

Art of Living Foundation Provides Immediate Assistance and Long-term Trauma relief to Victims of Chennai Floods

Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India - December 10 -- The south Indian city of Chennai is slowly limping back to normalcy after the torrential rains and flooding that wreaked havoc last week. The catastrophic disaster killed more than 280 people and displaced or stranded over 500,000 citizens in the fourth-largest city in India. Declared a disaster zone, the country's Army, Navy and Air forces have been deployed in Chennai to rescue marooned citizens and deliver essentials to the affected areas.

While many slums have been washed away without a trace, houses damaged and businesses lost, the resilient spirit and the inherent courage of the people of Chennai remains strong. The city has seen a record number of volunteers tirelessly helping their fellow citizens with food, clothing and other essential supplies. Over 5000 volunteers mobilized by the [Art of Living Foundation](#) in partnership with [International Association for Human Values](#) (IAHV), have also been working tirelessly over the last 3 weeks to provide much needed relief efforts.



Art of Living Volunteers engaged in rescue efforts

Solving Immediate Challenges

“The people’s homes are filled with river water and drainage. Nothing is usable. They have nothing left.” said Harish Gopalakrishnan, a volunteer with the Art of Living Foundation. “One of the immediate needs in disaster situations, is providing relief - and the challenge lies in coordinating relief efforts.” In Chennai this problem was further compounded by the complete

breakdown of all communication channels - most parts of the city did not have any electricity, internet and cell phone connectivity. Amidst this chaos, the volunteers from the Art of Living Foundation have been able to organize relief effectively, providing timely and orderly help to several of the worst hit flood zones.

“There has been so much frenzy and chaos while sharing relief materials. While some people have been aggressively taking multiple packets, others have received none - and we wanted to bring some order to the situation,” said Harish. Prior to the floods the volunteers were actively involved in slum development projects in several parts of Chennai. During this process they were able to create youth volunteers and form strong relationships with the community, area councillors and the police department. After the storms hit, the team was able to leverage these relationships and mobilize forces to deliver relief in an structured manner. “Last night, more than 300 people stood in a line and collected materials in an orderly fashion. People appreciated us and were very happy that everyone got relief packets. The police thanked us for making their jobs easier,” Harish points out.



Food distribution at a slum in Kotturpuram, Chennai

The volunteers also ensured that timely food and water reached members of the rescue teams, who were operating under severe time crunch over extended hours. This included several teams from the Tamil Nadu Police Department, Fire Department, Coastal Guard service and the National Disaster Response Force(NDRF).

Long-term Mental Health Programs and Rehabilitation efforts

Bringing the city back on its feet entails not just short term relief, but a complete rehabilitation of those who have been displaced, lost all their belongings and undergone severe trauma. The International Association for Human values (IAHV) along with the Art of Living Foundation has initiated a rehabilitation project in Chennai with an emphasis on trauma relief. IAHV has been a global leader in bringing mental fortitude and stress relief to those affected by natural calamities and disasters. “Aside of material needs, unless mental trauma is attended to, it is extremely difficult for the victims to cope, especially those who lost their homes, loved ones or livelihood,” said Madhu Kadari, Treasurer, IAHV. “ We have recognized this from our past relief work during the Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, Uttarakhand and Nepal earthquakes. After undergoing IAHV's trauma relief training programs, victims are able to sleep well, gain an appetite to eat and regain strength to face the situation with greater confidence to rebuild their lives,” he added.

Teaming up with local healthcare providers like [Kauvery Hospital](#), [Fortis](#) and [SRM Hospitals](#), several medical health and hygiene camps are also being planned and conducted by the volunteers of the foundation to prevent any further outbreak of epidemics. So far 10 medical camps have been conducted to treat ailments ranging from sore feet to cold, fever to more serious conditions.



Medical camp conducted along with Fortis Malar Hospital at Chennai

Support of Non-Resident Volunteers Worldwide

While the storm and the floods ravaged Chennai, the spirit of the city knew no borders. It resonated across the globe as NRIs came together during the hour of need providing crucial communications and coordination for immediate relief and rescue efforts from several control rooms worldwide. “Our team, responded early to the disaster creating a global volunteer Whatsapp group. It soon became our virtual global control center,” said Abitha Narayanan, a volunteer with the Overseas Volunteer for a Better India (OVBI). “Rescue and relief requests received from Chennai, and from social media channels were funneled to the right action teams on the ground, making assistance available to the needy within a short span of time. NRIs across countries handled data collection, prioritization of requests and made direct calls for rescue and relief. We quickly partnered with many other NGOs with the single goal of aiding Chennai”

Relief Effort Statistics

- 10 central collection & distribution centres
- 65 relief operation sub-locations across Chennai
- 200 full-time and 1000s of part-time volunteers
- Over 50000 food packets distributed
- Reached out to thousands of families with Disaster Kits (blankets/medicines/candles/matches/ mosquito repellents & personal hygiene products)

Support Chennai Relief Efforts

IAHV in partnership with Art of Living foundation is raising funds for short and long term relief & rehabilitation for the thousands affected in Tamil Nadu by Chennai floods.

DONATE HERE: <http://www.iahv.org/us-en/chennai-flood-relief/>

About AOLF : The Art of Living Foundation

www.artofliving.org

The Art of Living Foundation (AOLF) is a non-profit, educational and humanitarian organization founded in 1981 by the world-renowned spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. AOLF is present in 152 countries, reaching an estimated 300 million people worldwide with a vision of creating a stress-free, violence-free society.

About IAHV: International Association for Human Values

www.iahv.org

IAHV offers programs to reduce stress and develop leaders so that human values can flourish in people and communities. We foster the daily practice of human values – a sense

of connectedness and respect for all people and the natural environment, an attitude of non-violence, and an ethic of social service. Our programs enhance clarity of mind, shift attitudes and behaviors, and develop leaders and communities that are resilient, responsible, and inspired.

About OVBI: Overseas Volunteer for a Better India

www.overseasvbi.org

Overseas Volunteer for a Better India (OVBI) launched in May 2013, is driven by a group of inspired NRIs ready to support initiatives in India and tackle issues the Indian community faces in the U.S.