

World Environment Day Celebration

Date: 05.06.2018

Venue: Office of Indraprastha Srijan Welfare Society, Ramganga

Organized by: Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCS)

Supported by: Sign of Hope (SoH) & BMZ, Germany

Introduction:

Development Research Communication and Services Centre (DRCS) is a non-government development organization working in 12 districts of West Bengal and other states for more than 35 years. DRCS's major concern is food, nutrition and livelihood security of the poor through sustainable management of natural resources on the basis of principles and actions, that are environment friendly, economically appropriate, socially just and developed by mutual cooperation.



DRCS is working with a vision for a **Sustainable future** free from poverty, hunger and **environmental degradation** and implement various projects with values for creating an environment conscious society. DRCS is implementing a project titled **“Sundarban Climate Adaptation”** with support from Sign of Hope (SoH) and BMZ, Germany in 8 villages of Ramganga Gram Panchayat, Patharpratima Block, South 24 Pgs District of West Bengal. The overall objective of this project is to regenerate and protect the endangered flora and fauna of the Sundarbans in a sustainable manner and

focus on reforestation and empowerment of the local population with regard to resource management and positive management strategies, thus contributing to the improved resilience of the target group in the face of natural disasters.

World Environment Day is the United Nation's most important day for encouraging worldwide awareness and action for the protection of our environment. This year the theme is **“Beat Plastic Pollution”**. This is a call for action for all to combat one of the greatest environmental challenges in recent times. The theme invites all to consider how one can make changes in everyday lives to reduce the heavy burden of plastic pollution on natural places, wildlife – and own health.

With this backdrop an awareness programme was organized on 5th June'18, World Environment Day in Ramganga with 55 participants including community members, local organization and project staff.

Objective:

The objective of celebrating World Environment Day is to spread awareness among the community on reducing plastic uses into their daily life and love, restore and protect the nature to develop a environment conscious society.

Brief description of the programme:

The programme starts with introducing DRCS and ISWS as organization and their vision, mission, objectives and activities in the neighbourhood areas. After that Anirban Banerjee from DRCS explained the significance of the day and its relation to holistic development. He said that Sundarbans region is one of the richest ecosystems in the world. It contains arguably the world's largest remaining area of mangroves forests, with globally high levels of floral and faunal diversity. There is large human population which is challenged with poverty. Due to inadequate infrastructure, health-care, education and transport, as well as restricted livelihood options, communities have to struggle for even their basic requirements. The community people are heavily dependent

on forest resources such as fish, crab and honey, as their source of livelihood. Even they have to depend on forest for collecting fire-wood, fodder etc.

He expressed deep concern about the protection of mangrove trees and bio-diversity in these areas. Rapid usage of thermocol and other plastic materials in day to day life creates huge effect to the drainage system, mangrove forests and overall bio-diversity of Sundarbans. He invites the community members to think over alternatives and return to the practices used by their ancestors for leading daily life without plastics. He call for a joint effort along with various stakeholders to plant trees, protect mangroves, prevent/reduce plastic use, promote use of Banana leaf plates, Sal leaf plates etc.



After that Sri Hiranmoy Maity from ISWS shared his views. He conveys his worries over increasing plastic use in the household level. He gave some examples that earlier people used to take bags for collecting necessary items from local markets/huts, but nowadays they are more comfortable in using non-disposable plastic bags. People should return back in the habit of carrying jute/cotton bags with them for shopping. Further he cited that during

any occasion/ceremony thermocol plates are used in havoc manner and being dumped in the mangrove forest in the riverside or poolside. The decomposition of thermocol items takes nearly more than 10 decades and by that time it affects the soil, flora & fauna and slowly poisons the whole diversity. He requested the group members to take initiative from their own houses and fight for plastic free zone. He appeals for using Banana leaf plate instead of thermocol and jute/cotton bags instead of plastic bags.



Following this Sri Arabindo Nayek, one of the ARTC members call for planting trees and refusing plastic and make the place more greener and better for future living. After that Sri Khudiram Guchhait, member of ISWS expressed his views on forest dependency of the community people regarding fuel-wood and cutting of trees. He further said that due to collection of prawn seeds from the river, the newly born mangrove saplings in the river bank are getting destroyed. This is a call for the hour and all of the community members should organize themselves and act upon for combating these problems.

During discussion session, women members from different groups admit the rapid usage of plastics and they assure to reduce the use. They said that in recent times the usage is more happening and as a result it is affecting the soil, water and environment. They also express that they will think for the alternatives but it will take time to change the practice. In the meantime leaflets have been distributed among the participants.



After the discussion session was over, the women planted trees in the garden in-front of office and aired slogans of environment day. A signature campaign was organized and all the participants take oath **“Our Earth...We have to Protect it”** and sign on the sheet of chart paper. The community members showed their interest in this kind of awareness programmes and lend their support for creating an environment friendly earth.

“If the Plastic cannot be reused, then refuse it. Let us make the Sundarban plastic free, and take oath to protect the mangroves and bio-diversity of Sundarbans”.