

E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs
Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

“Collector Bro”: Using Social Media to Tap the Power of Volunteerism

CASE

“With initiatives like Compassionate Kozhikode, Operation Sulaimani, [...] Prasanth Nair, who was the District Collector of Kozhikode at that time, ushered in a new era of governance that endeavoured to bridge the gap between the district administration and citizens through the optimal employment of social media.”¹

Lekshmi Priya S, Columnist, in August 2018

“...we want ‘compassion’ to be ingrained in administrative tools. It must be ignited among the people to be sustained and replicated in all communities. The more compassion we have, the less administration we will have to do.”²

Prasanth Nair, in March 2016

This case was written by Debapratim Purkayastha and Vijay Kumar Tangirala of IBS Hyderabad. It was a winning case in E-PARCC’s 2018-2019 Competition for Collaborative Public Management, Governance, and Problem-Solving Teaching Materials. The case is intended for classroom discussion and not to suggest either effective or ineffective responses to the situation depicted. It may be copied as many times as needed, provided that the authors and E-PARCC are given full credit. [E-PARCC is a project of the Collaborative Governance Initiative](#), Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration- a research, teaching and practice center within Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

¹ Lekshmi Priya S, “How Kerala’s ‘Collector Bro’ Harnessed the Power of Social Media to Save Lives!,” www.thebetterindia.com, August 21, 2018.

² Osama Manzar, “Compassion: A New Administrative Tool,” www.livemint.com, March 31, 2016.

For Suresh aged 65 and a daily wage laborer from Kozhikode³, a free meal implied a day without worry about his limited resources. By noon, several like him queued up at the nearest village office for free lunch coupons.⁴ He was among the several needy who benefited from a free-food initiative “Operation Sulaimani,” one of the many projects launched under the parent program “Compassionate Kozhikode.” Compassionate Kozhikode was entirely volunteer driven; the citizens of the district donated goods and volunteered their time to institutions such as children’s homes and palliative care centers. They also, among other things, cleaned up beaches and lakes.

The chief architect of Compassionate Kozhikode was Prasanth Nair (Nair), who was the District Collector⁵ of Kozhikode from February 2015 to around January 2017. Social media was one of the key tools used by Nair, who was affectionately called “Collector Bro” by his followers, to interact with the citizens of the district and give information about the various government schemes. According to observers, the earthy language used by him on social media appealed to the citizens and encouraged them to participate actively in the various initiatives under Compassionate Kozhikode. Later in 2018, when floods devastated Kerala, Nair, who was then the Deputy Secretary in the Union Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, employed social media to pool together volunteers who contributed to the rescue and rehabilitation efforts. However, that Nair was social media savvy was criticized by some among the political class.

BACKGROUND NOTE

Prasanth Nair, an Indian bureaucrat, had served in various capacities in diverse sectors such as tourism, taxation, roads, water supply, and skill development. After completing his graduation in Law from the University of Kerala, Nair was selected to the Indian Administrative Service in 2007. Nair assumed responsibility as the District Collector of Kozhikode in February 2015. The same month, he created a Facebook public page called “Collector Kozhikode” as an additional medium to interact with the public. A week later, he happened to visit the government mental health center in the district, which housed more than 600 people. According to him, even sunlight could not enter the prison-like cellular rooms. Nair was saddened to see elderly women who had been left to fend for themselves by relatives, mentally ill men who had been abandoned, and women who, despite being cured of their illnesses, were apprehensive about stepping into the outside world as they

³ Kozhikode is a district in the south Indian state of Kerala.

⁴ Sneha Mary Koshy, “Yes, There are Free Lunches in Kerala's Kozhikode. Here's How,” www.ndtv.com, November 25, 2015.

⁵ A District Collector is one among the several positions handled by the recruits of the elite Indian Administrative Service (IAS), an administrative wing of the All India Services. A District Collector is responsible for the revenue collection and administration of a district. Some of his/her responsibilities are assessment and collection of land revenue, supervision of treasury and sub-treasury, land assessment, land acquisition, disaster management during natural calamities, and all matters connected with land reforms, land records, and land acquisition.

feared being sexually assaulted.⁶ “Even more distressing were the inhuman conditions of living that I witnessed firsthand. The inmates were locked up in dark, humid cells that resembled prisons; a foul stench permeating the premises. Many were squatting in their own excreta, and one person was attempting to eat his own waste,”⁷ he said. The absence of even essential materials in the hospital shocked him.

When Nair asked the hospital Superintendent why the patients were being housed in such poor conditions, the Superintendent cited lack of government funds as the reason. Nair then asked him for a list of items that the hospital required. Upon receiving the list consisting of 22 items, including wheelchairs, cots, mugs, plates, air beds, nail cutters, scissors, and water purifiers, Nair posted the list on the official Facebook page and requested that the citizens of the district donate the items. “I had two options. One was to write to the government, wait for budgetary allocation, procurement process. The second option was to circumvent this. I had to do it because every minute mattered. Human beings were living there and these interventions would change their lives,”⁸ said Nair. His post also included a request to not donate any cash.

The response from people, according to observers, was overwhelming. People belonging to different spheres — students, teachers, psychiatrists, architects, and social workers — actively contributed to revamp the mental health center.⁹ Within two weeks, Nair had received all the items on the list – on the whole, citizens donated items worth INR1 million (USD 14,000). The response proved to Nair that community mobilization was possible. “This opened my eyes towards the innate goodness among the people. I believed that they would express it when opportunities are made available,”¹⁰ he said.

COMPASSIONATE KOZHIKODE

Encouraged by the response received from the public to revamp the government mental center, Nair launched a project titled “Compassionate Kozhikode” in the first half of 2015. It comprised several volunteer-run community initiatives that tackled a host of issues such as poor roads, crowded buses, and hunger. Some of the initiatives were also aimed at helping institutions such as libraries, children’s homes, old age homes, and palliative care centers (Refer to Exhibit I for details of some of the initiatives). The [project’s website](#) posted areas needing voluntary services. It displayed details pertaining to the requirements of each institution. The donor could select an institution that he/she wanted to be associated with,

⁶ “How a Kerala Collector Reached Out to Public for Help and Got an Amazing Response,” www.thenewsminute.com, March 19, 2015.

⁷ Sangeetha Swaroop, “Kozhikode District Collector Leads by Example,” <https://gulfnews.com>, June 8, 2016.

⁸ Sneha Mary Koshy, “In Kozhikode Mental Hospital, Patients Living in British-Era ‘Cells’ Get Help From Facebook Donors,” www.ndtv.com, April 7, 2015.

⁹ Prasanth Nair and Ardra Manasi, “How Volunteerism Has Been A Transformative Tool In Kozhikode,” www.huffingtonpost.in, January 14, 2018.

¹⁰ TK Devasia, “Kerala govt in a spot as fight between Kozhikode collector, Congress MP escalates,” www.firstpost.com, July 3, 2016.

choose from the list of its requirements, and communicate his/her willingness in the space provided on the website.¹¹ “The idea originated from the realisation that there are people in Kozhikode who are willing to give and there are many who really need help. We acted only as a facilitator. It is the culmination of several brainstorming sessions by a group of dedicated persons,”¹² said Nair.

Besides donations in kind such as cots, wheelchairs, radios, and refrigerators, the Compassionate Kozhikode website invited citizens to volunteer for different roles; for instance, as occupational therapists at mental health centers, plumbers at leprosy hospitals, maids at children’s centers, teachers at girls’ care homes, and yoga trainers at old-age homes. The founding team of Compassionate Kozhikode employed the Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp to promote the project while emphasizing one of the key tenets of the project – “No cash, kindness in kind only”.¹³ According to Nair, the project did not accept donations in the form of money to prevent, among other things, corruption.

By April 2016, there were more than 1,000 volunteers associated with Compassionate Kozhikode. They comprised people from diverse spheres such as students, entrepreneur-millionaires, professionals, and individuals from local fishing communities. Since the unveiling of the project until around April 2016, the different initiatives, put together, had works worth around INR25 million in process.¹⁴

Each of the initiatives under Compassionate Kozhikode was handled, maintained, and sustained by volunteers. “We are taught, in our administrative service training...that you have to be responsive, engaging, interactive, participative, citizen-centric, and consultative. But, most of the time, when we go back to the ground, we follow the same administrative practices, without any citizen engagement...In Kozhikode, we are only following what I was taught and converting theory into practice,” said Nair.¹⁵

According to observers, a key reason for the success of the Compassionate Kozhikode project was that Nair gave volunteers the space to assume leadership roles and to come up with innovative solutions. According to Nair, the responsibility for dissecting an issue and generating solutions had to be with the youth where they were bestowed with leadership roles and were required to tap their creativity in problem solving and ensuring consistency

¹¹ TK Devasia, “Kerala govt in a spot as fight between Kozhikode collector, Congress MP escalates,” www.firstpost.com July 3, 2016.

¹² MP Prashanth, “Kozhikode: A City of Compassion,” <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> October 3, 2015.

¹³ R Krishnakumar, “Collective action yields results in Kozhikode district,” www.deccanherald.com, April 10, 2016.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Osama Manzar, “Compassion: A New Administrative Tool,” www.livemint.com, March 31, 2016.

in execution.¹⁶ According to him, a key tenet of ensuring that volunteers were engaged was trust. Nair said:

“If you can’t believe in youth, how can you expect them to take the future ahead?...What is important is that we have touched them deep inside their hearts and sown compassion. It doesn’t matter where the initiative ‘Compassionate Kozhikode’ goes on after I move away from here, what should be sustainable is compassion, not ‘Compassionate Kozhikode’. The actions should be sustainable, not the name of the organization,”¹⁷

Observers also attributed the success of the project to one of its key tenets of neither the benefactors nor the beneficiaries being photographed. This ensured that only individuals who had the genuine interests of the beneficiaries in mind and not the scope for their own visibility or self-promotion, participated in the various initiatives.

OPERATION SULAIMANI

The flagship initiative of Compassionate Kozhikode was Operation Sulaimani. The initiative was named after Sulaimani tea, a famous drink of the district, which was a mix of black tea, lemon, and cardamom. “We didn’t want names that smack of typical government projects,”¹⁸ said Nair. The objective of the initiative, which was launched by the district administration in collaboration with the Kerala Hotel and Restaurants Association, was to tackle the problem of hunger and to ensure that no person in the district would go hungry for lack of money to pay for food.

Under the scheme, Sulaimani food coupons, each worth INR40, were distributed through counters set up at the Collectorate, village and *taluk*¹⁹ offices, at select hostels, railway stations, and bus stands. The needy could give these coupons in exchange for a free meal at any of the partner restaurants – there were more than 125 restaurants enlisted under the initiative. Individuals using this facility were treated on a par with any other guest at these restaurants.

“Suliamani is based on the concept ‘food with dignity.’ It is a discreet way of handling hunger without poor people having to beg for food,”²⁰ said Nair. He added, “We cannot ask a hungry person to get his hunger attested by a certified gazetted officer! That is why we insisted on the philosophy that ‘no questions will be asked’. If you ask for a food coupon,

¹⁶ “State of Youth Volunteering in India,” <http://www.in.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/UNV/State%20of%20Youth%20Volunteering%20in%20India-compressed.pdf>.

¹⁷ “State of Youth Volunteering in India,” <http://www.in.undp.org/content/dam/india/docs/UNV/State%20of%20Youth%20Volunteering%20in%20India-compressed.pdf>.

¹⁸ P Anima, “Collector, Bro, Rockstar!” www.thehindubusinessline.com, October 23, 2015.

¹⁹ Taluk, in South Asia, refers to a subdivision of a district.

²⁰ Anjana Sankar, “Superman ‘Collector Bro’ of Indian State Kerala,” <https://gulfnews.com>, April 28, 2016.

you will get it, it is as dignified as that.”²¹ Falah, a college student and a volunteer who tested how the beneficiaries were being treated, said, “When I gave the coupon, I was served with utmost respect. I was told that the hotels association has given strict orders to everyone to treat guests carrying coupons with dignity.”²²

The volunteer team placed boxes, with ‘Operation Sulaimani’ inscribed on them, across the district into which nameless donations poured in. The money collected was employed to reimburse the partner restaurants for the coupons collected and meals served by them. What fascinated observers was the fact that Team Sulaimani did not appropriate a penny from the collected money to recoup its administrative expenses. The funds collected, according to the team, were meant only to feed the hungry.

The Operation Sulaimani team allowed neither large donations nor government funding for the initiative. Two days subsequent to the start of the initiative, a Middle-East-Asia-based businessman offered a donation of INR12.5 million. The team, however, politely turned down the offer as it believed that the spirit of Operation Sulaimani was in the collective responsibility shouldered by the people to care for one another instead of a generous contribution by any one individual or organization.²³ The team also did not accept donations from corporate sponsors; instead, it adhered to the principle of crowdfunding to inculcate in the citizens of the district the feeling that they owned the initiative.

According to observers, a distinctive feature of Operation Sulaimani was that it made use of the existing infrastructure and did not require the construction of kitchens. “There is no food wastage nor do we have to worry about the safety of the food. If we had chosen to build a large kitchen to supply free food, we would have all these problems,”²⁴ explained Nair. Also, by directing the needy to the several partner restaurants, the initiative combined the cause with the regular operations of the restaurants. Most of the restaurant owners said that the initiative bestowed upon them the chance to help several individuals without forgoing revenue. “The restaurants’ turnover has actually increased because more people are eating there,”²⁵ remarked Nair.

“We have been running a hotel near Kuthiravattom from 1938 but never have I felt so happy as now seeing the people having free lunch here and giving me a thankful look,”²⁶ commented an owner of one of the partner restaurants located near the

²¹ Ranjini Sivaswamy, “Operation Sulaimani: A District Collector’s Mind Blowing Initiative to Feed the Hungry in Kozhikode,” www.thebetterindia.com, April 24, 2016.

²² Sneha Mary Koshy, “Yes, There are Free Lunches in Kerala’s Kozhikode. Here’s How,” www.ndtv.com, November 25, 2015.

²³ Ranjini Sivaswamy, “Operation Sulaimani: A District Collector’s Mind Blowing Initiative to Feed the Hungry in Kozhikode,” www.thebetterindia.com, April 24, 2016.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Aravind KS, “‘Operation Sulaimani’ to Tackle Poverty in Kozhikode District,” www.newindianexpress.com, April 24, 2015.

²⁶ K Praveen Kumar, “Kudos to Free Lunch via Operation Sulaimani,” www.deccanchronicle.com, July 10, 2015.

government mental hospital. Most of the individuals eating food for free at the restaurant under the scheme were the relatives of patients at the mental hospital. “They are people who do not beg before others for any favours. The district administration’s initiative to help such people through Operation Sulaimani is laudable,”²⁷ added the owner. With the passage of time, some of the restaurant owners began to offer food even to those among the needy who could not produce Sulaimani coupons.

According to Nair, the initiative also helped tackle the problem of food wastage in the district. “It is found that here is a practice of wasting food in connection with the free food distribution campaigns of certain organisations. A big share of food arranged for such campaigns is often found dumped along with other waste materials. Another sad thing is that the eligible persons often do not get the benefit of this scheme as many who can afford to buy food grab these free packs,”²⁸ he commented. According to him, the district administration maintained a register in which information about the individuals who came to them for the food coupons was entered. The intention was to not cater to individuals who, despite a steady income, came regularly for free food as the intended beneficiaries were the poor.²⁹

CLEANING A LAKE

In January 2016, Nair posted a Facebook message inviting the citizens of Koyilandy, a town in Kozhikode, to clean up the 57,000 square-meter Pisharikavu Lake, which was filled with dirt and water hyacinth. In return, he promised the participants a treat of sumptuous Malabar biryani, a spicy delicacy of the region. Nair’s offer led to nearly 750 people turning up to clean the lake. With Nair joining in, they cleaned the entire lake in a single day. And as promised, the volunteers got a treat of heaps of Malabar biryani. “I think you should be able to bring in excitement in the work that you do; it doesn’t have to be drab. You should be able to get people excited and involved,”³⁰ he recounted. He added, “The government has always had a volunteer programme where people are expected to turn up and clean water bodies and other public places, and they will be rewarded with snacks and refreshments. You expect people to turn (up) for such a press release note?”³¹ The money from the drought prevention fund of the district administration was used to finance the preparation of the biryani. The clean-up of the Pisharikavu Lake had since inspired similar initiatives

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Aravind KS, “‘Operation Sulaimani’ to Tackle Poverty in Kozhikode District,” www.newindianexpress.com, April 24, 2015.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Nikita Puri, “Prasanth Nair, the Man Who Is Known as ‘Collector Bro’,” www.business-standard.com, December 16, 2016.

³¹ “‘Acts of Compassion Can Change Many Lives,’ Says Kerala’s Collector Bro in TEDx Talk,” www.thenewsminute.com, January 9, 2018.

across the district with residents coming together voluntarily to clean up water bodies in their vicinities.³²

NAIR'S GOVERNANCE APPROACH

Social media was a key component of Nair's governance modus operandi. By 2016, the Facebook page of 'Collector Kozhikode' had registered more than 189,064 likes, and over 8,184 individuals were conversing about the page at any given point in time. According to an observer, this implied that over 8,000 individuals were constantly conversing or reacting or engaging themselves on the district collector's Facebook page.³³ "The people are out there in social media, so we need to be there. It's as simple as that. Pasting notices on the notice boards of the village office is no longer the way to reach out to the public. Social media as a platform makes administration more transparent, seamless, fast, publicly accountable, and 'informal',"³⁴ explained Nair. He added, "The public needs to be taken into confidence and strong and credible leadership should own up these initiatives. The public is often faced with a trust deficit issue when it comes to trusting new initiatives. This is where smart and credible social selling becomes relevant,"³⁵

On the 'Collector Kozhikode' Facebook page, Nair, announced, among other things, welfare programs, charity projects, and other initiatives and wrote detailed notes for each of them. The page was replete with photographs of campaigns requesting the citizens of the district to take action in diverse ways. Through the page, people brought to Nair's notice their complaints and the issues that they encountered in their residential areas.³⁶ They also frequently wrote in lauding Nair for his work. And he replied to each query, suggestion, and remark.

Nair believed that social media, unlike conventional media, aided direct interactions with citizens. "The real purpose of social media is two-way communication. I...personally interact with each and every one of them. And I cannot act like a boss online because social media is a level playing ground where everyone is an account holder,"³⁷ he commented. According to an observer, interacting with the public through social media also enhanced Nair's efficiency. "It is a great feeling when someone comes with a petition and mentions that he has sent me a complaint the day before on Facebook. We check and mostly find it has already been resolved. The citizen satisfaction is boundless,"³⁸ he said. On another occasion,

³² Sangeetha Swaroop, "Kozhikode district collector leads by example," <https://gulffnews.com>, June 8, 2016.

³³ Osama Manzar, "Compassion: A New Administrative Tool," www.livemint.com, March 31, 2016.

³⁴ Vishnu Varma, "Kozhikode Collector Goes All Social, Gets More Than a Few Likes for His Work," <https://indianexpress.com>, September 20, 2015.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Tanaya Singh, "This Collector Has 1 Lakh Followers on Facebook. And He Interacts with Them Everyday!," www.thebetterindia.com, September 22, 2015.

³⁷ Anjana Sankar, "Superman 'Collector Bro' of Indian State Kerala," <https://gulffnews.com>, April 28, 2016.

³⁸ Biju Govind, "How a Kerala Collector Became a Facebook Hit," www.thehindu.com, May 9, 2016.

when he required an app to rein in speeding buses, models poured in from techies within minutes.³⁹

According to observers, Nair's use of language which was accessible, earthy, humorous, and interspersed with colloquial slang, increased the impact of his social media interactions.⁴⁰ He addressed the people who interacted with him on the Facebook page as Bhai⁴¹, and the citizens addressed him as 'bro' and 'rockstar'.⁴² Observers also pointed out that the sobriquet 'Collector Bro' that he had earned was proof of the following he had.

By July 2016, the Collector Kozhikode Facebook page had more than 225,000 followers.⁴³ As of January 2019, the page had around 285,000 followers.

According to observers, what added to the appeal of Nair's social media engagement was his peppering of his posts and replies with movie dialogues. When mischievous followers went overboard, he would reply, "Nadesha... kollanda" (Nadesha, don't kill — a dialogue from a Malayalam⁴⁴ movie).⁴⁵ Once when it rained heavily in Kozhikode, in the early hours of a Monday morning, a college student asked Nair on the 'Collector Kozhikode' Facebook page whether he would declare a holiday. To the student's amazement, Nair replied, "Nothing, go to your classes."⁴⁶ Followers of the Facebook page instantly recognized the sentence as a dialogue from a romantic comedy movie in Malayalam.⁴⁷ "The apt language for social media is an informal one; humour helps and similes work. We do not delete any comments, except if they are communally sensitive,"⁴⁸ commented Nair.

A MINOR HICCUP?

In February 2017, Nair was transferred out from the post of the district collector of Kozhikode. UV Jose, who replaced Nair as the district collector, said that Compassionate Kozhikode would continue as it was. "There is no question on the future of CK (Compassionate Kozhikode) which is a movement unique for Kozhikode,"⁴⁹ he said. As of April 2017, a minimum of 250 Sulaimani coupons were being used on a daily basis.⁵⁰ By May 2018, over 80,000 free food coupons had been distributed under the Operation Sulaimani

³⁹ P. Anima, "Collector, Bro, Rockstar!" www.thehindubusinessline.com, October 23, 2015.

⁴⁰ "Some 'Kozhikode Biryani' to Clean a Lake?" <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, February 12, 2016.

⁴¹ Bhai refers to 'brother' in Hindi and some other Indian languages.

⁴² "Some 'Kozhikode Biryani' to Clean a Lake?" <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, February 12, 2016.

⁴³ "Compassionate Kozhikode on FB," www.thehindu.com, July 6, 2016.

⁴⁴ Malayalam is a language which is largely spoken in Kerala.

⁴⁵ P Anima, "Collector, Bro, Rockstar!" www.thehindubusinessline.com, October 23, 2015.

⁴⁶ Nikita Puri, "Prasanth Nair, the Man Who Is Known as 'Collector Bro'," www.business-standard.com, December 16, 2016.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ P Anima, "Collector, Bro, Rockstar!" www.thehindubusinessline.com, October 23, 2015.

⁴⁹ "Kozhikode to Remain 'Compassionate'," www.deccanchronicle.com, February 26, 2017.

⁵⁰ Ashlin Mathew, "Food Waste Solutions Paswan Should Have Heard About," www.nationalheraldindia.com, April 14, 2017.

initiative.⁵¹ Coupon-distribution counters were being opened at new locations after pilot tests were conducted at those sites.

BEYOND KOZHIKODE

In 2018, when floods devastated Kerala resulting in losses of over INR200 billion, Nair successfully led a social media intervention to track, rescue, and rehabilitate the people affected (Refer to Exhibit II for details of the extent of devastation caused by the floods). Nair, who was then deputy secretary in the union ministry of new and renewable energy, wrote a Facebook post putting forth the idea of volunteers coming together to provide tech support to augment rescue and relief operations in Kerala across all social media platforms.⁵² Within minutes, a Facebook group called 'Flood Technology Support Kerala 2018' was created. It was launched by IT professionals to garner information related to those stranded and who needed to be rescued.⁵³

Nair was also instrumental in launching a website called 'Compassionate Keralam'. The website, among other things, connected the flood affected with individuals and entities such as NGOs and trusts who could help them in kind. Compassionate Keralam quickly morphed into a 6,000-strong volunteer group. "When our volunteers began offering help, we united them through the Facebook page titled KeralaFloods2018 and soon, the membership crossed 12,000 from all over the world,"⁵⁴ said Nair.

The members created, among other things, 14 WhatsApp groups, one for each district in the state. They directed all SOS messages garnered through various social media platforms together with the data from the government portal, Keralarescue.in, to government call centers. The volunteers directed the data to the district control rooms from where the government officials acted on the distress calls. To aid real-time flow of data to government officials, over 200 members voluntarily operated out of every district call center. Besides, a WhatsApp group of naval officers' wives also volunteered; it was in touch with the Navy officers given charge of reaching out to difficult-to-reach locations (refer to Exhibit III for the workflow of team Compassionate Keralam).⁵⁵

When the flood waters started receding in several regions statewide, the volunteers prepared and provided different kits that would aid people in cleaning their homes and ensuring that they were suitable to reside in again. These kits comprised essential materials

⁵¹ "Operation Sulaimani's New Counter Opened," www.thehindu.com, May 8, 2018.

⁵² Lekshmi Priya S, "How Kerala's 'Collector Bro' Harnessed the Power of Social Media to Save Lives!," www.thebetterindia.com, August 21, 2018.

⁵³ Regina Mihindukulasuriya, "How an IAS Officer in Kerala Used Facebook to Help Flood Victims," <https://theprint.in>. August 20, 2018.

⁵⁴ KP Saikiran, "How FB Army Became Lifesaver for Kerala," <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>, August 23, 2018.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

such as rubber boots, heavy-duty gloves, masks, soap powder, disinfectants, scrubbers, and rodent killers.⁵⁶

One of the programs under Compassionate Keralam was 'Extend Your Family' wherein families had to adopt and support the families impacted by the flood. "The idea is to adopt a family and help them tide through the crisis as though they are an extension of your own family. There are...kind-hearted Keralites across the globe, and we are providing a credible platform to connect families,"⁵⁷ said Nair. Potential benefactors had to register on the Compassionate Keralam website. Volunteers identified deserving families and brought the beneficiaries and the benefactors together. "With the first post itself, 700 people have signed up for the 'Extend Your Family' initiative. Our aim is to reach out to 10,000 families through this project. And I am confident we will..."⁵⁸ said Nair. According to observers, the number of people registering to support an extended family could be gauged from the fact that the website crashed because of heavy traffic. According to Lekshmi Priya S, "[W]e believe that Nair's timely incorporation and optimal mining of tech-support during Kerala's darkest hours that has silently saved the lives of thousands will surely qualify as his best initiative yet."⁵⁹

RIGHT GOVERNANCE APPROACH?

According to some observers, Nair's leadership style might not work under all circumstances. "The concept of crowdsourcing and public participation can definitely be replicated, but his approach is actually very risky. The whole concept of Compassionate Kozhikode is based on the relationship and trust between him and the people. I doubt there will be many bureaucrats who will be confident enough to take this kind of risk,"⁶⁰ remarked Suresh Kumar, an expert in palliative healthcare who had known Nair for a long time.

Observers also recounted how, when Nair was the collector of Kozhikode, some local politicians were irked by the fact that he maintained an active virtual profile. Among his critics was the Kozhikode District Congress⁶¹ Committee President, KC Abu, who said that Nair devoted a lot of time to social media and not enough time to taking his phone calls.⁶² Nair responded that he employed social media as one of the mechanisms to address the grievances of the citizens of the district. According to observers, VT Balram, a Congress

⁵⁶ Lekshmi Priya S, "How Kerala's 'Collector Bro' Harnessed the Power of Social Media to Save Lives!" www.thebetterindia.com, August 21, 2018.

⁵⁷ Anjana Sankar, "IAS Officer Launches Initiative to Adopt Flood-Hit Kerala Families," www.khaleejtimes.com, September 6, 2018.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Lekshmi Priya S, "How Kerala's 'Collector Bro' Harnessed the Power of Social Media to Save Lives!," www.thebetterindia.com, August 21, 2018.

⁶⁰ Nikita Puri, "Prasanth Nair, the Man Who Is Known as 'Collector Bro'," www.business-standard.com, December 16, 2016.

⁶¹ Congress, or Indian National Congress, is a political party in India.

⁶² Vishnu Varma, "Kozhikode Collector Goes All Social, Gets More Than a Few Likes for His Work," <https://indianexpress.com>, September 20, 2015.

Member of the Legislative Assembly who supported Nair's style of functioning, seemed to have the last word about the importance of public servants using social media when he noted, "For a politician every medium through which he can communicate directly to the public without any middlemen is a weapon."⁶³

⁶³ Venu Muruvil, "How a Collector's Online Popularity Earned Him Politicians' Wrath," www.rediff.com, July 16, 2015.

Exhibit I

Some of the Initiatives under Compassionate Kozhikode

Name of the Initiative	Description
District Collector's Internship Program (DCIP)	Under DCIP, youngsters were given field training on the implementation of different government programs and were mentored by IIM Kozhikode, an elite management institute in India
Welfare Homes	Compassionate Kozhikode ensured provision of recreation for boys and girls in children's homes
Savari Giri Giri	Savari Giri Giri provided safety and dignity to students who traveled by public transport on concession tickets
Hey Auto	Hey Auto was a smartphone-based application connecting auto rickshaws with those who wanted to hire them
Sampoorna	Sampoorna was a universal healthcare insurance scheme
Project 4N	Project 4N was a road maintenance initiative involving the public. Under this initiative, citizens identified roads with potholes; the administration then found sponsors and other contributors to fix those potholes.
Kozhipedia	Kozhipedia was an open street map-based initiative under which volunteers garnered and recorded information about roads, streets, pathways, stories, legends, folklore, and cultural and natural heritage
Legends of Kozhikode	Legends of Kozhikode documented and shared stories of the unsung heroes of the district.
Yo Appooppa	Yo Appooppa was an initiative to improve the quality of life of the elderly, particularly those living alone.
Tere Mere Beach Mein*	Tere Mere Beach Mein was a project to tackle waste at the Kozhikode beach.

* *Tere Mere Beach Mein* is a playful version of the phrase in the Indian language of Hindi, which means "Between you and me."

Compiled from various sources

Exhibit II

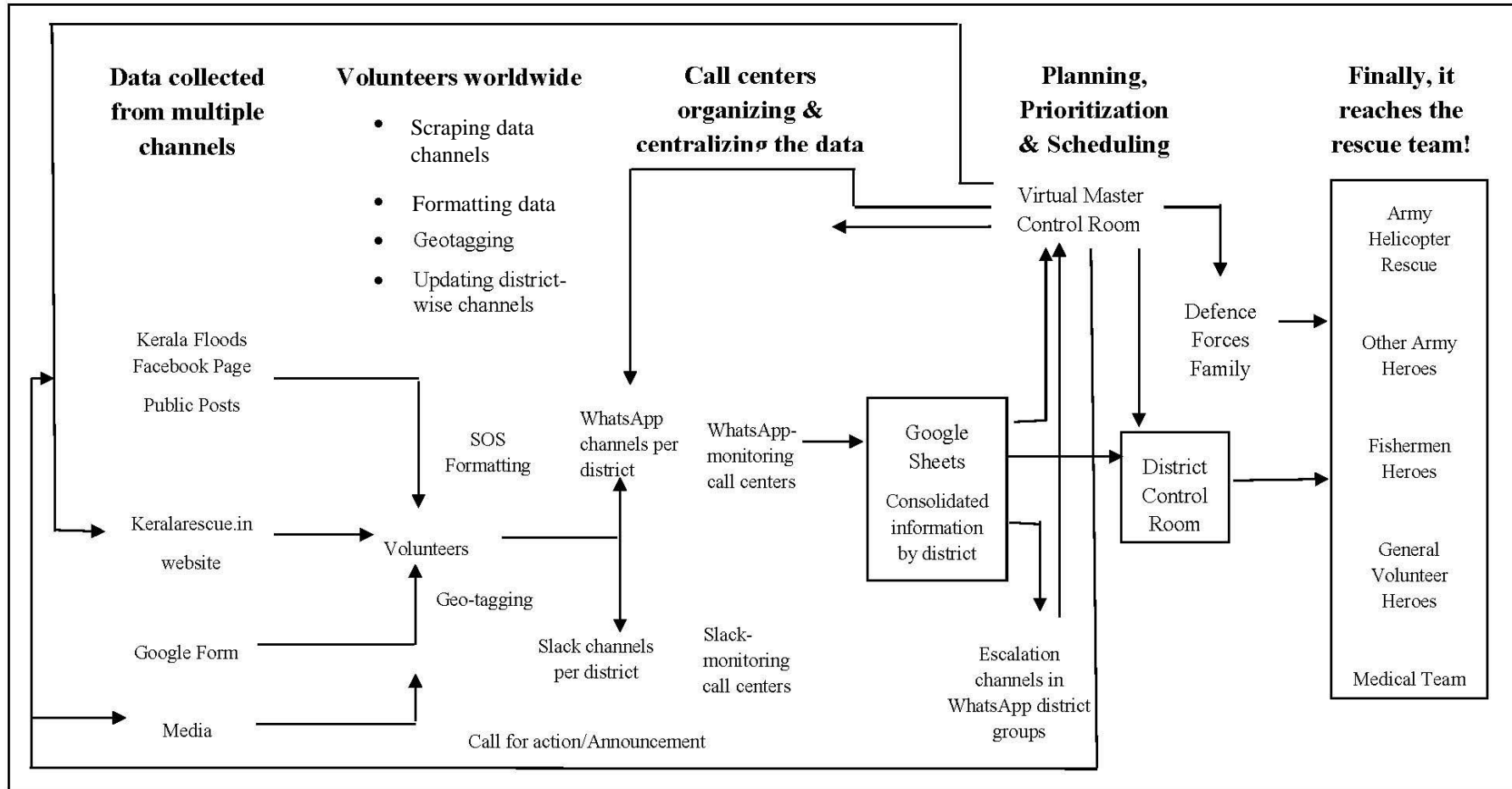
Devastation Caused by the Kerala Floods of 2018

Category	Figures
Number of deaths	384
Number of people displaced	1.078 million
Number of houses washed away	50,000
Length of Public Works Department roads destroyed	16,000 kilometers
Length of local roads destroyed	82,000 kilometers
Number of bridges destroyed	134
Number of hectares of farmland submerged	45,000

Source: Sandhya Keelery, "The Kerala Floods Were the Worst in Over a Century," www.statista.com, August 28, 2018; "Kerala Floods Caused Damage Worth Rs 20,000 Crore: Assocham," www.indiatoday.in, August 20, 2018.

Exhibit III

Workflow of Team Compassionate Keralam



Source: Prasanth Nair/Compassionate Keralam