

School Education for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation in South India

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1.0 Introduction

Community action for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are crucial elements in promoting a 'culture of prevention' and creating disaster preparedness in communities, therefore, the role of schools in the community is very important. School children should be encouraged to take up tasks which make them realize their importance as necessary stakeholders in the change process. The objectives of this research are to assess the current situation of disaster education regarding DRR and CCA; to propose a set of recommendations for more effective school education addressing those issues; and to identify the main stakeholders for integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change issues in disaster education for better prepared communities.

2.0 Study Area and Methodology

This dissertation takes a case study from South India, where two surveys were conducted with students and teachers from coastal communities' schools in Chennai, Cuddalore, Samiyarpettai and T.S. Pettai to assess their current awareness on DRR and , as well as challenges and improvements in mainstreaming CCA into education for more effective DRR within communities. For this, questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions were carried out in the surveyed localities.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Some limitations in the researched areas of South India are presented: urgent need of teachers training, time pressure in school curriculum, focus on in-school education, need of more careful revision and update of textbooks, lack of context-specific educational contents and in regards to coastal areas.

An integration of DRR and CCA in disaster education at school level will, therefore, require: a more efficient approach to implement the disaster topic, particularly related to climate change impacts; impacts from cyclones, floods, and sea-level rise need to be addressed adequately at schools, as students' knowledge and interest are very low; students need to be educated and made aware about the potential threats in the coastal zones.

There is also the need to improve disaster education school curriculum and introduce materials that are specifically contextualized with respect to the characteristics of each locality, as they face different kinds of disasters (e.g. disasters in coastal areas are very distinct from disasters in mountainous areas). Moreover, there is the necessity of better cooperation between schools, academia as well as NGOs in supporting the implementation of appropriate educational topics and activities related to climate change. A content management system developed by the responsible authorities would allow the textbooks to be created and adapted. Teachers as key bodies to disseminate knowledge and incorporate disaster and climate change within their schools educational programs need to be trained. Therefore, the involvement of parents, teachers, and community members is crucial to build capacity and raise their awareness in regards to DRR and CCA.