

A Brief Report of the 4th Lecture Series by NIDM at DAIC, New Delhi

Saturday, 13 October 2018: NIDM continued its lecture series programme for delivery of special lectures from distinguished renowned speakers about their distinct contributions and sharing of their ideas and experiences with the disaster management community and professionals / experts. Taking the trend further after the first lecture from Dr. R. K. Bhandari, distinguished landslide expert who won Varnes Medal at the international level for his contributions to landslides risk reduction and resilience; second lecture by Shri Chandi Prasad Bhatt jee, famous veteran environmentalist and the Padam Vibhushan and Padam Shri Awardee, who talked about the Himalayan environment and strategies of disaster risk reduction; third lecture by Shri Himanshu Thakkar, who talked about the reservoir operation and flood risk management in context with the current Kerala Floods. On 13th October 2018, the International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR 2018), the Institute invited Dr. Rajendra Singh, widely known as the Waterman (Jal Purush) of India, Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for his community based practices in water harvesting and watershed management and the Stockholm Water Prize Winner (an award also known as “Noble Prize for Water”) as well as the International Ahimsa Award by Institute of Jainology based in UK. He helped villagers take charge of water management in the arid and semi-arid areas of Rajasthan, through the use of Johads, rain water storage tanks, check dams and other time tested as well as path breaking techniques, primarily using indigenous traditional knowledge, skills and local resources. He helped build 11,800 Johads and other water conservation structures and brought water back to over 1,200 villages and revived five rivers in Rajasthan – Arvari, Ruparel, Sarsa, Bhagani and Jahajwali.

The programme began with the welcome to the honourable guest speaker and brief information about the International Day on Disaster Reduction (IDDR 2018). Dr. Surya Parkash, Head, Geo-Meteorological Risks Management Division, NIDM stated that subsequent to the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction from 14-18 March 2015 at Sendai, Japan, a Sendai Declaration was made to follow the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) at the global level. The SFDRR envisaged seven targets to monitor the progress and achievements in disaster risk reduction and resilience. The seven targets were set for each subsequent year’s IDDR as below:

2016 – Target A: Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate

2017 – Target B: Substantially reduce the number of people affected globally by 2030, aiming to lower the global figure per 100,000

2018 – Target C: Reduce the disaster economic losses in relation to global GDP by 2030

2019 – Target D: Substantially reduce disaster damages to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities

2020 – Target E: Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local strategies for DRR&R

2021 – Target F: Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for the implementation of present framework

2022 – Target G: Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessment to people

Globally about \$3 trillion are lost on an average due to disaster and India loses about 80 billion USD due to disasters. Our country is among the top ten economically affected countries by disasters. Its position is number 4 after USA, China and Japan. Hence, we need to work hard on the initiatives and strategies for disaster risk reduction and resilience.

It was followed by lecture on “*Watershed Approach to Disaster Management*” by Dr. Rajendra Singh. Dr. Singh delivered the talk in Hindi while narrating his initial experiences with the local communities in Rajasthan when he was working as a health practitioner. He told about his conversation with an old man in a village who showed him a different perspective about dealing with the problems of the community. Dr. Singh got motivated with the vision of the old villager and started working for community based water harvesting and watershed management with support from the local people.

He further narrated that the local communities have great wealth of indigenous knowledge and skills that helped not only in better understanding of the local environment and resources but also finding suitable sustainable economical and

environment friendly natural solutions to disasters like floods and droughts. He mentioned that due to over-exploitation and haphazard use of water resources, the water in the rivers as well as ground water got depleted to a great extent, resulting sometimes in extinction of rivers and scarcity of water, thereby causing droughts in the region.

He informed about the natural signs of locating water ways using vertical and horizontal fractures / cracks in the earth and also emphasized on water conservation by optimal utilization and preventing evaporation by covering water bodies like wells and ponds. He indicated that people are more willing to support community movements for humanitarian / social benefits but less interested in cooperation for environmental conservation and management. He said that both humanity and nature should be treated equally as humans cannot survive without water.

While concluding the lecture, he motivated the audience to take steps for water conservation and management in and around their areas. Several discussion points were raised after the lecture and these were answered by Dr. Rajendra Singh.

Finally, the Executive Director, NIDM, Shri B.H. Anil Kumar, IAS, gave the concluding remarks on the talk. While appreciating Dr. Rajendra Singh about his works and the style of presentation, he asked faculty from NIDM to adopt at least one village and manage water resources for disaster risk reduction and resilience. A vote of thanks was given to all by Dr. Surya Parkash, NIDM for making the programme successful. He said at the end “Jal hai, to Kal hai”. Water is our future and life, blood and nerves of all our lives and infrastructure, so let us pledge to conserve and manage it properly to reduce disaster risks and make the country disaster resilient.



