



Psycho Trauma Care Center

Kerala Report: EMDR India Community Rescue after Devastating Floods and Cyclone

In the summer of 2018, Kerala state on the southwestern tip of India suffered devastating floods and landslides, due to unusually high rainfall during the monsoon season. The flooding and landslides left 350 dead and over 800,000 displaced throughout the region. Heavy rains throughout the summer caused severe landslides, leaving the hilly districts isolated. This emergency

situation followed the deadly cyclone "Ockhi" which hit coastal Kerala the previous year.

EMDR India Association Begins Training

One of the board members of EMDR India Association was in the forefront of the disaster management work. The EMDR Association contacted him once the physical rehabilitation was completed to plan conducting very low cost EMDR Basic Part 1 and Part 2 trainings for local clinicians. Twenty four local mental health professionals attended these trainings seeking to upgrade their skill set to deal with the communities' disaster-related trauma.

All participants pledged to implement their skills in the field to bring psychological relief to disaster survivors. As part of the agreement, the trainees pledged to offer voluntary services for a minimum of 10 working days to the affected areas as a pre-condition to receive the Part 2 training and consultation at low cost.

After Part 1 training in October of 2018, some of the EMDR trained participants went through additional training in EMDR, group protocol. EMDR basic training Part 2 was completed in May 2019, by all trainees.

Upon completing training, clinicians began reaching out to survivors in both individual and group therapy sessions. Group protocol facilitated community based outreach particularly to tribal villages affected by the landslides. Similarly, school



Group EMDR intervention for youth group and children after the floods, 2018

children received EMDR therapy using group protocol. This was done creatively using local, available facilities.



Tribal Village

Since the participants of the training were from different districts of Kerala, therapy intervention reached out across the state from inland areas to the hill regions and communities along the coast. Volunteers made a comprehensive action plan to cover the most remote places in villages, hills, hospitals, schools, tribal areas, NGOs, and faith based organizations in the affected communities. Assessment of impact was conducted and target groups were identified followed by EMDR therapy education, awareness about trauma/ PTSD and the efficacy of EMDR therapy.

Survivors reported in the aftermath of the disaster fearful traumatic memories including experiences with reptiles, scorpions, and stray animals entering homes for shelter, disappearance of family members, complete isolation from the larger community of help, due to complete failure of the phone system and, inaccessibility caused by floods and landslides, inability to restore normal life after the relief operations terminated and complete disruption of their social system.

A training for counselling psychologists was conducted to give Psychological First Aid (PFA) to the various flood affected areas of Ernakulam District. Twenty-four volunteers worked for 6 weeks, visiting 187 houses and bringing aid to 668 people.

The EMDR India team gave support to the PFA Team and inaugurated a Psycho Trauma CARE centre at Fatima Hospital, Edakochi in October of 2018, which is now a platform for community-based trauma intervention. All projects are pro bono thanks to EMDR India and volunteers.

Feedback from the community has been mostly positive and encouraging. On-going client requests for follow-up has resulted in the continuation of the intervention initiative.



PFA 2018 Volunteer Training