

RCE Srinagar, India, Asia-Pacific Region

Title: “Towards achieving a sustainable, climate smart and disaster resilient community”

Introduction, Context and Action through Learning:

India, South Asia and many countries of Asia-Pacific Region for their high and dense population, poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, poor sanitation, hygiene, high infant mortality, stunted growth of children, anemia and mosaic of other problems remain susceptible for disasters, pandemics, environmental, ecological, social, economic problems and remain challenging grounds for promoting ESD and achieving SDGs. This region achieving SDGs and other Global Targets (Paris Climate Agreement, Aichi Biodiversity Targets etc.) is must for the world to achieve SDGs and ESD 2030.

RCE Srinagar is located in Jammu & Kashmir, India. Much of its area of operations falls closer to the Line of Control (LoC) on international border between India and Pakistan, under severe armed conflict. There is heavy presence and control of armed forces and working there is very challenging. RCE Srinagar, acknowledged in September 2011, have been actively engaged in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) preparedness, climate change and sustainability education, relief and reconstruction work. It has got DRR theme recognized and incorporated in the RCE meetings, both Global and Regional (Asia-Pacific). Realizing the need of DRR preparedness considering the increasing frequency and magnitude of disasters in the time to come it has launched 'Asia Pacific RCEs DRR Network' and have been trying to strengthen it. Getting DRR Preparedness and disaster management mainstreamed in the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) we have been striving to achieve. Gram Panchayats (GPs) are the lowest, tertiary level, governance system, elected by the people.

These activities were implemented in the State of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and the Union Territory of Jammu, and Kashmir in India. UP is the most populous state of India and multi-disasters prone inhabited with most vulnerable population. Having annual population increase of 1.7736 million, currently it has 223.2416 million population, about 17.5% of country's total, more than 59 million below poverty line. Having population density of 828 people per square kilometer it is the most densely populated state of India. Its literacy rate is below national average, 79% for men and 59% for women.

Besides, being highly prone to climate change impacts for floods as most of the rivers are glacial fed. Agriculture and animal husbandry are major source of income and employment to more than 70% population and both these sectors are badly hit adversely by climate change impacts. Floods, drought, extreme weather events, heat waves, cold waves, fire pose serious threats to food, nutrition, health and well-being security. illiterate, unhealthy, unskilled, insensitive, not committed and enthusiastic population under rampant corruption pose serious hindrances in achieving sustainable development. For lop sided development, mass level migration of people to cities and other states for employment remains a serious issue and a challenge.

Objectives:

- To get risk reduction and risk management (Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030) understood and included in existing disaster management practice confined to relief distribution.
- To train and capacity build the first responders on behalf of the State and Central governments during disasters to enable them to perform their role and responsibility in disaster management better, more effectively and efficiently.
- To impart climate change and sustainability education to climate proof livelihood practices ensuring food, nutrition, health and well-being security.

- To get DRR mainstreamed at all levels of governance especially in Gram Panchayat Development Plans making community-based disaster management a reality.
- To help Gram Panchayats make their 'Village Disaster Management Plan' and schools make their 'School Disaster Management Plan' ensuring safety and well-being of all, everywhere, all the time.

Delivery Mechanisms:

- Development of resource material books and trainings modules, for State level Training of Trainers (ToTs) for the Master Trainers (MTs) and for the district level trainings for the first respondents in disasters were prepared in Hindi language and given to all the participants, also made available on website, put in public domain.
- Organizing two sets of trainings, first one for the State level, five-day long ToTs to train senior officers as MTs. The second set of trainings were three-day long at district level to train all the Lekhpals (first responder from government side during any disaster) using the MTs and other local resource persons as resource persons.
- Community level interactions, demonstrations, hands-on trainings, mock drills

Beneficiaries:

- 426 senior district level officials,
- 14,220 Lekhpals (the first responders during any disaster from the Government side),
- 59,073 Gram Panchayats (tertiary level of decentralized governance, the members are elected by the people),
- 438 Municipal bodies,
- 2,43,014 schools and their 10,09,333 teachers and 2,58,06,929 students,
- a total of around 78 million population got addressed through the activities.

Key Achievements:

The activities helped in mainstreaming DRR and necessary capacity enhancement. All the government departments need to have DRR awareness, spread it in public they deal with and are required to prepare the disaster management plan of their department. India is largely rural and Gram Panchayats, the lowest level of Panchayati Raj Institutions, mainstream DRR into their Gram Panchayat Development Plan. Every village has schools. The schools made aware of DRR and helped in preparing their 'School Disaster Management Plan'. The schools and their Gram Panchayats work together for DRR of their citizens. School teachers become an asset to the Gram Panchayats in helping them in creating DRR awareness and prepare 'Village Disaster Management Plan'. State Disaster Management Authority continuously trains district level officials in DRR, RCE Srinagar helping them as a resource person. The resource material developed under the project is being disseminated to all the Hindi speaking states and citizenry of India which is a huge number. Project has helped in improving quality of environment and quality of life of people of UP and India. The reach out of the project is described above under 'size of academic audience'.

RCE Srinagar project activities undertaken addressed to 49 Indicators under 5 sectors of Health and Nutrition, Education, Agriculture and Water Resources, Financial Inclusion and Skill Development, and Basic Infrastructure. Disaster resilience helped in checking the loss of lives and property and saved money for development that was otherwise spent on relief and rehabilitation. Becoming climate smart saved agriculture and other livelihood sources bringing food security and prosperity. Environmental sustainability drives sustainable development and all the project activities put together help in achieving the SDGs and ESD 2030. The prevalent notion and practice of Disaster Management confined to only relief and rehabilitation needed to be changed to risk reduction and risk management which the RCE Srinagar projects have successfully achieved. Collaboration with the government departments and agencies was required to get DRR mainstreamed, included into policies and practices of the government, all the departments, NGOs, civil society and the community. Getting DRR mainstreamed was much needed and a challenge but it has been done successfully.

Challenges, Lessons Learned and Inspiration to RCE Community:

For large scale, long-lasting results and sustainability of the interventions undertaken it is important to liaison and partner with the government and get things mainstreamed. Government departments has constraints in reaching out to the last man (though it is their mandate, however for lack of commitment, interest and enthusiasm amongst government employees to go to rural areas) RCEs can bridge this gap taking government interventions and their benefits to rural population. RCEs' expertise, if their own, and added with what is gathered from Regional and Global RCE meetings is a fantastic and valuable resource to be made available to local governments to put it into practice and getting translated into action. RCEs need to work closely with the governments to get RCE community recognized, their credentials established and putting RCEs' strengths into local action achieving SDGs and making sustainable development a reality.

RCE Srinagar has been advocating and promoting DRR amongst the RCE community and in the agenda of RCE meetings, both regional and global. We formed and launched 'Asia Pacific RCEs DRR Network' during 9th Tongyeong ESD International Forum, 12-13 December 2017 held at RCE Tongyeong, Sejahtera Forest, Republic of Korea (reported in RCE e-bulletin Issues 66: February 2017 and 74: October 2017). Most RCEs of Asia Pacific Region are part of this initiative.

Priority Action Areas and SDGs addressed:

The activities addressed 'Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level' Priority Action Area directly and the other 4 Priority Action Areas indirectly.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressed were SDG 9 'Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation'; SDG 11 'Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'; SDG 13 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts'; and SDG 17 'Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development'.

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