

Loyola College of Social Sciences

Department of MSW Disaster Management

Activities Undertaken for International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction: A Brief Report

On October 13th, the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction was observed at Loyola College of Social Science, Sreekariyam. The theme for the year 2023 is "Fighting Inequality for a Resilient Future". As part of the observance, the Department of MSW Disaster Management with support from KSDMA organised programs around the theme "Njangalude Dhurantha Nivaranam". The preparations for the programme were initiated by the students four days in advance. The collaborative efforts of senior and junior batch students, along with the faculties, resulted in the successful organisation of the programme.

LOYOLA COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF MSW DISASTER MANAGEMENT

**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION
CONFERENCE**
"ഞങ്ങളുടെ ദുരന്ത നിവാരണം"
VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

WELCOME	MS. ABHITHA SOMAN, STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE	ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES	MS SUNITHA YESUDAS (FORMER MEMBER POOVAR GP)
PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS	DR. SAJI.P. JACOB, PRINCIPAL	MR SUDHILAL THRIKUNNAPUZHA, BLOCK PANCHAYAT MEMBER, HARIPAD	MR RETHIN ANTONY, MEMBER, KARUMKULAM GP
INTRODUCING THE THEME AND SPEAKERS	DR. JYOTHI KRISHNAN, HOD OF MSW DM	DISCUSSION	
SPEAKERS:		VOTE OF THANKS	DR. JOICE.K.JOSEPH, FACULTY DM DEPT.
COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES	MS FAISAL (POZHIVLOOR) MR EDMUND (POOVAR) MR K P BIJU (ALAPPUZHA) MR ROBIN (PARISH COUNCIL, POONTHURA)		

VENUE : SUTTER HALL **13 OCTOBER 2023 @ 2 PM**

SUPPORTED BY KSDMA

ALL ARE WELCOME

DR. SAJI.P. JACOB
PRINCIPAL

DR. JYOTHI KRISHNAN
HOD, MSW DM

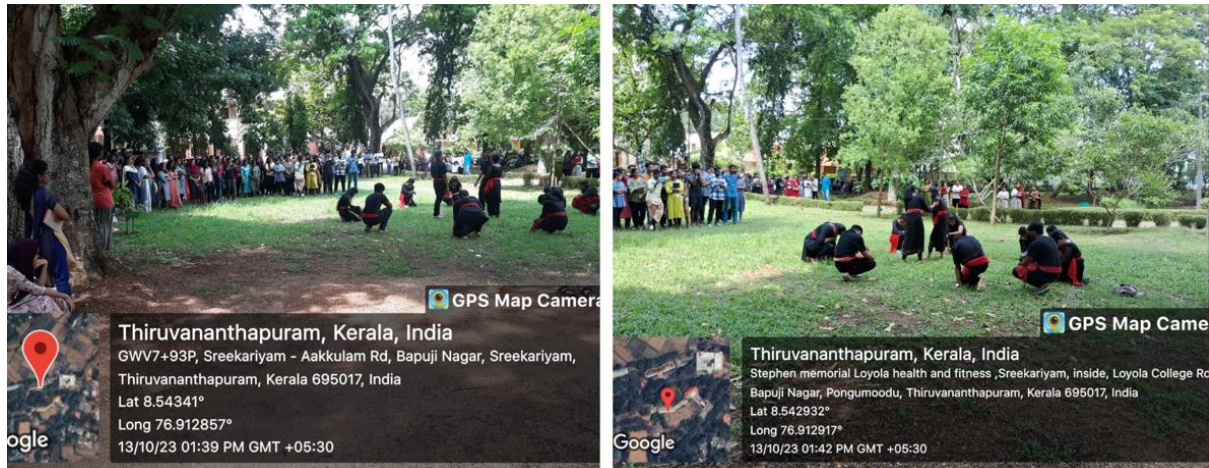
Flash mob and street theatre

A flash mob and street theatre performance took place at the college open stage. The flashmob performance conducted on campus successfully captured the attention of staff and students. During the performance, students displayed banners that highlighted the significance of the day. The invited guests for the conference to follow were also present at the venue.

A street play was organised around the theme "Fighting Inequality for A Resilient Future." The objective of the street play was to bring attention to the struggles of coastal community affected

by the 2017 Ockhi cyclone. The play brought out issues of community members residing in relief camps as well as the daily struggles of people.

The planning for the street play commenced on October 10th, with the active involvement of ten students. The performance, with a duration of approximately 10 minutes, effectively communicated the message regarding the ongoing challenges and inequality experienced by the coastal community impacted by the Ockhi disaster. It also raised issues experienced by people affected by Ockhi and sea erosion, who have been living in relief camps.



Collage Exhibition

The students hosted a collage exhibition centred around the theme "Fighting Inequality for a Resilient Future." The collection of posters and news cuttings were organised in a pattern that resembled the shape of a feathered earth. The paper clippings pertained to news coverage regarding disasters. The message concerning global disasters and subsequent resilience was communicated through the collage framework. The framework was exhibited at Sutter Hall, the designated venue for the conference and provided an appropriate backdrop.



Conference proceedings: “Njangalude Dhurantha Nivaranam”- Voices from the Community

The flash mob and street play was followed by the Conference. The conference brought together different stakeholders who in varying capacities have been the first responders in times of disasters.

It brought together disaster affected people, community representatives as well as elected body representatives.

The conference started at 2pm in the Sutter Hall located on our campus.

Welcome Speech:

The meeting commenced with the welcome speech by Ms. Abitha Soman, second year student of MSW Disaster Management.

Presidential Address

The presidential address was delivered by Dr. Saji P. Jacob, the college Principal. He emphasized the importance of understanding the models for disaster risk reduction and the need of disseminating such knowledge widely to effectively mitigate and prevent the risk of disasters.

Introducing the Theme and the Speakers

Dr. Jyothi Krishnan, the head of MSW Disaster Management department introduced the theme of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDRR), touching upon the relationship between Disasters and Inequalities and the relevance of community-led, bottom up models of disaster risk reduction. She also introduced all the seven speakers for the day.

The first panel included community representatives who had first hand experiences of facing the aftermath of disasters.

The first speaker, Smt. Haisel, is a community representative hailing from the coastal region known as Pozhiyoor. She shared the difficult experiences her community has to go through due to coastal erosion. It has been a duration of two years since they were relocated to a flat in Uchakada through the Punargeham rehabilitation project initiated by the government.

She raised the problems they faced after relocation in the new flat complex. The absence of waste management facilities posed a big issue for the 180 families living in the complex. The increased distance from the sea posed livelihood challenges to the inmates, who were all from the fishing community. The flat complex being located quite a distance from the main road, accessing the PHC, ration shop, bank and post office were difficult. The absence of an Aganwadi for the 180 families also posed problems with regard to child care. Being located away from the main road, residents, especially the elderly had to hire auto every time they went out, which increased their travel cost. Ms Haisel therefore reiterated the need to look into these dimensions while relocating disaster affected people.

The next speaker was Shri. Edmand Mathew, a fisherman hailing from Poovar region, who is recognized as a survivor of Ockhi incident. Mr Edmund narrated his experiences, as he withstood the onslaught of the cyclone for four days before he was rescued. This first hand experience sharing was an eye opener for the audience. Mr Edmund mentioned that while many like him got media attention soon after Ockhi, they did not get adequate financial assistance from the government.

The third speaker, Shri. K P Biju, a resident of Arattupuzha recalled his experiences in the aftermath of the tsunami in 2004. He lost his residence as a result of tsunami and was subsequently relocated by the government. The quality of housing provided however was poor and many of the houses built after the tsunami are leaking.

Mr Biju spoke about the importance of self protection during disasters. In his community, as men went out to sea, they were better aware of ways in which they could protect themselves. Women and children in his opinion faced greater challenges due to a lack of experience and familiarity in this regard. He also mentioned about how the attire of women came in the way of self protection and rescue during the tsunami.

The second half consisted of presentations by elected body representatives.

Shri. Sudhilal, a block panchayath member from Thrikunnapuzha, spoke about the efforts being made by the panchayat in disaster preparedness. After Tsunami (2004), Ockhi (2017), and Flood (2018), he said the government sensed the need for a Disaster Management team in 2019.

Local self-government bodies have been tasked with coordinating disaster management activities in Kerala. He spoke of the importance of emergency response training in all panchayats. He also mentioned that individuals and groups who go for rescue operations should be acknowledged and compensated. While panchayats are required to be the first responders, he feels they are still under equipped while facing large disasters. He mentioned that the government too is left with no resort other than relocating people and issuing orders that prevented fishing. This left fisherfolk with an impaired livelihood.

Mr Sudhilal also spoke about other developmental issues like mining that aggravate disaster vulnerability in coastal areas. He spoke about uncontrolled mining which hinders the natural process of beach replenishment.

The next speaker was Smt.Sunitha Yesudas, a former member of the Poovar Grama Panchayat. She had also worked as a social worker in the Kaval project with the dept of Social Justice. She spoke of issues related to compensation after disasters. The families of those who died in the Ockhi cyclone were compensated with 25 lakhs, but they were permitted to use only the interest amount. If the fisherman goes missing or dies, his family will receive 20 lakhs and 5 lakhs as bank deposits, which they are not permitted to withdraw regardless of the severity of their circumstances.

Those who survived the Ockhi continue to be plagued by fear and trauma. We need to think of alternative livelihoods for such people, she said. She also spoke of the inadequacies of the Punargeham project and the relocation site at Uchakkada. She mentioned how the compound wall had not been constructed around the flat complex, the menace of stray dogs due to the absence of a waste management facility, bursting drainage and sewage lines and so on. She raised the issue of disasters and inequality in this regard. She felt the panchayat alone was not in a position to address such issues. It needed a coordinated effort from all concerned departments.

Shri. Robin, the Social Action in-charge at the Parish Council, Poonthura spoke about the man-made disasters. He spoke about the need to conserve and protect water bodies that would prevent the unfolding of large disasters. He recollected his childhood memories of the Parvathi Puthanar that flows by Poontura. As children they bathed and played in its waters, today its flow is choked by the waste that flows down from the city. Urbanisation and population growth have contributed to the pollution of the Parvathi Puthanar, causing untold misery to the residents of Poontura. He spoke about the need for better planning and implementation and the urgent need to protect such water bodies if the lives of vulnerable populations are to be improved.

Shri Rethin Antony, a member of the Karinkulam Grama panchayat, is also an executive member of the Coastal Students Cultural Forum. He spoke about how coastal areas are particularly vulnerable due to the dense population and lack of amenities. The densely populated region of Karinkulam Grama panchayat consists of 18 wards (13 wards for the coastal area and 5 wards for the inland area). There are homes constructed on just 1-1.5 cents of land. These homes lack essential amenities, and residents were unable to obtain loans for maintenance.

He spoke about the complex situation that has developed along the coasts in the present day. He highlighted the challenges faced by coastal communities, specifically the absence of stable employment opportunities and the risks associated with fishing activities. All of these factors affected their recovery from disasters, he said. He also spoke of the additional challenges that fishing communities face today, owing to the shift of the younger generation away from fishing.

Mr Rethin also spoke of the challenges posed by large infrastructural projects along the coast.



Discussion and Q&A session

Following the presentations by the speakers, a discussion and Question-Answer session took place.

Dr. Jyothi Krishnan moderated the discussion session. The first question was posed by Ms. Merlin, a research scholar in Loyola College of Social Sciences. She shared her field experiences and posed a question regarding the government's alert system that prevents fishermen from going to sea, and how it could be better tuned to the livelihood needs of the fisherfolk. She also raised questions regarding accountability when fisherfolk were relocated following disasters. Ms. Vaishnavi, a student of MSW Disaster Management raised a question as to why the government was not able to initiate a system for a sustainable redressal of the waste management issue in coastal areas like Pountura. Ms. Abhitha, a student of MSW Disaster Management presented the third query about the functioning of task forces and

volunteer forces in disaster affected regions. Ms. Kavya, student of MSW DM raised her concerns about mining in the coastal areas and how people are compelled to sell their land at the rate of Rs 55000 per cent to mining companies.

Mr. Sudhilal responded that the volunteer force has been trained, with more than 50 members, and rescue personnel have also been trained accordingly. It has been reported that the government has provided the community with a marine ambulance, the functioning of which is minimal. Ms Sunitha remarked that a sustainable solution for the problems faced by the fisher folk required greater advocacy for the needs of the vulnerable.

In the final remarks, Dr. Jyothi Krishnan pointed out that the conference should set off more enquiries in this area facilitating the emergence of local level responses to disaster risk reduction.

The conference and the day long events concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr. Joice K Joseph, faculty member at the Department of MSW Disaster Management.



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