

INTERFAITH LINK

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Participants of the Conference on Community Based Disaster Management and Mitigation at Kottayam

Editorial

We concluded an eventful year in which many unforeseen incidents occurred like the devastating floods that affected 12 out of the 14 Districts in Kerala. More than 400 people died and thousands lost all possessions including homes and livelihood means. We were in the forefront to bring help to some affected areas in the Alleppy and Pathanamthitta Districts.

A big achievement was the third Asia Assembly that was conducted in Sri Lanka. We are so grateful to the Sarvodaya Movement for their great support. It was also a matter of Joy to present the Asia Peace Award to Dr. A.T Ariaratne the Sri Lankan Gandhi. 100,000 Sri Lankan rupees was given us prize money.

The Disaster Management Training at Kottayam was an eye opener to many of our participants. We are grateful to Vishwa Yuvak Kendra , New Delhi for their valuable support for the same. Our gratitude are due to our partners also. We could conduct a Zonal Assembly for the first time in Hyderabad. Hope all our new CCs in this region will work with renewed vigor in future.



Dr. Abraham Karickam

RESPONSE TO KERALA FLOODS

The Floods:

The State of Kerala has seen the worst flooding in the living memory, due to heavy rains continuing since July. People had not seen such deluge ever before due to excess rainfall. After 7 August more than 317% of the normal rainfall was recorded. 12 out of 14 districts of the State remained under Red Alert for many days. The worst affected districts were Alapuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Wynadu, and Idukki. The chief minister had described the situation as "very grim" and sought support for relief and recovery.

More than 450 people were either dead or missing. Over 5 million people were affected, out of which 725,632 displaced people were sheltering in 1,925 relief camps managed by the state. There was extensive damage to houses, infrastructure and livelihood. The chief minister of Kerala has estimated the loss to the tune of INR 19,512 crores (USD 3 billion approximately).

Over the years, unplanned growth has made the state extremely vulnerable. For the first time in the history of Kerala, all the gates of 37 reservoirs had to be opened to release excess water, which caused widespread inundation of rural as well as urban areas. Kerala's undulated topography paved ways for several landslides and flash flooding in many places washing away and destroying many habitations. Most of the families were witnessing the scene of absolute devastation with over 50 cm of mud within their houses. The central government has declared Kerala floods as 'disaster of great severity'.

Response:

URI South India Region Head quarters initiated flood response activities with the help of its CCs. Cosmic Community Centre and Karickam International Public School (KIPS), Kottarakara. Zero Limit CC, Kollam was also involved.

Emergency Medical Camps.

In coordination with Humanitarian Aid International (HAI), New Delhi, teams of nine doctors and paramedical persons came from Mumbai. URI CCs hosted the teams and linked them with the Government Health Department to serve the flood victims at different affected wards of Pathanamthitta and Allapuzha districts.



Medicines worth Rs. 100,000/ was donated by Hero Corp, which were administered and distributed by our medical teams through the emergency medical camps. The remaining stock of medicines and related supplies were handed over to the district general hospital, Pathanamthitta under the supervision of the medical teams from Mumbai. Our team of doctors brought medicines worth rupees five lakh with them.

Inter Agency Coordination .

In Kerala the importance of Inter Agency Coordination had not been recognized before. URI South India Regional Office has played an important role of organizing the Government – NGO coordination in disaster response. After the floods, such a meeting was held at Trivandrum, in which representatives from KSDMA, United Nations agencies, Sphere India and National and International NGOs were taken part.

Safe Water Supply

Like in any flood situation, waters are everywhere; but not a drop to drink. So has been in the Kuttanadan areas of Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta; topographically lying below sea level, where the floods have played havoc. Safe water supply has been a big challenge and restoration remain a big task. We were able to mobilize safe water supply system in several places under Pathanamthitta and Alapuzha districts.

WaterGen – 350

With the support from TATA Trust, two machines from Israel Water Gen Company, were entrusted with us to be placed at two locations to produce pure drinking water from the atmosphere. These machines costing around 35 lakhs each needed consistent high voltage power supply to work. Two locations were identified and agreements were signed to place the machines and provide needed electric power. Thus one unit was placed at Parumala Seminary and the second unit at the influence of Rotary Club members at Pandanadu, Chengannur. Later after observing the scope of utility and ground support, the second machine was shifted to Bethel House, Chengannur to benefit the local public.

31 Water filters each costing around Rs.30,000 were installed in different locations in Alapuzha and Pathanamthitta districts. More such Water Filters are being installed under the water supply recovery program.

Situation Assessment and Psycho Social Care Assistance.

Most of the families were traumatized in the impact of the floods. It was necessary to recover the moral strength and sense of accompaniment to the affected families. We engaged the Psycho social students of Laade Institute of Social Science, Kollam (part of URI CC) in this activity. While conducting a quick survey of damages and immediate need assessment, the household visit served the approach towards psycho social first aid.



CONFERENCE ON COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION



A three day Conference on Community Based Disaster Management and Mitigation was organized for Multi States operational N.G.Os from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and other states. The venue of the conference was KSSS – Chaithannya Pastoral Centre, Thellkom, Kottayam. The conference was coordinated by United Religions Initiative (URI), South India Regional Office during 27, 28 and 29th November 2018.

Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi was represented by Mr. Rajat Thomas. IRDRP, Chennai was represented by Dr. U. Irrudayasamy and SAMA Foundation was represented by Mr. Paul Ramanathan. URI was represented by its Asia Secretary General, Dr. Abraham Karickam. Mr. K.G. Mathaikutty was the Coordinator of the conference.



The objective of this conference was to create awareness among the grass root level community members through representatives of NGOs, local leaders, senior Social Workers, students, etc.. To be a 'Think Tank' partner in the New Kerala Building efforts of the State Government drawing lessons from the recent floods and its response from various corners, was another objectives.

Participants:

Out of the total 123 persons registered on the 1st day, i.e. 27th November 2018, 80 persons attended the conference all the three days. Remaining 43 persons including 32 students attended only on the 1st day and they did not continue following days. Out of 80 persons who attended all the three days 70 persons availed the Campus accommodation and the remaining 10 persons were either day scholars or stayed outside the campus but availed the boarding facilities within the campus



Inaugural Ceremony

The former Home Minister of Kerala and M.L.A. of the area, Shri. Thiruvanchoor Radhakrishnan delivered a befitting inaugural address. The Jilla Panchayat President Advocate Sunny Pampady addressed the gathering as the Guest of Honour during the inaugural function, which was chaired by, URI Asia Secretary General, Dr. Abraham Karickam. The Conference Coordinator, Mr. K.G. gave the welcome address. Dr. Andrew Spencer, DDMA, Kottayam, Mr. Rajat Thomas, VYK, Dr. U. Irrudayasamy, IRDRP and Mr. Paul Ramanathan offered the felicitations.



After the tea break, Dr. Andrew Spencer started the 1st session on the DM Frame work and role of Government & Community. This was followed by a group work

After lunch break, Mr. Joe George, KSDMA, presented the government frame work and the Kerala Floods -2018 Post Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA) outcome. Mr. Rajat Thomas introduced to the participants the history of Vishwa Yuvak Kendra (VYK). After tea break Ms. Neethu V. Thomas, DDMA Kollam presented the application of Technology in disaster Management. This was followed by the session on First Aid/Emergency Health Support demonstration by Dr. Aathura Das, from TRACK, Kollam. This session continued till 7 p.m.



Day – 2 (Wenesday) 28 November 2018:

The day 2 sessions were moderated by Dr. U. Irrudayasamy, IRDRP. The day started at 9.00 am with bhajans, songs, etc. and reported on the day 1 programme by participants. Since the designated resource person could not reach the camp due to delayed flight, the conference partners utilized the time to introduce their respective NGOs to the participants from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and other places.

Mr. K.G. Mathaikutty took the session on Community Volunteers for Disaster Management and Psycho Social support introducing the development of bottom-up processes arising from the communities themselves. Development is based on the community's specific needs and its aspirations for safety, and appropriate actions to address before, during and after disaster.

When Mr. Samuel Peter of Habitat for Humanity arrived, next session started on Shelter and Standard procedures during disaster – Good Practices and Community perspective. After lunch, Mr. Joseph Sahayam of CASA, Chennai took the session on Sectoral approach, Networking, Science and Technology. Mr. K.G. Mathaikutty discussion on Sphere India.

As per the schedule the District Fire and Rescue Station Officer and team arrived at 4.30 p.m. and after a brief in-house lecture by the Station Officer, all the participants were moved out to the open ground for fire safety and rescue demonstration till 6.30 p.m. Different types of fire extinguishing techniques were demonstrated and rescue methods were shown with the help of ropes. The participants actively and enthusiastically involved in the demonstration activities.

After dinner, a cultural program was held, in which all the camping participants were present and took part in various cultural programs.

Day -3 (Thursday) 29th November 2018.

The day began with report on previous day sessions. As per schedule Mr. Prabhulingappa the Scientific Officer of the Karnataka Disaster Management Society took the session on State | Disaster Management Overview. Followed by this the participants representing from different states expressed their views and experience during the conference. The individual participants then filled in their feed back in the format distributed among them.

Valedictory Ceremony:

The Arch Bishop of Kttayam, visited the conference hall on special invitation and gave a befitting message to the participants and appreciated the organizers for considering such a subject especially after the Kerala Floods. The Municipal Chair persons gave away the participation certificates. The conference came to an end with vote of thanks.

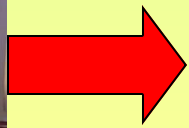
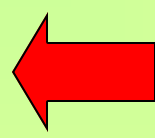
Prepared by : K.G. Mathaikutty,
Conference Coordinator,& Executive Secretary, URI South India.

URI South India Region - Interfaith Christmas Celebrations



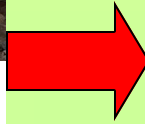
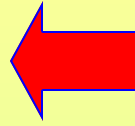
An Interfaith Christmas get together was conducted at LISS Institute of Social Sciences, Kollam, under the auspices of Zero Limit CC. Members from various CCs attended Dr. Abraham Karickam inaugurated the program. Fr. Sterin Jose gave X-mas message. This was followed by variety entertainments by students of LISS

A home for a destitute woman was constructed by St Mary's School, Mulakkuzha CC. The key was handed over by Sri. Kodikkunnil Suresh M.P at a meeting presided by Dr. Abraham Karickam. P.S John, Manager of St. Mary's school said they had spent 400,000 rupees for the home.



New office bearers of URI Sri Lanka – South India Region at the Henry Martyn Institute.

The Hiroshima and Nagasaki Memorial Day was observed by URI Zero LIMIT CC in association with Laa De' Institute of Social Sciences with its message of "No War -Need Peace" to mark the tragedy of the fatal bombing in 1945. A special peace assembly was organised by the students along with whole day long programs including Elocution Competition, Poster Making and No War placard Campaign. The participants received the copy of "The World of Nuclear Weapon" book edited by Dr Abraham Karickam.



ZONAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The South India – Sri Lanka Leadership Council was conducted on 6th January at Karickam International Public School, to streamline the activities of the year. New Youth Ambassadors were also introduced.

Newly elected Trustees Ravi Kandage (Sri Lanka) and C.N.N Raju were present. Former Trustee Prof. John Kurakar was also felicitated on the occasion.

Dr. Abraham Karickam gave an overview about the second phase of URI, which is marching into the 20th year of global interfaith networking and advocacy.

8TH INTERNATIONAL HOLY BOOKS CONFERENCE

(Jointly organized by Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Centre for Dialogue and URI Cosmic community Centre, Karickam)
Kaulalumpur, Malaysia, April 5-8, 2019

Theme : Holy Books and World Literature.

Around 40 delegates from different parts of the world will be attending this conference in the "Intertextuality" Series which began at Kottarakkara in 2005.

Previous Conferences:

- 2005, Kottarakkara - Intertextuality of the Holy Books .
- 2007, Santhigiri Ashram, Always— One Word Many Versions—A Re-Reading of The Holy Books.
- 2009, Kottarakkara – Holy Books and Violence
- 2011, Kottarakkara – Holy Books and People of Differing Faiths
- 2013, Kottarakkara - Holy Books and Life after Life.
- 2015, Sri Lanka – Holy Books and Eco Spirituality
- 2017, Bangkok – Holy Books and Creation Stories: In Search of the Original Cosmic Design.

UN World Interfaith Harmony week Celebrations - 2019

UN World Interfaith Harmony week

Inauguration:

The weeklong celebration was inaugurated on 1st February 2019 at Karickam International Public School, Kottarakara by Mr. M.G. Mathew, former treasurer of Federation of Malayalee Association in America (FOMA). Mr. K.O. Rajukutty, of All Kerala Balajana Sakhyam presided over the meeting. Dr. Abraham Karickam, Mr. K.G. Mathaikutty, Dr. Tenny Abraham, Mrs. Nisha V. Rajan, Mr. M. Thomas spoke on the occasion.

State Level Interfaith Quiz Competition:

Kerala state level interfaith Quiz competition was organized at Karickam International Public School, Kottarakara. The program was inaugurated by Mr. Anil Kumar, Tahasildar and Judicial Magistrate of Kottarakara. Seventy students from various schools took part in the quiz completion. The questions were based on Religions – 50% and General Knowledge 50%. Dr. Abraham Karickam and Prof. John Kurakar were the quiz masters. The winners of the competition were awarded Cash Prizes, trophies and certificates. Rs.3,000/-, Rs.2,000/- and Rs.1,000/- were the Cash Money awarded to first, second and third prize winners respectively. The prizes were distributed by Mr. Babu Ponnechan, Retd. Senior Manager, State Bank of India, Dr. Mohan Lal, Director, Laade Institute of Social Sciences (LISS), Kollam, and Dr. Devi Lal, Clinical Psychologist, Psychological Research & Development Council (PRDC).

Peace Poster Procession:

In a Peace Procession through the Main Central Road, carrying posters of messages, paintings and pictures depicting the need and values of interfaith harmony, peace and preserving environment, etc., all students of the school, teachers and community leaders from the area actively participated. Dr. Tenny Abraham, Senior Principal, KIPS flagged off the procession on 4th February 2019.

Closing Ceremony:

The closing ceremony of the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week celebration was held on 7th February 2019 at Kurakar Town Centre. Leaders from various religions participated and spoke on the occasion.



SOUTH INDIA - SRI LANKA ZONAL ASSEMBLY -2019



The South India – Sri Lanka Zonal Assembly 2019 was conducted at the Henry Martyn Institute of Islamic studies, Hyderabad from 23-24 February. It was inaugurated by Dr. Packiam T Samuel, Director of HMI. Dr. Abraham Karickam, Ravi Kandage, C.N.N Raju, P.K Ramachandran and Devi Raj spoke during inauguration.

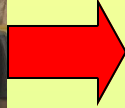
“Equipping Teachers and Schools for Interfaith Education” was the main theme. South India and Sri Lanka regions presented their reports. Several CCs also gave beautiful presentations of their activities.

Forty two delegates from Sri Lanka and South India participated. It was for the first time that a URI event was being held in the State of Telengana. It gave the new CCs excellent opportunity to gain first hand information about the life and work of URI in several parts of the World. URI Website was introduced and CC Toolkit distributed. Two URI videos were also presented.



Congratulations

Mrs. Suni Mariam Mathew (Member of International Centre for Study and Development CC, Valakom) was appointed as the Director of the Indian Institute for Speech and Hearing Disabilities. There are six major Institutes under the National Centre. Hearty congratulations. Suni is the daughter of late K.C Mathew and Mariamma Mathew (President ICSD CC). Suni was one of our youth delegates to Taize Community, France during her student days.



URJ South India Region Youth Ambassadors



Vinayak Murali
(Amarjyothi CC), Sadanandapuram



Ardra P Manoj
(Habel Foundation CC),
Mallappally



Ardra K Biju
(KIPS CC)

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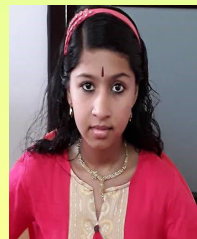
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