

Abstract

The state of Kerala is located towards the extreme south west of peninsular India. It witnessed a greater than normal South Western monsoon showers during the months of June, July & August in 2018, which was estimated to be 42% in excess of the average annual rainfall. In addition to this, about 37 dams across the state had to be opened up to release their excess water. This was followed by extensive flooding and landslides in all 14 districts of the state. As many as 433 lives were lost, while more than 5.4 million lives were affected. This disastrous event was widely referred to as the worst ever floods in the history of Kerala since the floods of 1924. The Indian government declared it to be a L3 level disaster, which means a calamity of severe nature. A rough estimate of the amount for recovery was put at 4.4 billion USD in a Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) report prepared for the state of Kerala by the United Nations.

The central and state governments of the country, national and international non-profit and for profit as well as religious organizations, celebrities and well-meaning individuals pitched in the rescue and relief efforts by donating money, facilitating fund & material collection as well as in their timely delivery. The Indian army, navy, air force, coastal forces and others coupled with mass voluntary support of 4537 odd fishermen and locals contributed hugely to the rescue operations.

It is necessary to study and evaluate the causative factors in the floods of Kerala as it holds a valuable lesson for the future, in preparing for disaster risk management. Dams are often put on the spot when a drought or flood situation arises in the state. To move away from the tendency of a seasonal blame game and develop a focussed and planned approach in preparing for natural calamities is necessary, if we are to prevent such disasters in future.

In this thesis I will examine in detail the causative factors that led to the disastrous flood situation. I will be presenting the findings of Indian Meteorological Department as well as the Central Water Commission, India's authority on weather analytics and dam operations

respectively as well as published critics of these findings. I will also incorporate the narratives of those affected by the floods and of their experiences in this ordeal.