

State level Consultation on Comprehensive School Safety

Kerala State Disaster Management Authority & UNICEF
in association with Department of General Education

Venue: Hotel Central Residency, Thiruvananthapuram

Date : 2nd March 2020



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Background

School safety related issues are increasing day by day, reiterating the need of school safety initiatives in all the schools. To ensure safety of children in school and its surrounding areas, it is critical to implement comprehensive school safety programme which includes preparation of school safety plan, formation of school safety committee, hazard hunt exercises and mock drills..

Due to various incidents happened in the passing academic year such as school bus accidents, snake bites and drowning deaths, various stakeholders were involved in multiple activities and awareness programmes related to school safety. In the past, Education Department, Police Department, the Samagra Siksha Keralam(SSK) and KSDMA took initiatives to publish various guidelines & manuals related to school safety. Kerala SDMA in association with UNDP and UNICEF has organised many activities with active participation and support from the Directorate of General Education to impart the culture of School safety in the passing academic year. UNDP focussed on individual schools, two from each district and 28 schools were considered and individual attention was given in preparation of School safety plan, School safety committee and also a system in place to address the safety issues. UNICEF organised district level orientation/training programmes for teachers, DEOs and AEOs of 11 districts in 6 locations covering about 230 schools (1100 individuals).

There are other commendable efforts in place by the DDMA's, Civil society organisations and NGOs as response to the incidents happened as well as routine activities. In order to have a focussed effort in School safety activities with the aim of implementing School safety action plan in all the schools across the state, a strategy and an action plan for the next academic year is a necessity.

In order to review the efforts taken by KSDMA and other stakeholders and also to identify the gaps and formulate the future plan, a consultation meeting was conducted covering the following departments and government organisations on 2nd March 2020 at Hotel Central Residency, Thampanoor, Thiruvananthapuram.

1. Department of general Education
2. SCERT
3. SIEMAT
4. Student Police Cadet
5. Engineering Wing, LSG Department
6. Motor Vehicles Department
7. Health Department
8. SIET
9. KITE
10. Fire and Rescue
11. Kerala State commission for Protection of Child Rights.
12. All India Radio(including FM channels)
13. NCRMP

The following were the broad objectives of the programme

1. Review the activities and programmes organised by various stakeholders and identifying the gaps and challenges
2. Explore the possibilities of expanding the school safety programme to all schools across Kerala and devising a strategy of action
3. Possibility of utilising the school safety app in integrating and collating the information from different schools
4. Strategy for disseminating messages about child safety and school safety through various available mass media.

The meeting started with a formal inaugural session. KSDMA chief manager Mr. Siji M Thankachen, welcomed the dignitaries and participants followed by introductory remarks by Dr K B Valsalakumari IAS, former Principal secretary & DRR consultant

UNICEF. She pointed out the relevance of the school safety activities in the current context of changing climate and disasters. Dr. Sekhar L Kuriakose, Member secretary, KSDMA inaugurated the meeting He reiterated the legacy of Kerala in incorporating safe schools concept in the Education rules which was executed decades ago and the need to press on to the goal of safe schools. He outlined the activities started by KSDMA to ensure imparting the culture of safety in schools and the importance of the involvement of stakeholders in the effectiveness of these activities.

Keynote address by Mr Jeevan Babu IAS, Director, Directorate of General Education which followed, focused the need for coordination and the relevance of school safety activities in the context of changing environment and increased use of technological aids. He also stressed on the practical difficulties in implementation and scaling up of the school safety activities but pinpointed the expansion of these activities so that all schools across the state are involved.

Smt. Meera Rani, Programme head of All India Radio delivered felicitations and pointed out the importance of mass media and social media in disseminating the safety ideas to the public which in turn increase the resilience. She explained the possibilities of associating AIR for such communication options.

Er. Hari Kumar, Regional Coordinator for South Asia, Geohazard Society shared his national and international experiences on school safety implementation and introduce School safety app developed by Geohazards international. He introduced the app and its functionalities to all the participants and explained its utility in generating the School safety DM plan after inputting information related to schools. Member Secretary, KSDMA suggested Director, DGE to have a similar app in the state to aid the school authorities and assured necessary support from KSDMA to materialise the same.

In the post lunch session, school safety activities by Education Department, KSDMA in association with UNDP and UNICEF were detailed by Smt. Beena Rani, Chief Planning Officer, DGE; Mr. Joe John George, State project Officer, KSDMA; Mr. Ramesh Krishnan, Executive Director, FDA & Dr Pratheesh C Mammen, Programme Coordinator, UNICEF. This was followed by active discussion involving representatives from various departments and organization explaining their perspective in this matter.

Dr Muralee Thummarukudy, Operations Manager, UNEP also raised the issues related to school safety and he focused on the need to implement school safety in a bigger way and also pointed out the activities he initiated in Wayanad districts post snake bite incident in the school.

The discussions were centered on the following

1. Need of an approving authority and a mechanism to vet the school DM plans
2. Need for an integration of different stakeholders at the district level or local level
3. Technological interventions related to up scaling the school safety efforts
4. Integration of school safety and disaster management in different syllabus
5. Mock drills to be conducted in a routine basis and possibility of making those mandatory
6. Teaching essential life skills to students which can be useful as part of cultivating disaster resilience to the future generation.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 pm after closing remarks by Dr K B Valsalakumari.



Inaugural address by Dr Sekhar L Kuriakose, Member Secretary, KSDMA



Keynote address by Mr. Jeevan Babu IAS, Director, Department of General Education



Muralee Thummarukudy addressing the gathering



Mr Vineesh T V, Research officer, SCERT addressing the session

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