Strengthening Kerala's State Action Plan on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

2 day workshop for policy makers, government officials, civil society organisations, scientists, academicians and media.

26-27 September 2016
Thiruvanathapuram, Kerala.

CONCEPT NOTE

Climate resilience refers to the capacity of a socio-ecological system to adapt, reorganize, and evolve to be better prepared for future disasters and climate change impacts. Kerala is home to 3.44% of India's population. Kerala's rate of population growth is India's lowest as per Census 2001 was 318.41 lakh consisting of 154.69 lakh males and 163.72 lakh females. In Kerala, 74% of the population lives in rural areas. Kerala's human development indices— primary level education, health care and elimination of poverty—are among the best in India. Kerala has one of the highest literacy rates (97.0%) among Indian states and life expectancy (73 years) the highest in India.

Kerala has started witnessing the climate change and its impacts on various geographic regions and economic sectors. Rising temperatures, seasonal extremes in rainfall causing floods and water scarcity, accelerated coastal erosion have together led to failure of crops, drop in fisheries catch, increase in diseases, and sea level rise threatening the coastal cities.

In order to respond to climate realities of the state, Kerala had prepared State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC). The SAPCC outlines strategies and provides recommendations to deal with climate impacts. The SAPCC is supported by vulnerability assessment which leads to sector-specific action plans over short, medium and long term for identified institutions. In its current form the Kerala SAPCC lacks detailed climate vulnerability analyses, state-specific climate research and evidence-building including time series data mechanisms. There is also very little documentation of community voices and their perception of climate change impacts. In addition, there is a need to identify sources for significant and sustained finance to implement many of the large-scale adaptation measures such as retrofitting core infrastructure assets that are at risk from extreme weather events. Finally, sector-specific priorities and programmes needed re-alignment through adoption of risk-informed planning as well as classification of existing adaptation actions as part of the climate change agenda. The overall purpose is to address economic development and growth in a way to achieve resilience to shocks and stresses.

With Paris Agreement bringing in new climate regime, there is emphasis on integration of these climate action strategies in existing schemes and policies at sub-national level. The priority for the state has been to build resilient and low emissions society. Though SAPCC is first step towards identifying vulnerability and an adaptation agenda, much more is to be done on implementation of SAPCC. The state needs to prioritise certain cross-sector actions, develop mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of activities as well as devise appropriate institutional mechanisms for implementation. Throughout this process the emphasis also needs to be on enhancing capacity within the concerned departments through skill-building

and innovation towards mainstreaming resilience in development planning. Another global event in 2015 was adoption of Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) which identified 7 global goals to be achieved by 2030. This is widely deemed to be the guiding framework for DRR preparation and interventions globally until 2030. Thus, the alignment of state and national policies needs to begin in earnest at the earliest. The Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 with the mission to *leave no one behind* identified addressing climate change as one of the goals besides also identifying others goals for areas such as water and energy access that are key to sustainable development and national government's goal of inclusive growth.

Strategies for poverty eradication (SDG1), food security (SDG 2), health (SDG 3), water and sanitation (SDG 6) will get affected from changing climatic conditions. The energy source (SDG 7), nature of economic activities (SDG 8), urbanisation (SDG 11) will determine carbon emissions. The SDGs are inter-twined with areas involved in climate change and will contribute immensely to the pathways of climate change adaptation and mitigation in the state and country. The SDG agenda 2030 provides an opportunity to direct development in a climate resilient, low carbon, sustainable and inclusive manner. It is therefore pertinent to integrate Paris Agreement on climate change with action on Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Approach to State Consultation –

SAPCC is the comprehensive policy framework providing a platform for all departments and planning to find convergence on as climate resilience needs to be integrated across all government actions rather than stand-alone separate policy document with lack of ownership;

All concerned state departments besides Department of Environment and Forestry such as Disaster Management, Energy and Alternative Energy, Agriculture, Irrigation, Housing, Health, Transport, Public Works, Tourism, Women and Child Welfare, Planning and Finance need to be engaged in the deliberations and consultation;

Outcome expected is a draft implementation roadmap to utilize the entry points for mainstreaming DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) into various policies and plans, addressing all forms of loss and damage, as well as leading Kerala on an inclusive and sustainable development pathway;

Recognise the need for creation of a multi-department work program as part of the long-term domestic policies and global frameworks implementation and review roadmap to enable contribution from each department along with addressing their capacity-building needs.

Currently, climate resilience efforts encompass social, economic, technological, and political strategies that are being implemented at all scales of society.

From local community action to global treaties, addressing climate resilience is becoming a priority, although it could be argued that a significant amount of the theory has yet to be translated into practice.