

# School Safety and Security: Reflections

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of Government of India celebrated its 13th Formation Day on September 28, 2017 in New Delhi, with singular focus on school safety and security. The event was a success and a long term view was shared and owned by the participants who came from local schools, government authorities, national institutions, UN agencies, and international organisations.

When in school, India's students are exposed to over 18 hazards such as floods, droughts, and heat waves. Moreover, these students also face the issue of security, which ranges from child protection to safe educational environment on a day-to-day basis.

The event offered a national moment to over reflect on what has been achieved and what can be achieved in the coming months to launch a national initiative to make all the 15 lakh schools of India safe and secure for children. The following are some of the key reflections that have been captured after the Delhi event from AIDMI's ongoing work with UNICEF and are being finalised for the next issue of [Southasiadisasters.net](http://southasiadisasters.net).

Dr. R.P. Pandey of the National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee and Dr. Surya Prakash of National Institute of Disaster Management, New Delhi suggests that local hydrology is overlooked too often in climate studies and hazard analysis. He also opined that in the end, reducing local risk of floods and droughts must be in school curriculum. Ultimately, the students must know why their village or city is flooded and what can be done about that by whom and how to alleviate the situation.

Amrit Sangma of Caritas India, New Delhi has recorded that Assam has an active and able cohort of school

children and teachers who can and have made their lives safer. Such efforts in schools by children must be wide scaled to more states.

Fatima Gay J. Molina and Jesusa Grace J. Molina of Centre for Disaster Preparedness, Philippines have argued, that youth and children shouldn't just be looked as victims of disaster risk but also as important stakeholders who can transform loss and damage into opportunities to rebuild. It is our children who shape our future.

Netaji Basumatary, Regional Manager, North-East India of IGSSS Guwahati says that floods should not only be viewed as disasters but also an opportunity for students to learn ways to reduce risk and build resilience in their day-to-day lives.

Chandra Bhakuni, Structural Engineer of Ahmedabad, has often remarked that building safer schools achieves the dual purpose of furthering education and risk reduction outcomes. In this regard, he also remarked that it is a learning and iterative process where all good insights (lessons learnt) from previous efforts should be leveraged.

D. Parthasarathy, Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences from Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai has often pointed out to the necessity of dealing with uncertainty from the beginning of school education so as to make it central to everyone's thinking about the future.

Samir Porecha, District Child Protection Officer of Jamnagar in Gujarat has stated that child protection must be made central to school safety and security activities. It is the most urgent need in *Sarva Siksha Abhiyan* activities across all states in India.

Shakuntala Pratihary of Utkal University, Bhubaneswar has

studied changing climate over the years. She finds that children must study in schools heat waves and its impact on human life so as to internalise the need to find solutions for an increasing frequency of heat waves and the loss and damage caused by them to human life as well as livelihoods. This would help them at an early age to relate to causes of heat waves and ways to resolve the challenges caused by them.

Oswaldo L. Moraes of National Centre for Monitoring and Early Warning of Natural Disasters Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil has highlighted the need for children in schools to learn risk data enlisting and management to reduce risk.

Schools in cities are not safer than schools in rural areas. Alka Bharat, Professor, Department of Architecture and Planning of MANIT Bhopal has showed that schools in peri-urban areas have dual needs-urban and rural-which in fact integrate safety and security challenges in to one. Far more attention is needed on peri-urban areas as well as on schools in peri-urban areas to balance the role of natural ecosystems in reducing risk in cities.

As Kamol Taokitphaisarn, Expert of Better Rice Initiative Asia, Thailand suggests the distance between satellite and schools' must be a click away for the students and teachers learning disaster risk reduction in South Asia. The geospatial data and information must not only be used in mega science projects but also in urban and rural schools for educational projects.

The above reflections are only a start of a larger and longer all round reflection on making India's schools and students in them safer and secure. After all, these students are India's future. ■ - AIDMI Team