



## Assam-India Flood 2019 Final Report

Partnership agreement between  
Water Survival Box  
&  
Khalsa Aid International



**Report Authors:** Andrew Duncan, Gurpreet Singh & Inderdeep Jalf of Khalsa Aid International

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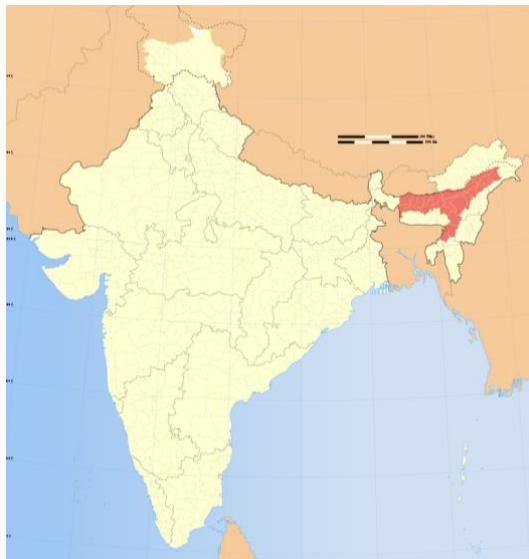
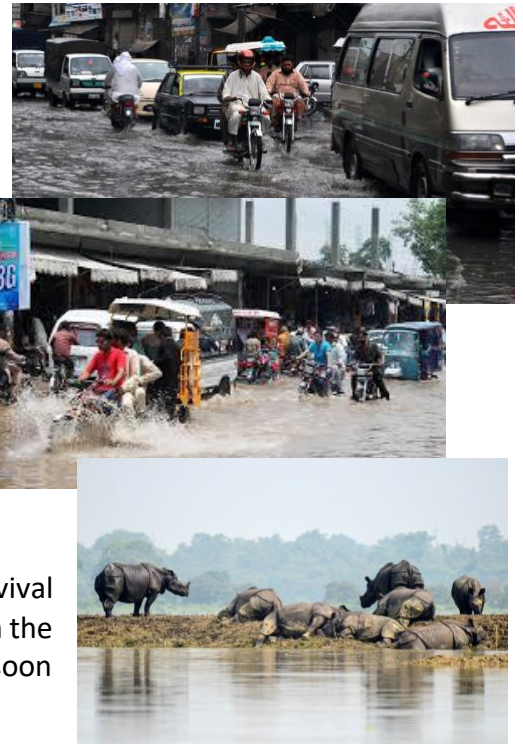
# Assam Floods 2019 Partnership Between Khalsa Aid International and Water Survival Box

## Background to the Disaster

The annual Monsoon season always brings a number of challenges to India and across the whole of South East Asia. As the summer months in the northern hemisphere come to a close, the Indian Ocean experience's far more sunlight increasing the amount of moisture in the air which results in large scale down pours across India and south east Asia.

As of October 2019, more than 2,100 people had lost their lives and another 46 were still missing. 22 of the 29 states in India have been drenched by the monsoon rains with over 250,000 people displaced across the country and over 20,000 animals have been lost.

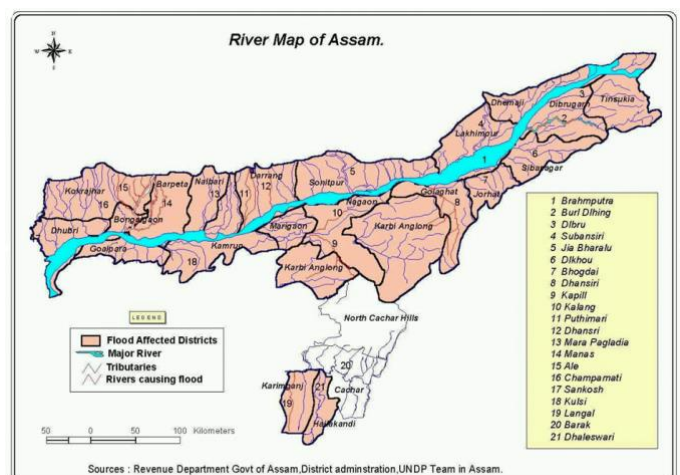
In 2018, Khalsa Aid International (KAI) collaborated with Water Survival Box (WSB) to provide and distribute 200 WSBs to the Kerala region in the wake of the devastating floods caused by last year's seasonal monsoon rain.



Assam is one of the 29 states in India and covers an area of 78,438 square kilometers. Situated in the north-east of the country, the state is home to around 35 million people across 33 districts with just over 60% of the population being Hindu and 34% are Muslim with the remaining split across numerous religions. The state borders Bhutan & Arunachal Pradesh to the north and neighbouring states Meghalaya & Nagaland to the south.

The most distinct natural features of the state of Assam are the Himalayan Mountains to the north on the border with Bhutan and the foothills of the Shillong Plateau to the south, with the Brahmaputra river carving its way through the middle of Assam travelling east to west.

The Brahmaputra river is a large trans-boundary river which originates from the Angsi Glacier in the autonomous region of Tibet in China, north of Nepal and runs for about 2,899.9km as it flows from southern China through India and then out to sea in Bangladesh. The river is the main catalyst for the number of severe floods that affect the state throughout the year, with the continuing melting of the Himalayan glaciers exacerbating the situation.



Dispur is the capital city of the Indian state of Assam. Dispur is a district of Guwahati, the largest city of Assam and one of the fastest growing cities in India with a population of just under a million residents. Located on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. Assam is known for producing a wide variety of vegetables, silk and tea.

The region of Assam is not only one of the richest biodiversity zones in India but also one of the richest in the world with tropical rainforests, deciduous forest, riverine grasslands, bamboo, orchards and numerous wetlands. There are two UNESCO World Heritage sites located in Assam which is home to a number of endangered animals including one-horned rhinoceros, white-winged wood duck, black-breasted parrotbill, vultures, Benagl tigers, Asian elephants, wild water buffalo, Ganges river dolphins and many other types of animal.



## What caused the Disaster



Assam suffers flooding every year and has become an annual calamity with the local population. The region is susceptible to flooding every year due to a number of factors, some are natural, but others are man-made problems. The Himalayas mountains lay to the north of Assam where the Indian tectonic plate meets the Eurasia plate, causing earthquakes and landslide, which sends a lot of debris to the riverbed causing the water level to rise and exacerbating the bank erosion of the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers. The forest has also seen extreme encroachment as more and more water travels down from the mountains due to the monsoon rains.

## Background to Relationship between KAI & WSB

Since establishing a relationship between Khalsa Aid International (KAI) and the Rotary Club charity, Water Survival Box (WSB), in October 2017, Assam was the third occasion in which the organisations collaborated to distribute a consignment of the WSBs to those affected by devastating regional floods in India.

The terms of the distribution remain the same, WSB will provide the consignment, will ship the consignment to the nearest international airport and will cover the costs for this. KAI will receive the consignment; they will clear the consignment through customs at the airport and transport it to the storage facility located close to the beneficiaries.

# Khalsa Aid International's Response to the Assam Floods

## Khalsa Aid International's history in Assam

KAI has 2 offices located in Punjab, India. Since 2015, the team in India has responded to any natural disasters, whether severe flooding or drought. The team has also responded to the refugee crisis in Bangladesh as the Rohingya migrants flee oppression in Myanmar.

In the autumn of 2018, in response to the devastating floods in Kerala, Southern India, KAI distributed its first consignment of WSBs. In 2019, KAI also went to Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Pune, Tamil Nadu, as well



as Assam and Bihar. Punjab, the spiritual home of the Sikhs and KAI offices, was also hit by devastating flooding across the region. In early July, after a week of intense rain, around 1.4 million people were displaced in Assam. Within a week, KAI had sent a team of volunteers to visit Assam, set up a communal kitchen to start serving hot meals to those who were displaced and then to carry out a local needs-assessment.



## Arrival of WSB to Assam

KAI and WSB started discussing the floods in Assam on the 25/07/2019 followed by an agreement to distribute 200 x WSB units to Assam and additional 180 x Aquafilters. On the 16/08/2019, KAI advised WSB to send the consignment to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport in Kolkata.

The consignment was dispatched in the middle of August but remained in the cargo terminal of Kolkata airport until the KAI team in India had resolved the customs clearance for the consignment. There was a delay in KAI clearing the consignment due to the new flooding disaster which had struck Punjab, India, the location of KAI office in India. Once KAI was able to mobilise a team for the distribution, the customs requirements were cleared, and the consignment released and then loaded on to a flatbed covered truck.

On the 25/09/2019, KAI notified WSB of the address for the storage facility arranged in Assam. The WSBs were then transported to Assam by road.

## Creating the Distribution Plan

### Local Needs Assessment

An initial needs-assessment was undertaken by the KA-India team whilst they also provided food from the pop-up communal kitchen they had initiated. Within the first 24 hours of arriving, our team in India had served over 7,000 hot meals to the community of Kohara, Kaziranga, who had been heavily affected by the monsoon rains.





During the initial need's assessment, KA-India team had identified the Golghat District to be one of the worst affected areas in the entire region. From this acknowledgement, the KAI team decided to distribute dry rations, hygiene items (such as toothbrushes & soap), sanitation items and other basic household necessities that the victims needed.

Then the KAI team travelled a further 20km south to the surrounding region of Kaziranga National park, which is also known as the "rice bowl of Assam" owing to high productivity of rice from this region.



Once the consignment of WSBs had been confirmed and sent from London Heathrow, the team on the ground discussed the criteria which would be used to identify the beneficiaries for the Water Survival Boxes (WSB).

The criteria agreed were:

1. Medical conditions arising from a lack of clean drinking water.
2. Families identified as living below the poverty line [e.g. marginal farmers, fishermen, manual labours etc]
3. Families with severely damaged homes due to floodwaters.
4. Families who have lost their livelihood due to floodwaters.
5. Targeting the most vulnerable people of the local communities like single mothers, widowers, and the elderly.

### How did we transport the boxes from the airport to our storage facility?

On arrival of the consignment of WSBs to Netaji Subash Chandra Bose International Airport, the boxes were transported from the hanger and loaded on to a flatbed covered truck. Having been stacked on pallets and fastened securely, the WSBs were transported with care overnight to avoid snarled-up traffic (always a danger when a natural disaster hits a region) from Netaji Subash Chandra Bose International Airport to the Khalsa Aid Warehouse in Kohara Kaziranga, Assam.



## WHERE AND HOW SAFE WAS THE STORAGE FACILITY?

As with every relief effort, KAI established a base of operation which offers a secure storage facility. A warehouse in Kohara, Kaziranga, was identified for the distribution as it was strategically located on the main arterial road between Guwahati and Golaghat, known locally as Charali Kohara. The connecting roads offered primary access to Golaghat and the surrounding regions, which was identified as one of the most severely



affected flooded areas across the region. This was why the Khalsa Aid team chose this location as its base of operations for the Assam Relief Project.

The boxes were safely transported from the airport and stored inside Khalsa Aid's Warehouse in Kohara, Kaziranga National Park. The facility was secure and had

on-site and around the clock security.

## What were the most useful items in the box?

The feedback from most of the beneficiaries was incredibly positive and for many, a surprise to receive a full box of supplies which would make such a big impact in their lives. The majority of the villagers did not have these items before the floods struck, so for the beneficiaries to receive these items afterwards was a massive boost for them after enduring such hardships.



The water purification kit was the biggest benefit for the beneficiaries, as many of them were displaced and did not have access to their original pumps or they had resorted to drinking water from the dirty rivers.

The community found the following items most useful for their regular day to day use:

1. Kitchen set – stainless steel cooking pot and vessels
2. Stainless steel plates and cutlery
3. Toothbrush and toothpaste
4. Soar lantern
5. Water canister
6. Tarpaulin



The cooking and cutlery items received were favourite items for the beneficiaries as these allowed them to visit the kitchens established by other NGOs (like our own KAI Langar Kitchen) and could use these items straightaway. Those with food rations were able to use the cooking tools and start cooking food for their own family.

## CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW WE TRAINED THE VOLUNTEERS WITH THE BOXES?

KAI has a wealth of experience when responding to natural or man-made conflicts across India. The distribution plan was created and led by one of our senior aid coordinators, Inderjeet Singh, who oversaw all the distributions and demonstrations whilst in Assam. To ensure that there were no mistakes, special emphasis was laid on the training and maintenance of the aqua filter purifier. Inderjeet Singh trained himself first on using the water purifier by reading the instructions provided in the boxes and watching the YouTube video provided by WSB.



After training himself, he focused on training his team of volunteers before observing them train the beneficiaries. For a wider understanding for our volunteers, they all watched the YouTube video and they were encouraged to raise any queries they might have had during the demonstrations before dispatching the boxes to the community and training the beneficiaries. Every volunteer was instructed to train the beneficiaries until they were confident the beneficiaries could use the filters before moving on to the next community.

## How did we organise the distribution of the boxes?

As the KAI team undertook the needs assessment, they had already established a criteria for the beneficiaries and set up 2 distribution teams. The teams delivered 142 of the boxes in No.2 area of Kohara, Kaziranga, and 58 in the No.1 area of Kohara, Kaziranga.

All family members were invited to learn and understand what is in each box and how to use the equipment. Our volunteers firstly explained in detail the contents of the boxes before watching a demonstration on how to use and clean the aqua filter.

Once the demonstration had taken place, they were given the time for any queries. After all, queries had been answered, the family would then collect the boxes from the truck.



## What went well and what didn't go well during the distribution

The enthusiasm from the beneficiaries who were participating in the demonstration of the aqua filter was very heartening to observe and to be a part of. The villages in Assam, mostly speak Assamese and Bengali and not many of them can speak or read English. With this, the instruction was not very useful but there was a sense of community as people who could speak English were willing to help others.

## Do we have feedback from the beneficiaries of the boxes?

The feedback from the beneficiaries was overwhelmingly positive. Many of the recipients were from Kohara Kaziranga which is quite remote and difficult to access.

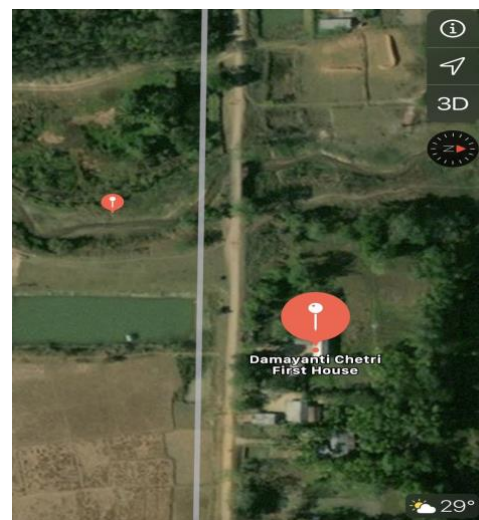
The beneficiaries were very thankful to receive the Water Survival Boxes. The cooking equipment was the most highly appreciated content in the box. Having no access to clean drinking water was a major concern within the region and the aqua filter filled that gap very well. We also received several requests for mosquito nets to be included which may be something WSB could consider in the future.

Perhaps in the future, the survival boxes could have less text and more visual content explaining the process for the countries where English is not the first language.

## Individual Case Studies

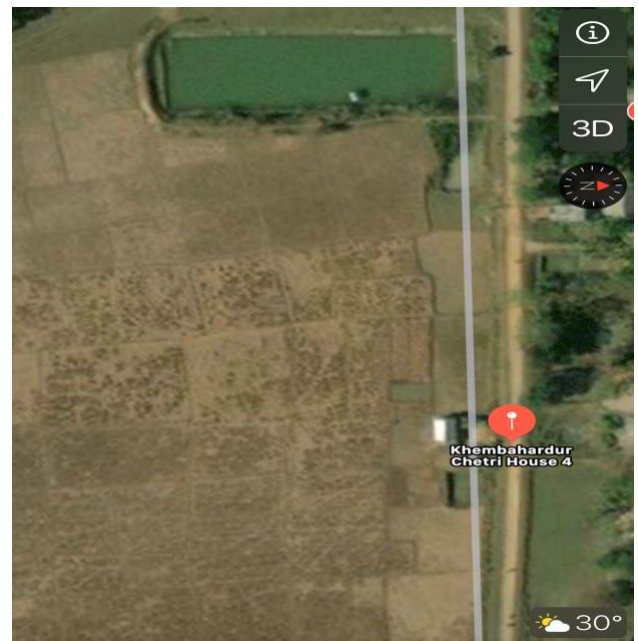
### Case Study One

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Name:                | Damayanti Chetri  |
| Age:                 | 38  |
| Gender               | Female  |
| Family               | 6   |
| Effect of Flood      | Their house was severely damaged due to the floods. The bathroom walls and the roof of his home were close to collapsing. Teg Bahadur is the husband of Damayanti and their only breadwinner in the family home but does not have any of his own tools to help repair the family home.  |
| How Did Box Help:    | The side wall of the house was badly damaged during the floods. The roof is precariously perched on the dilapidating wall and is danger of collapsing at any moment. The family had constructed a temporary shelter using the tarpaulin, tools and nails from the WSB. Without our support via WSB the family would not be in a position to construct the temporary shelter and literally wouldn't have a roof over their head and would have had to move and live in one of the temporary camps. |
| Best Item:           | Kitchen utensils – The ability to cook large meals for the family.  |
| Anything Not Used:   | No  |
| Additional requests: | Mosquito Nets, Food, Clothes  |



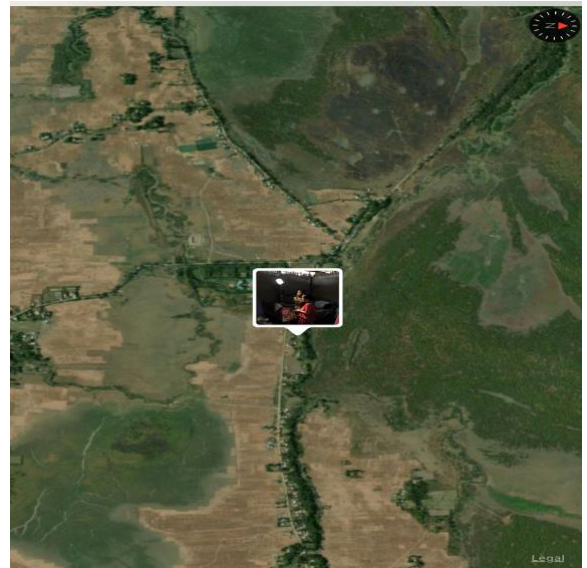
## Case Study Two

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Name:                | Khembahadur Chetri  |
| Age:                 | 42  |
| Gender               | Male  |
| Family               | 3   |
| Effect of Flood      | In the wake of the floods hitting the area, the family lost all of their household items in the rushing water. All their day to day items, especially the cooking pots and vessels, were washed away when the flood waters first hit, and they did not have the money to start replacing these items. |
| How Did Box Help:    | Very much. The cooking utensils were vital and gave hope to family. The WSB empowered the family to resolve their own challenges rather than waiting for handouts.  |
| Best Item:           | Water Purifier, Pots, Plates, Kitchen items.  |
| Anything Not Used:   | Everything Used   |
| Additional requests: | None  |



### Case Study Three

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Name:                | Janak Bahadur Chetri   |
| Age:                 | 50   |
| Gender               | Male   |
| Family               | 4  |
| Effect of Flood      | The foundation of the family home was laid over a decade ago but due to a lack of finances/funds, the lack of renovation and his wife's medical conditions had resulted in the construction of the home remaining incomplete for years prior to the floods. The situation was exacerbated and made far worse with the floods water washing away their personal items and damaging the foundations of their home. |
| How Did Box Help:    | Used every item in the box. The tools were utilised straightaway and the cooking utensils were the highlight.  |
| Best Item:           | The hammer   |
| Anything Not Used:   | No   |
| Additional requests: | None   |



## Case Study Four

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Name:                | Gita Rani Goswami   |
| Age:                 | 62  |
| Gender               | Female  |
| Family               | 5   |
| Effect of Flood      | The family have been living in a home which was constructed out of wooden panels and they did not have access to proper toilet facilities.  |
| How Did Box Help:    | Tarpaulin for covering the roof. The water filtered via the Aquafilter acted as a source of clean drinking water for the extended family and it meant they do not have to rely on regular handouts and they have been empowered to become self-sufficient. And the cooking utensils were a blessing as they lost all their own items. |
| Best Item:           | Kitchen Utensils and Water Purification   |
| Anything Not Used:   | Still all in use  |
| Additional requests: | Tapaulin and Blankets   |

