

## OSAAT NEWS



**One of several hundred villages devastated by floods in Karnataka**

The rain was supposed to be a welcome respite. The lakes and rivers were supposed to fill to levels unheard of in recent years. The barren lands were supposed to soak up the water like sponges. But, what actually happened was beyond belief. The relentless downpour went on and on for days. The lakes and rivers overflowed, drowning everything in sight.

Hundreds of villages were under water and have been devastated beyond hope. Maharashtra has suffered similar, severe damages. Overall, 13 States - Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Assam, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Goa, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, and Punjab have been affected to varying degree with untold loss of livelihoods, homes, schools, hospitals and places of worship. At least 200 people

### Where do we go from here?

When Mother Nature does what she does, all good Samaritans jump in with their hearts and souls to help a fellow human being. They do not look the age, gender, social status, level of education, race, religion, or for that matter, anything that describes a person in another context or circumstance. A humanitarian crisis is answered by a calling of someone's heart. People on the ground in India have worked round the clock and supplied meals, collected blankets, clothes, medical and hygiene kits, and transported them to places with no roads and no bridges.

**Let us first acknowledge good Samaritans from all over the world who have rushed to the aid of flood victims.**



Have lost their lives and about a million people have been displaced. Karnataka and Maharashtra are reported to be the most severely

affected States. Now comes the big question of "Where do we go from here?". It is so overwhelming fathom.

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OSAAT volunteers Srinivas Subramaniam and Gundu Rao visited several flood-hit areas to assess the damages first-hand. Gundu Rao, a seasoned volunteer, who, over the past years, has conducted countless site visits to assess damages to rural school buildings damaged all over India says he was quite speechless when he saw the “Kids are generally happy to get drenched in the rain and play in puddles. They get excited to get a day off from school. The first couple of days of rain brought them the usual excitement. When it started wreaking havoc on their villages, they became the unfortunate witnesses of the death and destruction that even adults could not handle without breaking apart physically and emotionally. I have no words to describe the trauma I have seen”.

Subramaniam and Gundu Rao visited many villages and brought home pictures, each worth a thousand words, words that dig deep into our hearts and make us hug our kids and thank our stars for sparing us the horrific experiences the kids have been through. Needless to say that we need to act quickly, decisively, and with strength, to restore whatever we can for these kids.

“One thing we know is that people can lose their physical assets – home, land, furniture, material belongings gathered over a lifetime. We also know that there are things that will stay with people is their education, tenacity, inner strength and desire to beat the odds. The kids have lost so much, but still have a future. As with any disaster relief, we intuitively know that there will be many efforts on all fronts to restore livelihoods and bring back a sense of hope” says Srinivas.

True. We can make that future a brighter one. We can give these kids hope and help them overcome their fear and sadness. We can show them that there is light at the end of the

tunnel. Here’s where we don’t have to think too much. Having successfully completed 29 school rebuilding projects to date, we just have to roll up our sleeves and go at it.

Hundreds of schools in Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra are waiting to be rescued!

There will be many years spent rebuilding lives and rekindling the desire to overcome adversity. For children too young to understand the magnitude of such a disaster, the emotional impact manifests in the form of fear and helplessness.

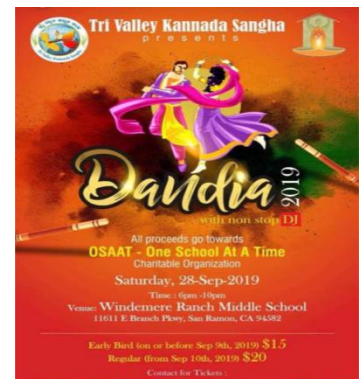
As an organization dedicated to helping kids in rural areas of India get an education, our thoughts naturally are drawn to their plight at a time like this.

## So, we jump right in!

Team USA held its first fundraiser on September 28, 2019, at San Ramon, Bay area. **Tri-Valley Kannada Sangha (TVKS)**, rose up to the occasion and graciously hosted a sold out Dandia event.

This is the second fundraiser conducted by TVKS, following the organization’s generous donation towards the adoption of the Kattamalalavadi school in Karnataka last year.

Donors and supporters of TVKS came out in large numbers to the joyous celebration that actually starts off the Navaratri festivities.



**They demonstrated the true meaning of “Service to mankind is Service to the Divine” this Navaratri season.**

The blessing of so many caring hearts, at a time it is needed so badly, is sure to make a profound impact on the kids in the flood affected villages.



## Team USA's Vidyaadana event

Team USA's "**Vidyaadana**" campaign is underway. The team is planning a dinner event on November 4, 2019, in the Bay area.

This year's campaign is being chaired by Keerti Melkote, a Bay area entrepreneur who adopted two schools last year in Karnataka, in Malur and Alambadi. Keerti and his wife Sneha have not only earned themselves the love and affection of not just these two towns, but also inspired many donors to adopt OSAAT's schools. As the campaign chair Keerti intends to draw attention to the plight of kids whose future is at stake due to the floods.

"It is, in fact, time for all hands on deck to restore life to normal in all areas devastated by the floods. It may take years but need not affect young lives that are just starting to discover life. It need not leave a deep scar in their hearts. It is time for us to stop overthinking the situation. It is time to act" – says Keerti.

"These photos captured by OSAAT volunteers show schools that are actually submerged 5-10 feet under water. These buildings were not in great shape to begin with and have either been totally destroyed or left useless beyond any reasonable means of repair. I don't think we need to debate the need of the hour" – Keerti said when OSAAT approached him to chair the Vidyaadana campaign.

"If anyone is looking to get involved with the campaign in any form or fashion, they are welcome to clarify any question they may have about the objectives of this campaign, how the funds will be spent, and what criteria are used to pick the schools." Keerti says,



**Keerti Melkote**

Campaign Chair, Vidyaadana 2019



based on his own first-hand experience with OSAAT.

"Looking at an issue of this magnitude is certainly overwhelming to some people. They will start questioning whether the time and effort they put in will be significant enough to make any difference at all. But we cannot get into this "analysis paralysis" situation. Human suffering cannot be allowed to go on and on. There are lives at stake, livelihoods at stake. I just



cannot imagine sitting back and waiting for someone else to act."

Keerti's actions have proven that he means what he says. This campaign is off to a great start under his leadership.



For vidyaadana info  
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## Schools in the flood affected areas under consideration

Currently, OSAAT is looking to shortlist about 10 schools each in Karnataka and Maharashtra, given that these two States are the worst-hit by the floods.

It is estimated that each school will need 4 to 6 classrooms and toilets.

OSAAT will monitor the situation closely in terms of rehabilitation efforts in these areas. There will be no quick fixes and no short cuts. Team India is knocking on all the doors that lead to restoration of lives and livelihoods.



## Schools Reviewed and Approved

Team India has worked diligently over the past several months to review the proposals from nearly one hundred schools in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh. The five schools listed below are in Uttar Pradesh. One school each in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh have also been approved and are in various stages of progress in terms of partner agreements, construction plans and logistical coordination.

School Name	Status
Lehni-II Primary School and Upper Primary School	Work started. Interior and exterior painting of 4 classrooms completed. Due to rain, some of the work pending better weather condition.
Chakhni Bhumiary Patti Primary School	Work expected to start in Mid-October 2019
Chilwan Upper Primary School	Work expected to start in Mid-October 2019
Chilwan Primary School	Work expected to start in Mid-October 2019
Jhajhawa Primary School	Work expected to start end of October 2019
Saidpur Kasimpur (Mathura) Primary School	Work expected to start end of October 2019

The school projects are all in a day's work at OSAAT and things are always moving. Please visit [osaat.org](http://osaat.org) for information on the organization and school projects. Donate, volunteer, cheer! Please support us in any way you can. Volunteers are the heart, soul and backbone of the organization.