

THE HINDU

Kudumbashree members clean Kerala



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Telltale signs:Books, some of them more than 100 years old, heaped outside the 85-year-old Chendamangalam Library in Kochi.H. Vibhu

Workers of the women empowerment programme have so far cleaned more than 1.1 lakh flood-hit houses

If Kerala's fishermen were at the forefront of saving marooned people from flood-hit areas, workers of the Kudumbasree poverty eradication and women empowerment programme are going the whole hog to restore normal life in the regions scarred by the disaster.

“Over 1.13 lakh residential premises across 10 districts have so far been cleaned and made habitable by the workers as on August 28. They have also cleaned over 3,100 public spaces while our community counsellors, 320 in all, offered psychological support to over 11,000 affected people,” S. Harikishore, executive director, Kudumbasree, told *The Hindu*, describing the gesture as a fine model of community service by the self-help group in post-disaster reconstruction.

Rs. 5 crore donation

Members of the mission also chipped in with their weekly thrift — savings that range between Rs. 10 and Rs. 20 — for ‘Snehanidhi,’ donation to the Chief Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund. “We have 42 lakh members and the amount donated so far is a little over Rs. 5 crore, with some members punching above their weight with donations. It is poor people’s money for a noble cause,” Mr. Harikishore said.

Kudumbasree workers had been active from the initial days of the flood, making packaged meals available to affected people. In the first three days from August 15, some 16,000 food packets were distributed at relief camps in Pathanamthitta district alone, Sabir Hussain, district mission coordinator, Kudumbasree, said.

The mission, according to Mr. Harikishore, also mobilised workers en masse from non-affected or less-affected areas to carry out cleaning drives in hard-hit regions in Pathanamthitta and Wayanad.

“On Tuesday, a total of 6,757 women from the Kudumbasree neighbourhood groups at Kalanjoor, Nedumbram, Enadimangalam, Kadambanad, Ezhamkulam, Peringara, Koduman, Adoor, Pallikkal, Kadapra, Enath, Niranam, Panthalam, Kuttoor and Konni panchayats and Thiruvalla municipality were mobilised to clean living premises at Peringara, Niranam, Nedumbram, Kuttoor and Kadapra panchayats and within the Thiruvalla municipality.

Each cleaning team had about 20 to 25 women equipped with bleaching and cleaning lotions. They were supported by the respective panchayats, Health Department and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA workers),” said Asha S. Panicker of the State Mission.

Massive mobilisation

Nearly 1,400 workers from Kollam had carried out a similar drive at Chengannur. In Wayanad, a massive team of 30,000 workers would do a day-long cleaning mission. “Such massive mobilisations are led by the respective district mission coordination teams,” Mr. Harikishore said.

Its State-wide network proved effective in tackling tough situations. For instance, at Chengannur, the cleaning team suddenly realised that they needed the traditional brooms made of coconut leaf midriff to sweep the mud-laden premises of households.

“In no time, some 2,000 brooms were made available by our Kannur team for the purpose,” he said. The office staff of the mission in Thiruvananthapuram also joined the field teams in carrying out cleaning activities.