



# Kerala State Disaster Management Authority

## Transgender + Queer Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction

### Report

December 21&22, 2022



# Transgender + Queer Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction

Two Day Training Event Programme Report

December 21 & 22, 2022

Kerala State Disaster Management Authority

In collaboration with

Social Justice Department

## **Introduction**

Transgender and Queer communities across the world find themselves in an extremely vulnerable position during disasters. They are rendered invisible in disaster policies; the attention they receive in public health systems is scarce and crimes against this community often go unreported. Being a marginalized community, their vulnerability during disasters only multiplies. Gender specific issues such as lack of safe and non-binary spaces, religious stigmatisation, inadequate or partial gender specific support, absence of agency and discrimination are the major issues faced by the community. Though the transgender or queer specific experiences in disasters are not well documented it is a fact that their challenges are more unique and complex. In the present scenario, only two countries have adopted the LGBTQ Community into their disaster risk reduction policies. There is a huge gap when it comes to understanding gender specific needs in disasters. The United Nations policies on Disaster Risk Reduction recommends that preparedness and response must be anchored in a human-rights based approach, where a person's sexual or gender identity is not a barrier for receiving the assistance and opportunities needed to recover from a disaster. (Blanchard, 2021)

Kerala has an exemplary record in bringing marginalised groups, especially transgender people and LGBTQ community into the fore front. In 2015 the social justice department was the first government agency to develop the Transgender Policy for the State. Now with this initiative by the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) in collaboration with the Social Justice Department, Kerala is the first state in India to devise a plan for inclusivity of Transgender people and LGBTQ community into its Disaster Risk Reduction Policy.

The aim of this initiative is to include the LGBTQ community into all spheres of Disaster Risk Reduction practices. Instead of being ostracised in disaster situations, our goal is to empower them to be the champions of disasters management and help them to be a part of relief and rescue operations along with the mainstream society. We also aim to understand the gender specific needs and issues in emergency situations through continuous engagement.

## **INAUGURATION CEREMONY**

A state wide training programme for the transgender and LGBTQ community was organised by the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority in collaboration with the Social Justice Department on December 21 & 22, 2022 at KTDC Chaithram, Thiruvananthapuram.

A warm welcome to all participants and guests of honour was given by Dr. Sekhar L. Kuriakose, Member Secretary, Kerala State Disaster Management Authority. The inaugural function was presided over by Honourable Minister for Social Justice and Higher Education Dr. R Bindu. She

appreciated the initiative taken by the of State Disaster Management Authority for making disaster management activities inclusive.

Subsequently, Sri. K Rajan, Honourable Minister for Revenue and Housing, Govt. of Kerala formally inaugurated the 2-day training program and appreciated KSDMA for the initiative. He addressed the audience by speaking about the challenges, issues, discrimination and progress the transgender and LGBTQ community have made over the years. He assured that LGBTQ+ populations would be represented/participated in disaster management's civil defence, Sannadham, and Emergency Response Group. And also guaranteed their inclusion as one CBOs in all the districts of the state.

The Additional Director, Social Justice Department delivered the keynote address. He offered full support from his department for this initiative. Transgender Justice Board Member Sheethal Shyam and Krishna Vardhan, TG cell representative offered the felicitation remarks. Sheethal welcomed the initiative and expressed their happiness for making disaster management activities of Kerala as inclusive Lastly, Ms. Amrutha, Hazard Analyst, KSDMA proposed the vote of thanks.





Followed by the inaugural function, there was a self-introduction and brainstorming session. All of the participants interacted with one another shared their expectations and the constraints faced in the past years during disaster times.



### **Day 1 - Session 1**

The first session on ‘Disaster Management’ was handled by Mr Pradeep GS, Hazard and Risk Analyst, KSDMA. He covered the areas of Disaster Management and Institutional Structure, the Disaster Management in India, the structure of NDMA and technical backing of KSDMA, IMD the relevance of IMD for weather forecasts and rainfall warnings, and the role of NDRF, Civil Defence, and Fire Force



### **Session 2**

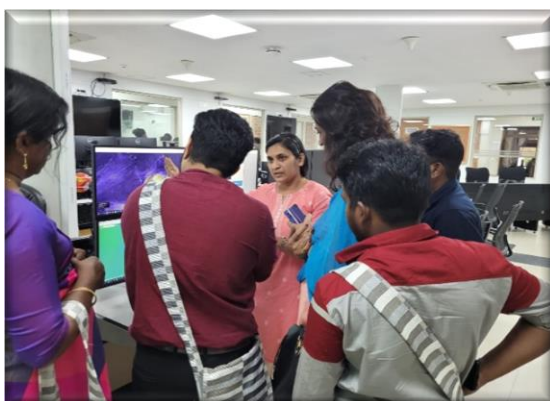
Mr Rejimon (Fire and Safety Officer, Alappuzha) handled the second session on safety measures. It involved demonstrations and practical sessions for the participants. Volunteers from the Civil Defence also participated in demonstrations (during the practical session). The session was very

interactive and fruitful, and covered the topics such as firefighting equipment's handling techniques, safety practices to be followed at home and public spaces. Participants were eager to take part in of the demonstrations and were quick to grasp emergency first aid skills. The session was concluded with Q&A round.



### **KSDMA Head Quarters Visit**

LGBTQ participants visited KSDMA headquarter for familiarising the disaster management activities. Participants were introduced to the GIS mapping and weather forecasting systems used in KSDMA to predict rainfall, windspeed and mapping. Dr. Shinu Sheela Wilson (Meteorologist, KSDMA) explained various models used for rainfall predictions. Post tour, an informal interactive session was organised for the participants by the KSDMA, in which they raised their doubts regarding disaster management and shared their experience during 2018 flood, Covid 19 pandemic etc.



## **Day 2- Session 1**

Joe John George (Consultant, UNICEF) and Ms Meera (Samoothika Sannatha Sena) handled the session on 'Volunteerism and Community Involvement in Disaster Risk Reduction'. The session gave a gist on ways to become a volunteer in disasters, importance of leadership and self-starting taking initiatives to bring changes in society, important and useful mobile app services during/in emergency, and Principles of Volunteering. Ms Meera from the Samoothika Sannatha Sena spoke about Samoothika Sannadha Sena and Civil Defence Service in India and its unique features in Kerala. All participants were familiarised with the registration portal of Sannadha Sena. Participants also spoke about their own/personal experiences with disaster volunteerism.



## **Day 2- Session 2**

Mr Jacob Mammen, Indian Institute of Medical Services handled session on 'Emergency Response and First Aid Training' with practical and participatory demonstration. The session covered the topics including CPR, Infant BLS, Choking, Near Drowning, Electric Shock, Burning, Wounds, Epistaxis and Seizure with suitable examples and demonstrations. Mr Jacob Mammen pointed out that the Basic Life Support is the key part of Emergency Medical Care and the purpose of BLS/CPR is to provide effective oxygenation to the vital organs, especially to the heart and brain. The training enabled the participants to understand the basics of BLS and to enhance the skill to manage emergency situations.





## Discussion and way forward

The discussion session was chaired by Ms. Mini Sukumar, Member State Planning Board. She pointed out various issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community in the past disaster events. Proper documentations were missing regarding the issues. She extended Planning Board support for this transgender inclusive DRR activity in the future. Member Secretary, Kerala State Disaster Management authority Dr. Sekhar Lukose Kuriakose spoke about the importance of this initiative and the vision for the future. He emphasized that this is just the beginning for bringing the gender inclusivity in DRR practices and welcomed future support from the LGBTQ Community. An open discussion with the participants led to many thought-provoking insights and ideas.

The participants raised the concerns regarding the lack of community representatives in the common programmes which were organised before by different departments and authorities. They also shared the discrimination they experienced from both the public and the officials in the camps after the disasters events. The discrimination by the public and officials in the camps during the disaster events.

Following the discussions, In the discussions that followed, the participants expressed their concerns when it comes to lack of understanding shown by the government organisations to understand different genders and sexualities, use of patriarchal language by authorities and importance of using right nouns/pronouns. They also expressed their gratitude for usage of inclusive language during the event and appreciated the authority for taking such an effort to organise the event.

All participants shared their enthusiasm to be a part of this initiative by KSDMA and their willingness to participate in DRR practice.

Participation certificates were distributed to all the participants who ~~were~~ attended the training.

Ms Amrutha (Hazard Analyst, KSDMA), who led the initiative for Transgender and Queer inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction program, conveyed her heartfelt gratitude to the LGBTQ members for participating and taking initiative in the event.



## Outcome and Feedback

- The participants were highly motivated. Our aim was to create a bridge with the community and acquaint them with DRR. This event gave us a platform to invite LGBTQ community members and create a link for future engagements.
- It also opened a channel for dialogue to understand all gender needs in emergency response and policies and discuss already existing challenges.
- The groundwork to bring inclusivity in DRR in the state of Kerala has been laid by this initiative and the advancement of the programme will follow with further engagements with LGBTQ members.
- In the discussions that followed, the participants expressed their concerns when it comes to lack of understanding shown in government organisations to understand different genders and sexualities, use of patriarchal language by authorities and importance of using right words to address the LGBTQ+ community members. They also expressed their satisfaction with the event for its use of inclusive language and efforts by the authorities to organise the event.
- They expressed their willingness to participate in the live demonstrations and drills as well as more hands-on experience of managing emergency situations in the future.
- Suggestions came to formulate transgender policy for disaster risk reduction for Kerala.



## Photographs from the event



**List of Participants**

<i>SL NO</i>	<i>NAME</i>
1	Aaradhya D.S
2	Laya Maria Jason
3	Adraja Das S
4	Sreekutty
5	Hruthu Krishna
6	Rohith Mohanan
7	Sheetal Shyam
8	Sindhya Saji
9	Ardra S
10	Sanjo Steve
11	Harikrishnan
12	Anamika Leo
13	Vadhav S.R
14	Madhav Shankar M
15	Karthik B
16	Anumol Ram
17	Abhirami N Nair
18	Shakhiya S Priyamvada
19	Krishna Vardhan NS
20	Sajid PM
21	Anas N.S.
22	Naveen Krishna K.S
23	Sisily George
24	Kalpana K
25	Sidhu C Sivan
26	Zaya Ali
27	Janvin Cleetus
28	Tanu Tamburu
29	Agamsha Krishna
30	Lavanya

***Report prepared by***

Ms. Amrutha K, Hazard Analyst, KSDMA

Ms. Aishwarya, Intern, KSDMA

***Event organising team***

Technical Staff of KSEOC and KSDMA

Administrative staff of KSEOC and KSDMA

Social Justice Department Transgender Cell staff

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