

Cyclone 'Gaja' Relief Service

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The cyclone 'Gaja' meaning 'The Elephant' began to make its landfall along the coastal line of Nagapattinam District causing unexpected damages to the dwelling huts and thatched houses. It pulled down not only coconut trees but also the dwelling huts and shelters. The aftermath of Cyclone 'Gaja' made one witness the unfathomable havoc in the livelihood of the poor to the extent that many were left abandoned on the streets with practically no place to dwell, no support to rehabilitate them and no person to offer them a hand. The after effects of Cyclone 'Gaja' left the poor widows in particular shattered in hope, disappointed in emotional support and desperate in material needs. Adding fuel to their woes, the unemployment problem due to climate change augmented their distress to rebuild their houses, as many of the afflicted were the daily wagers in the farming land.

On seeing the untold woes of the afflicted, along with Kalangarai, many individuals with merciful heart voluntarily came forward to offering relief materials to the needy poor widows who had been badly broken down materially and emotionally. One among them is Mr Kulandai Francis, Founder President, IVDP, Krishnagiri. He offered 'Tarpaulin, Solar Light, Blanket and Mosquito Net' worth of Rs 3000/-per head to the anguished with the aim of supporting

them with temporary shelters under feasible environment to live during the crises. Valuing and appreciating the intention of the donor, Kalangarai carried out the Rehabilitation Efforts in the following manner,

- Phase 1: Assessing the damages caused
- Phase 2: Preparing the list of deserving families
- Phase 3: Distributing the beneficiaries the Relief Materials

Accordingly, in consultation with Kalangarai, the zonal leaders of Widows' Self-help Groups in Nagai and Vedharanyam, which are the most affected taluks in Nagapattinam District, too prepared the list of beneficiaries belonging to only the Widows' Self-help Groups in Nagai Taluk and to all the Scheduled Caste (SC) chosen from the most stricken six hamlets in Vedharanyam Taluk, where the Widows' Self-help Groups are present. Following the distribution plan, IVDP distributed the relief materials to the most afflicted in the two taluks(Nagai and Vedharanyam)respectively.

Procedural Narration of Relief Distribution

Distribution of Relief Materials comprises two stages: 1. Preliminary Ground Works 2. Distribution Programme

1. Preliminary Ground Works:

On seeing the woes of the affected people, the Director of Kalangarai initially wrote an email to the Founder President of IVDP requesting him of the possibilities to offer a helping hand to those 2,000 people on the face of crises. In a response to that request, the IVDP decided to pay a visit to the affected spots; assessed the pathetic situation of the affected and chose to help out 1,000 people. On a discussion over the IVDP's choice, Kalangarai agreed upon helping out 750 people from widows' self-help groups and 250 people from Inner Wheel Foundation (SOS). As a follow up, IVDP asked Kalangarai to send in a formal request letter seeking the assistance of IVDP to the afflicted. In a response, IVDP sent a formal application form that each beneficiary filled in and affixed either signature or thumb print with a passport size photo and Xerox copies of Aathar Card and Ration Card of theirs.

2. Distribution Programme:

First Phase: As regards the selection of the beneficiaries, after consulting the zonal leaders of widows' self-help groups, Kalangarai arrived at choosing 525 beneficiaries, outside the Widows' Self-help Groups, from five Dalit villages (Thethakkudi, Kuravapulam, Underkadu, Ayakkaranpulam and Pannal) which are the

most stricken in Vedharanyam Taluk, and 225 beneficiaries within the Widows' Self-help Groups from Nagapattinam Taluk, while Inner Wheel Foundation (SOS) identified 250 beneficiaries from Thirukuvalai Taluk together comprising 1,000 people. Moreover, Kalangarai too proposed the types of relief materials, namely Tarpaulin, Blanket, Solar light and Mosquito net, that could be distributed to the afflicted. On following the distribution plan, IVDP initiated the first phase of distribution of relief materials on 5th January 2019 in Nagapattinam Taluk (in the morning to those beneficiaries of SOS and in the afternoon to those beneficiaries of Kalangarai) and on 6th January 2019 in Vedharanyam Taluk respectively.

Second Phase: Responding to the woes of the affected within the Widows' Self-help Groups, in Vedharanyam Taluk, Kalangarai once again placed a request to IVDP to offer Tarpaulin and Mosquito net while Kalangarai would offer solar light and blanket to those afflicted. Reacting positively to the request of Kalangarai, IVDP agreed upon the distribution of those two materials namely Tarpaulin and Mosquito net, and distributed them to those 325 beneficiaries in the second phase on 27th February 2019 when the Women's Day celebration was anticipated and celebrated by Widows' Federation.

Narration on Socio-Economic Status and Woes of the Afflicted

Socio-Economic Status of the Afflicted:

- 90 percent of beneficiaries belong to Scheduled Castes (SC) and rest of 10 percent of beneficiaries belong to Backward Communities (BC) including Muslims and Christians.
- 600 out of 1325 live in thatched houses while some live in asbestos sheeted houses and in mud tiled houses; and a very few live in concrete houses that are recently built under Govt. Cluster Housing Scheme.
- Most of the beneficiaries are daily wagers in farming land.

Woes of the Afflicted:

The aftereffects of cyclone 'Gaja' left most of the people abandoned on the streets. As many of the electrical posts were uprooted, there was no supply of electricity more than a month. As the village was partially inundated and the drinking water pipelines were damaged, there was no proper drinking water supply. Due to debris and make-shift rehabilitation camps of the affected, there was total road blockage leaving people with practically no access to transportation and daily essential commodities. Except those concrete houses that had been built recently under Govt. Cluster Housing Scheme, the rest of all houses including old concrete houses were badly hit. No wonder, one could not but imagine the damage caused to

thatched huts, asbestos sheeted houses and mud tiled houses. As a consequence, people had recourse to make-shift rehabilitation camps and courtyard of neighbours whose houses were rather damaged.

Responding to the distress of the afflicted, some volunteers initiated the distribution of relief materials. Those people who were near the road side and those who were voiced in local could avail the benefits. To the usual, those people who were in interior and those who were voiceless were left unattended and uncared. Unfortunately, those unattended and uncared were the target population of Kalangarai mission.

The Benefits of Relief Materials:

- Due to inundation, as there was stagnant water everywhere, people were condemned to live under a condition where there was mosquito breeding. Thanks to Mosquito Net, offered by IVDP, that protected the people from mosquitoes.
- As the crises of cyclone 'Gaja' took place during winter season, blanket offered by IVDP served them to protect themselves from cold.
- Thanks to Tarpaulin that served some as temporary shelter to rest, as floor to lie down and so forth.
- Solar light had served them to lit their houses more than a month, until the local panjayat assured them of the supply of electricity.

Testimonies of Beneficiaries



"I was much upset how I could rebuild my damaged house at all despite the relief materials offered by Kalangarai, due to my financial constraints and problem of unemployment in summer. Today I have recourse to Tarpaulin for my dwelling. Thanks to IVDP that offered me Tarpaulin."

- Gnanmmal, 57yrs, Kovilkulam, Vedharanyam Taluk

"Due to financial constraints I was bit worried how I could make a wall to assure me my privacy, as I dwell by the side of a pond. Thanks to IVDP that offered me Tarpaulin assuring me my privacy."

- Philominal, 53yrs, Karuppampulam West, Vedharanyam Taluk



"At my advanced year, today I am happy because of the confidence that I have someone to render me support after the relief materials issued by Kalangarai. Special thanks to IVDP who offered me Tarpaulin that serves me now as the floor of my thatched house and the mosquito net that helps me have peaceful sleep at night" - Ammuni, 63yrs, Karuppampulam South, Vedharanyam Taluk

"At my advanced age, today I could walk around with the broad smile on my face despite the dreadful moments caused by cyclone 'Gaja'. It is because of the solar light in particular that assures me light at night while panchayat fails to give villagers electricity at night."

- Rajammal R, 70yrs, Neivilakku South, Vedharanyam Taluk



"I am happy to have a Tarpaulin of my own now for the purpose of thrashing the paddy grains and drying them. Earlier I used to hire it during harvest. Thanks to IVDP who offered me Solar light as well that serves my family especially my children to study during evening."

- Jeyalakshmi, 48 years, Agalamkannu, Nagappatnam Taluk

"Earlier I used to borrow Tarpaulin for thrashing paddy grains. But, today I have it of my own during the harvest. I am also happy that I could save some amount now from the dispense of borrowing a Tarpaulin."

- Lakshmi, 52 years, Narimanam, Nagappatnam Taluk



"As a vendor at a road-side cool drink shop, I used to borrow Tarpaulin to cover the temporary shed. Today I am glad that I have it of my own and economise money in my investment for this summer-time business."

- Vasantha, 45 years, Ayvanallur, Nagappatnam Taluk

"I am happy to profit from Tarpaulin which serves me to not only dry paddy grains but also cover the rice bags."

- Thangammal K, 65 years, Panankudi Samathuval puram, Nagappatnam Taluk



1, Gnanammal G, 57yrs, Kovilkulam, Vedharanyam Taluk



Relief materials and emotional support offered by charitable institutes through Kalangarai have restored hope for Gnanammal to live in confidence that there is someone to listen to her woes and to offer her a hand.

It is very true that the financial constraints and persistent problem of unemployment during summer (as she is a daily wager in forming land) have not yet helped her realise a shelter of her own.

Thanks to Tarpaulin, offered by IVDP, that serves her now as a temporary shelter to protect her from the hot Sun and to sleep at night.

2, Philominal, 53yrs, Karuppampulam West, Vedharanyam Taluk

Though Philominal is rehabilitating her dwelling place with the assistance of Kalangarai, she has still a long way to go to realise her full-fledged house due to financial constraints.

Grace to Tarpaulin, offered by IVDP, that serves her as a temporary wall assuring her of privacy and of protection from hot Sun, grace to Mosquito net and Plastic straw mat that assure her of peaceful sleep at night, as her dwelling place is situated at the bank of a pond.



3, Ammuni, 63yrs, Karuppampulam South, Vedharanyam Taluk



Ammuni is very happy as she was able to rehabilitate herself even at this advanced age by the assistance of Kalangarai. Her happiness indeed doubles because of Tarpaulin, offered by IVDP, that serves her now as a floor in her house, Blanket and Solar Light which assure her of light and sound sleep at night.

4, Rajammal R, 70yrs, Neivilakku South, Vedharanyam Taluk



As far as Rajammal is concerned, there are no words to express her happiness. For her, it was almost unfathomable to realise a house of her own after such drastic catastrophe of cyclone 'Gaja'. Now she could make it happen with the assistance of Kalangarai.

With a broad smile on her face, she tells that she charges the solar cells during the day and gets her house well-lit during the evening.

Gaining confidence, now she is equipped to foresee the usage of Tarpaulin, offered by IVDP, to be spread over her thatched roof during rainy season.

To cover a unrepaired huts, ►
Underkaddu, Vedharanyam Taluk



5, Chithra, 36yrs, Underkadu, Vedharanyam Taluk



6. Vasantha, 45yrs, Ayvanallur, Nagai Taluk
To cover a road-side cool drink shop



7. Thangammal, 65yrs, Panankudi, Nagai Taluk
To cover rice bags and to dry paddy grains, Panankudi Samathuvapuram, Nagai Taluk