**District Planning for Disaster Mitigation and Management**

Departmental Workshop

**Date:** 26th September 2012

**Department:** Education

**Venue:** Nepal Club, Gorakhpur

**Facilitator:** Prof. S. S. Verma

**Co-facilitator:** Sandeep Kumar Singh

A workshop on District Planning for Disaster Mitigation and Management was organised for the Principal, teachers, officers, project officers, accountants of Education Department and students of Gorakhpur University. The workshop was held on 26th September 2012 at Nepal Club premises from 10.30am to 04.30pm. The workshop was attended by Block Education Officer (2), ABRC (1), Head Master (1), Primary Teacher (1), Inter College Principal (4), Clerk (5), Project Coordinator (1), Student (1), Others (12). A total of 28 people attended the workshop.

At the outset, Shri. Gautam Gupta, Project Officer, District Disaster Management Authority shed light on the objectives of the workshop. This was followed by a round of introduction of all the participants. Shri. Gupta shared in detail the agenda of the one day workshop and invited suggestions for incorporation in the agenda. Participants suggested a few more topics for inclusion after which the agenda was finalised.

In the first session of the workshop, Prof. Shiv Shankar made a presentation on global climate change and its effects. Through his presentation, Dr. Shankar described the climate change happening in the world, India and in Gorakhpur and based on this, he projected the climate change and its effects that will be felt in the future. He said that these changes in the climate will be the reason for many disasters in the future. Therefore, it is important to include the climate change and its effects happening at local, state and national level policies that are focussed on mitigating climate change.

In the second session, the participants were asked to do a group work. As per the structure of district level basic and middle level education system, the participants were asked to list down in detail the rights and duties of the officers. The outcomes of the group work are enclosed with this report.

Information communication system:

In the third session, the participants were asked to do another group work. The task was to describe the system of flow of information from senior to junior officials and vice-versa in the Education department. The participants made presentations after the group discussions.

Post lunch, an open session was organised where the participants were asked to discuss the effects of disaster on their Education department and their plan for mitigating it. Participants unanimously accepted that erratic rainfall and floods, severe temperatures during summer and winter seasons adversely affects the school schedule and activities especially in the primary schools. The attendance in the schools drop by quite a lot during such climatic conditions and many a times, even the district administration gives out orders for closing of schools and colleges which hampers the educational work. During rainy season, flood and water logging situations hampers the connecting roads to the schools. The school campus gets water logged, water seepage in the ceiling starts taking place and many a times, the building also collapses due to which the entire school work gets disrupted. The participants suggested the following ways in which the Education department gets affected with the changes happening in the climate.

The floods that had occurred in 1998, 2008 and 2010 had caused huge damages to the schools. The school premises, desks-chairs, boards, etc. had all got damaged completely. There is no provision made for the repair and maintenance of these types of damages due to which teaching suffers a lot in the rainy season. Therefore, the reasons for education to get affected by climate changes are as below:

* The school building is not constructed to withstand the local climatic conditions
* Appropriate materials are not used in the construction of school buildings
* During the time of climate change, appropriate solutions are not implemented
* Lack of convergence between different government departments due to which they do not work together
* People are not aware of the effects of climate change
* Schools and students are not provided with appropriate materials
* Apart from these, there are several other reasons which affect education

The participants suggested the following as solutions to above mentioned problems:

* It is important that all there is convergence between all the government departments and that they work together. If this happens, then the provision for basic amenities and facilities can be easily made to the education field.
* People should make alternate arrangements as per the changes in the weather and make sure that their children reach the school safely.
* The school premises should be constructed in a way that it can withstand any type of change in the climate.
* Occasionally, all the departments should share the problems that they come across in their areas of work so that it can be resolved timely.

Taking the discussions forward, Dr. S.S. Verma of Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group and the participants said that action planning alone will not be of any use until and unless the plans are converted into effective implementation. Once the implementation of the plans is done effectively, only then it will be advantageous. The ADO (ISB), Pipraich of Education department said that a good intention is required behind the implementation of policies else development cannot take place.

# Action planning

**Activities for mitigating disasters:** Participants carried out a group discussion on the probable solutions to deal with disasters. Mr. Gautam said that it is important to understand where to place disaster management in the developmental works/activities so that the effects of the disasters could be minimized. Reflecting on this, the ADO(ISB) said that it is important to make people aware of the connection between development programmes and disaster mitigation and the duties/responsibilities of development departments. Following points emerged as a result of action planning done by the participants:

* Awareness on disaster management should be done at all big and small levels
* There should be contact between government and non-government organizations for proper implementation of environmental related laws.
* Policy should not be defined only at the higher level but also for the particular areas which are actually affected by disasters
* At all levels, efforts should be made to minimize political intervention in construction works, rather the local citizens should be involved and the construction should be done as per the local environmental conditions
* The primary and junior school teachers should teach only in those schools where there can be an improvement in their work and quality.

Coordination between government programmes and projects should be done:

* The relief fund that is given to the beneficiaries of disaster hit areas should match with the extent of the disaster caused.
* The facilities related to settlements for people should be expanded and strengthened.
* Discussions on development and disaster should be taken to the people
* Part of the disaster relief fund that comes to the district should be made available to the Gran Panchayat so that the same can be distributed to the beneficiaries for immediate relief.
* For the publicity of district disaster mitigation programme, adequate funds should be allocated so that the dissemination of information can take place even in far off remote areas as well.

Discussing the problems related to schools and colleges, the participants said that there is different kind of opinion about the schools/colleges that offer education, uniform, educational materials, etc. at free of cost. People think that quality of education in such school/colleges is not upto the mark and hence, only children of very poor families go to such educational institutions. Maximum number of students study in private schools/colleges.

Schools/colleges in which the fees are subsidized often lack in basic facilities. They do not have appropriate materials for extracurricular activities for children, etc. In primary and junior high schools, collection of exam fees is restricted due to which there is a scarcity of question papers and answer booklets and hence, the examinations are not carried out in a smoother way. There are almost no extracurricular activities for children which hampers their physical and mental growth. All these aspects should be given proper attention.

Some of the participants raised the issue of lack of officers and teachers at the district level due to which the classes are not conducted timely and efficiently. The government and officials should pay attention to these problems as well. Participants opined that there should be provision for improving the basic facilities in the schools, renovating the building, availability of sport materials and appointment of teachers in all the schools should be done efficiently.

The quality of education should not get hampered in the times of natural disasters. In order to ensure this, the approach roads to schools should be well constructed. The school buildings and the ceiling should be renovated from time to time so that it can withstand heavy rains and high temperatures. Provision for electricity should be made in the schools. The classrooms should be well ventilated. The local villagers can be appointed as security guards to take care of the school premises.

# Conclusion

Prof. S.S. Verma thanked all the participants, officials from the district administration, Education department, Nepal Lodge and the students of the University for their active participation in the workshop.