

Press Brief After the Kick-Off Workshop of the project 'Participatory Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Approaches in Varanasi'

IESD/BHU and SEEDS Asia
16th of November 2015

The Kick-off Workshop for the project 'Participatory Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Approaches in Varanasi' was held on 16th November 2015 at Senate Hall of Swatantrata Bhavan, BHU. The three years project is jointly implemented by SEEDS Asia (a Japan based non-profit organization) and the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development, Banaras Hindu University (IESD-BHU) with the financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) of Government of Japan under the Confirmation of the intention regarding the Partner City Affiliation between City of Kyoto and City of Varanasi. The project aims to promote Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change (CC) education through real-time measurements of air pollutants (particulate matter, SO₂, NO_x and O₃ gases) and weather parameters at five schools of Varanasi city. Five schools have been identified as Climate Schools in five locations of Varanasi, who would work with other local school and community groups to promote the project. These five schools are: Central Hindu Boys School, Rajghat Besant School (senior secondary school), Sant Atulanand Convent School, Shri Agrasen Intermediate School for Girls, The Aryan International School.

Honorable Mayor Shree Ramgopal Mohley in his opening remarks highlighted the importance of community and citizen based learning to solve the daily environment and disaster issues. People's mindset change is the key point, which we need to learn from Kyoto, keeping in mind the old tradition and heritage of Varanasi. Ms. Yasuko Nishimura, First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan in India emphasized that Japan has learned the importance of community activities through the past experiences of disaster, especially after the 2011 East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Professor A.S. Raghubanshi, Director, IESD, BHU pointed out that the social learning is the first attempt in Varanasi in this field and that BHU IESD would like to work with different stakeholders including, school, community organizations, city government and district offices. Professor Rajib Shaw, Chairperson of SEEDS Asia and Adjunct Professor of Kyoto University highlighted that the Climate and Disaster Resilience Indexing (CDRI) study of IESD and Kyoto University has pointed out the importance of education and social resilience in the daily small-scale disasters in Varanasi. The new project focuses on the school and

community linkages in solving disaster and environmental issues. Representative of SEEDS Asia from Japan Ms. Maiko Miyazaki will be based in IESD, BHU for next three years to implement the project.

In the workshop, principals and representative teachers from the five schools shared their current work on the disaster and environmental issues, especially on involving students in action oriented learning. Community representatives shared their self-help innovative works in solid waste management, cleaning street, and maintaining street lamps. A MOU will be signed with the Climate School, IESD and SEEDS to undertake the project for three years (October 2015 to September 2018).