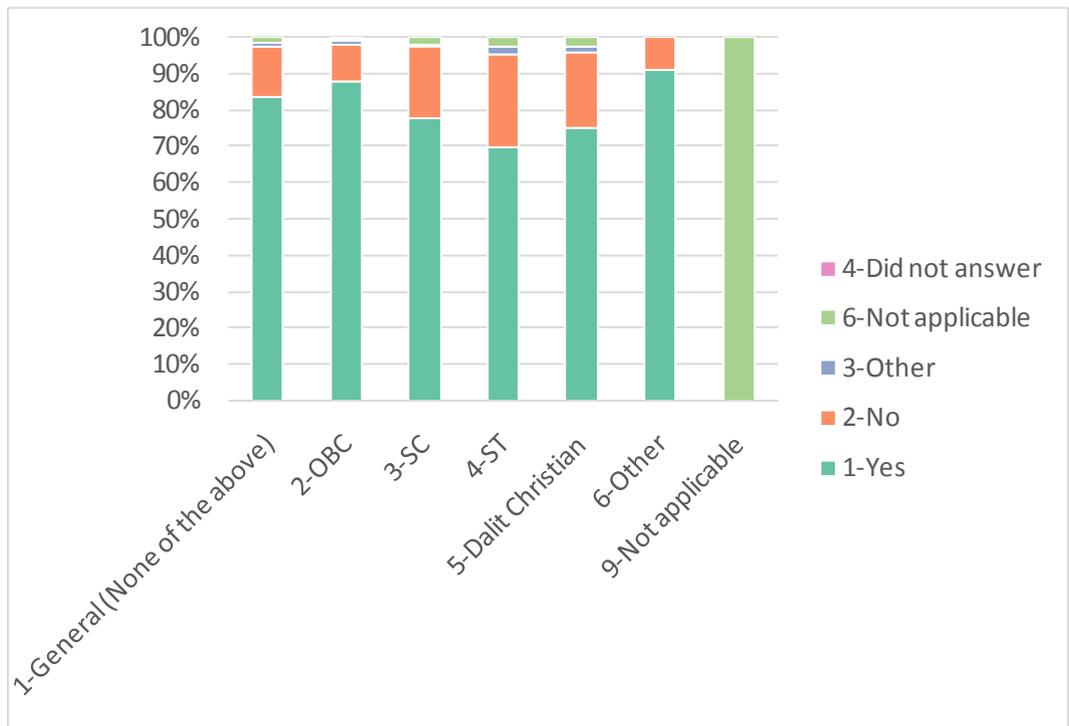


Have you received the financial assistance announced by the social welfare and empowerment department?

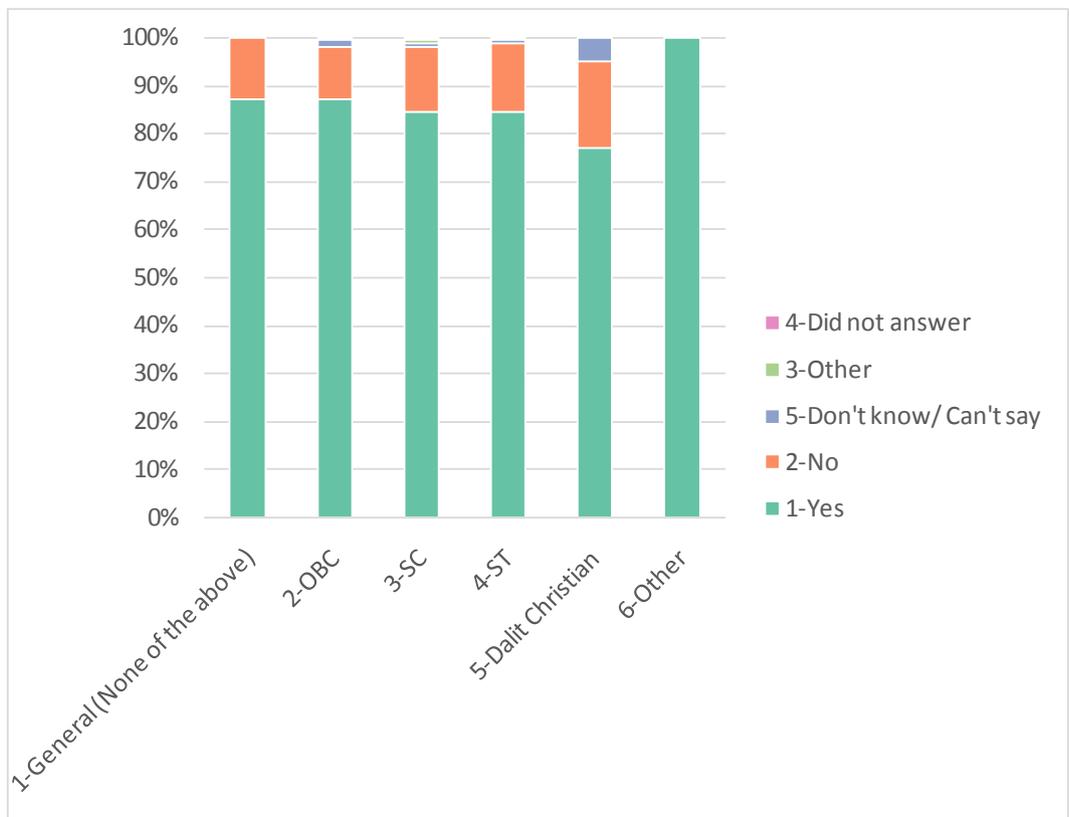
Assistance – Home

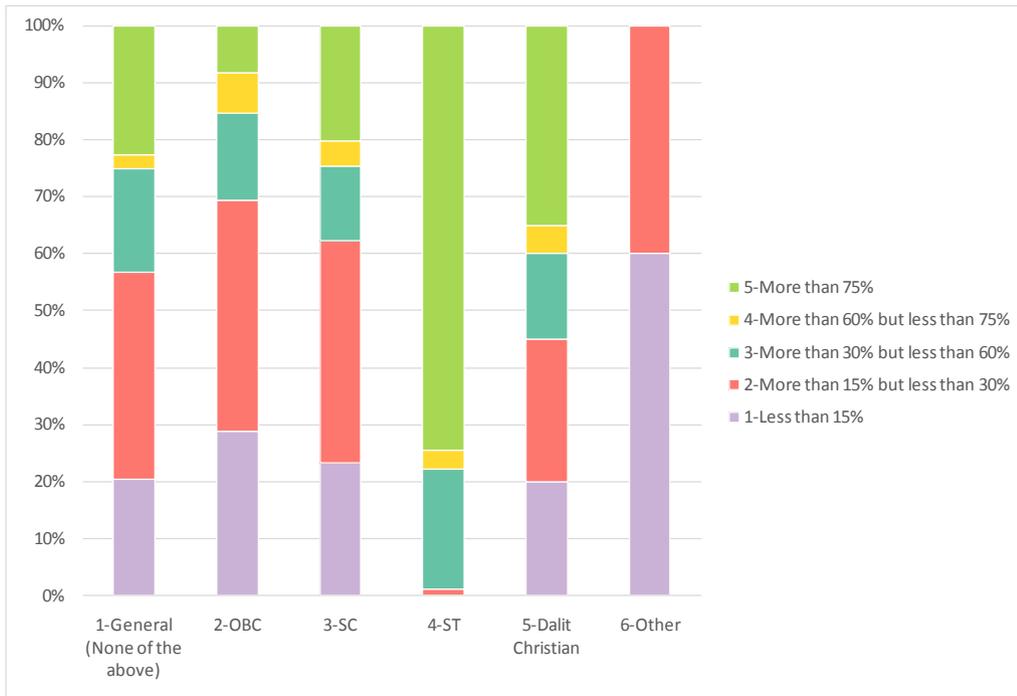
77.73% of all the surveyed respondents declared that their houses have been damaged in the heavy rains and floods, 90% of these respondents belong to the Alappuzha district and 79.15% were from Pathanamthitta. Of all the damaged houses, 85% of them have been assessed by the government, the lowest being 77.17% of the Dalit Christian homes. In Alappuzha and Idukki, fewer Dalit Christians and STs respectively have had their houses and the damage assessed as compared to other communities. Of the assessment made by the Government and according to the estimates shared by them, 74% of the ST community have reported over 75% damages, almost 82.43% of this damage was reported from Wayanad. While engineers from the panchayat have visited many houses that were damaged in the floods, no report or information about the inspection was shared with the people whose homes have been rendered uninhabitable by the disaster.

Has your house been damaged in the floods / landslides?



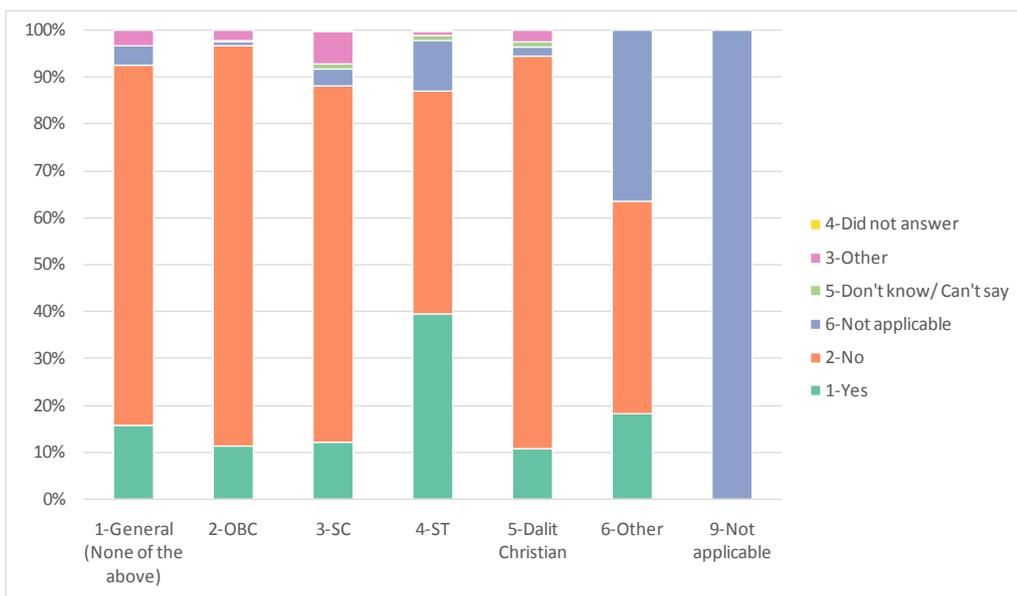
Has the damage to your house been assessed by the Government





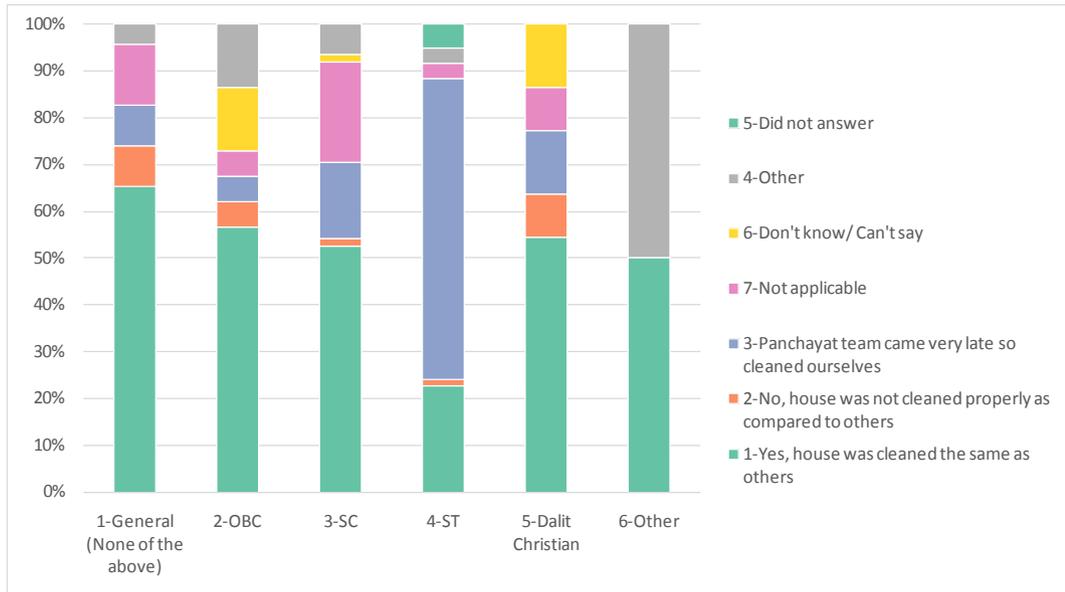
What is the percentage of damage as per the government team's assessment?

The response from the panchayat with regard to housecleaning was also poor, with over 75% respondents saying that the Panchayat authorities did not offer assistance to clean their homes. However, a higher percentage of ST respondents (over 40%) were offered assistance to clean their homes as compared to other communities. Over 66% of the ST respondents, especially in Idukki (64%) and Wayanad (65%), said that they cleaned the houses themselves as the panchayat team came very late. Only 28.12% of the overall respondents have applied for the interest-free loan of Rs.1,00,000 lakh for house repair, the lowest being 7% from the ST community. In Idukki, 2.82% applied for the loan, followed by 12% in Wayanad.



Did the Panchayat authorities offer assistance to clean your house after the floods?

Was your house cleaned in the same way as all other houses in your location?



Compensation

Around 3.5% of respondents stated that a member of their family had died in the disaster, the higher incidence of fatalities though has been recorded in the ST community (10.07%). Yet, none of the families that reported the death of a family member has received any compensation. And of 3.7% that have reported injuries in their family, 9.68% were from the ST community. Of all the injuries reported, only one person received compensation of Rs. 2000.



RECOMMENDATIONS

After a thorough analysis and assessment of the situation during and after the disaster, the teams from RIGHTS and NCDHR have prepared recommendations to be presented to the Honourable Chief Minister of Kerala and other relevant government authorities, NGOs and other humanitarian organisations who are engaged with implementing disaster recovery or development operations in India.

1. The Government should review mechanisms that are in place to provide relief for all flood-affected Panchayats in Kerala and consider all who have been excluded from the immediate relief of Rs.10000 and Rs.5000 from the SC/ST department. Steps should be taken to account for the affected families of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities, to ensure that they are included in the Government relief measures.
2. Families who have lost documents such as the papers of their land, ration card, or for families without a ration card, or whose houses have not been numbered by the Panchayat should be given preference and the criteria should be relaxed so that they are not excluded.
3. Governments should undertake an evaluation process to estimate the loss of household items of families that belong to SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities and announce a minimum 2 lakh interest-free loans with a repayment period of 3 years.
4. The Government should re-evaluate damages to the houses of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities that were damaged by rains, floods or landslides. Appropriate packages for the repair of the damaged houses should also be announced.

5. Considering geographical vulnerability and inaccessibility of the habitation of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities, Government should announce a housing package of 8 lakh for reconstruction of new houses and Rs. 5 lakh for repair of the damaged houses.
6. Most SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities live near water bodies and other areas vulnerable to disaster. A special disaster package to address the perennial floods should be announced for these areas. This includes early warning systems, well-equipped and fully functional relief camps with proper amenities for women and children.
7. A package of Rs. 3 lakh should be announced for women, especially single women and households run by women, and unwed mothers of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities.
8. Every household of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities, suffer an average wage loss of three months and struggle to find work in the period post the disaster. Wage compensation of Rs. 25,000 should be given to the affected families.
9. Most of the provision stores and tea shops run by the SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities have been denied relief for the loss their businesses suffered as they are yet to obtain registrations from Panchayath. The Government should reconsider these applications and also relax the norms.
10. The Government should announce a complete moratorium on payment of loans taken by the affected families of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC and the recommended communities. In the wake of such a huge disaster, the Government also should consider waiving these loans.

11. The agricultural losses of farmers who belong to SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and other recommended communities need to be considered. Both, a package to compensate for the loss of standing crops and a motion to initiate agricultural activities again should be announced.
12. The government should amend the existing disaster mitigation plan or formulate a new plan of action with 'inclusion' as the guiding principle. The Government should ensure that there will be no discrimination in rescue, relief and rehabilitation activities in the future.
13. A special livelihood or income generating package should be introduced for women who belong to SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities. This initiative should be formulated in consultation with the women.
14. Ensure existing schemes that provide adequate nutrition for lactating mothers and children cover all habitations of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities.
15. To ensure menstrual hygiene practices, the government should install sanitary napkin vending machines with scientific disposal systems in every habitation of SC, ST, Christian converts from SC, and the recommended communities. This service should be extended to relief camps in disaster situations.
16. Formulate guidelines that guarantee the privacy of women and girls in all identified relief camps.
17. Ensure all identified relief camps have enough clean drinking water and sanitation facilities.
18. A children's corner equipped with books and toys should be created in all identified relief camps.



CONCLUSION

With 44 rivers, 61 dams, and two spells of monsoon every year, Kerala's unique and sensitive landscape is an ecological and geographical curiosity. A complex network of rivers and tributaries criss-cross the Western Ghats and go all the way to the Arabian Sea, a circulatory system that connects lives and livelihoods across the state. Each district has its own geographical imprint and identity that come with specific concerns and irregularities. In Idukki, the people are largely affected by the landslide, whereas Alappuzha is perennially threatened by floods. And for a state that is, by virtue of location and landscape prone to escalated disasters, Kerala is unaware of disaster preparedness and disaster management. We live in a day and age where climate patterns are getting more unpredictable, with the occurrence of both old and new cyclones, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. In the face of the inevitable, we need a vision that converts a crisis into an opportunity to build an eco-sensitive, sustainable, and resilient state for all. In this endeavour, it is essential to include representation from the Dalit and Adivasi communities for a truly inclusive approach.

All assistance before, during and after a disaster is the responsibility of the state government, but the citizens are unaware of their rights or that they are entitled to certain benefits due to poor understanding and the overall lack of literacy. The warnings were ineffective and grossly delayed, communication systems had dissolved entirely leaving many communities in hard to reach areas in the dark, lives and livelihoods were lost, hoarding and unequal distribution of relief material, further oppression of the marginalised. Even the media failed in its role as a watchdog and was consumed instead by glossy stories of resilience and rescue. In fact, the scale of the crisis was taken seriously and received prime-time coverage only after the dominant caste people were affected. In Alappuzha district, the villages were flooded at least two months before the newspapers and channels took notice of the 'worst flood in a hundred years'.

The Disaster Management Act of 2005 details guidelines and frameworks for action at every level of governance. The act goes beyond the response and relief-centric approach and adopts a proactive, comprehensive approach to disaster management including, prevention, mitigation, and preparedness to

rehabilitation, reconstruction and recovery. The role of the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) is also outlined, which mandates that a vulnerability assessment and risk analysis of the state is done. The onus is on the state government to promote a culture of prevention and preparedness by prioritising disaster management at all levels and to ensure that all communities are equal stakeholders in the process. The state should also work to create a productive partnership with the media to create awareness and contribute towards capacity development while ensuring efficient response and relief with a caring approach towards the needs of the vulnerable sections of the society. It is the state's duty to bring the community back, better and safer than before the disaster.

The vision for Nava Kerala reflects the ethos of international charters that seek to ensure zero mortality during disasters with minimum economic losses and disruption of services. With additional investments for disaster preparedness and response, and the revival of the State Disaster Response Force, Kerala is on the path to building a stronger and more efficient fire and police department, along with robust early warning mechanisms, employing effective risk and behavioural change communication strategies, and implementing community-based disaster risk management approaches. However, the true victory of the Government of Kerala would lie in strengthening the development trajectory of the state by ensuring that no vulnerable group is left behind, thereby helping fast-track the building of Nava Kerala in an inclusive and empowering manner.

We cannot overlook factors in the specifics of geography, culture, and the social context and need to develop differentiated strategies to address the needs and priorities of vulnerable and marginalised groups who are dependent on daily labour, and who do not receive equal access to essential services and resources and also have unequal access and control of resources. During the Kerala Floods, we have seen that just like class, gender, and age, caste too, has particularly affected the socio-economically disadvantaged in Kerala including the poor, particularly the multi-dimensionally poor, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; and the fishing communities. The NCDHR and RIGHTS would like to underscore the critical need to reach out to these the affected populations that live in the crosshairs of caste and society, and restore their rightful place in the endeavour of 'Building Back Better'.



“Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire which prevents the Hindus from co-mingling and which has, therefore, to be pulled down. Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind.” - Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.



National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights
8/1, 2nd Floor, South Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110008
Phone No: +91 11 45668341, +91 11 25842249
Website: www.ncdhr.org.in, Twitter: @dalitrights,
Facebook: www.facebook.com/NCDHR