

Loyola College (Autonomous)

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Department of Service Learning

Voice of Slums in Post Flood Chennai: Future Concerns

The voice of the seminar emerged in the last year nonstop rains in Chennai city, December 2015. Hundred of houses collapsed or submerged in landslides and mudslides. The rain disrupted the normal life of Chennai City people. Tamil Nadu Government, Non-Governmental organisations, Educational Institutions, Corporate and helping minded volunteers jumped into rescue and relief actions and admirably addressed the issues of hunger, shelter, clean drinking water and health and hygiene. Loyola experienced the generosity of people from every quarter in Chennai during the floods.



Loyola students involved in the development and educational activities in the slums and people frequently informed to their troubles. The seminar brought out the voice of slum people and enlightened the participants about the Government rehabilitation work and preventive measure for addressing the flood. The voice of slums in post flood Chennai was conducted on **24th October 2016** at the **Lawrence Sundaram Auditorium**. More than hundred people participated from forty-one working area of the department of Service Learning (Outreach). It was organised by the Department of Service Learning (Outreach) & LRRS, Loyola College. The program started off with a prayer song, and sung by postgraduate students and followed by the

welcome address from Fr. Henry Jerome SJ, who welcomed Rev. Fr. Principal, Professors, Community People, NGO's, and Students for the event.

The principal shared his views on the flood-affected times in Chennai and his experience during the 2004 Tsunami.

The guest of honour, Mr. R Mani, a senior journalist stressed that flood happened due to encroachment of water channels and lakes in Chennai. In this kind of situation, common man and bureaucrat are same and have come to street to get relief. During this type situation, there is no difference on caste, creed and religion. Corruption is the main reason for encroachment and also political influence is playing key role for blocking the water channels and encroachment.

Session 1

The first session "Voice of slums" was started off by Prof. I. Priya, who listed the areas in which the students have been helping out. She also called one representative from each area to put forth their difficulties.

1. Maragatham from Teynampet
2. Janani from Saidapet
3. Malarvizhi from Chetpet
4. Poonguhali from Choolaimedu



These representatives mentioned about relief received from private institution like Department of Outreach and individual volunteers who rented their support. The

Government did not provide any material thing they added, and later Medical camps were organised for the women and children. Some of them told that relief amount provided was not adequate.

Session 2

The second session was chaired by Prof. Francis Kumaran and he brought out the issues of **"What was done? and what is yet to be done?"**

Three panel members were participated namely:

1. Mr. Natarajan (Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board)
2. Ms. Vanessa Peter(Journalist).
3. Mr. Deva Prakash (Care India NGO).

Mr. Natarajan explained the many facilities and services provided by the slum clearance board to the slum dwellers in Chennai. The Board provide houses to the slum dwellers who lost their houses during flood.



Mrs. Vanessa Peter, spoke from the perspective of the community people bringing out the many details which are ignored by the slum clearance board. She stressed that house which is provided by board it is to far from city. It affects livelihood of people. Education for the children is difficult to access and it is questionable on those parts of the city. When the officials ask to evacuate the place means Slum people must say that they have all rights to reside there.

- *Notable points are, The Slum act 1956, Relocation of people of slums.*

Mr. Deva Prakash, addressed the community about the future precautions to be taken during a natural disaster.

Session 3

The third session was started by Prof. A. Baskar Jayabalan, who welcomed the resource persons

Dr. K.V. Balasubramaniyan (Metrological Department) and Mrs. Maria Selvam. (Regional officer)

Dr. K.V. Balasubramaniyan addressed the gathering about the work of the regional Metrological Department. He explained in detail the workings of the weather forecast for a day.

Later he left an open question to the community for any queries regarding the Metrological Department and answered the questions. He also forecasted that there will be no rain till November 2nd 2016, with the help of the website.



Mrs. Esther Maria Selvam explained the meaning of the word "Dignity". Secondly she elaborated on the decision making aspect during a disaster. Thirdly she spoke about how to prevent disaster by ensuring proper disposal of garbage regularly. She mentioned reasons preventing flood during the heavy rain. The reasons are as follows:

1. Deepening water bodies
2. Denying the permission to build the construction on river banks
3. Disaster preparedness could made by expert committee
4. Preventing disposal of garbage into kuvam river

5. Giving proper announcement during releasing of water dam
6. Identify flood prone area and preparedness has to be made

Conclusion:

The whole event was summarised by Prof. Anand. He highlighted the main points and presented before the community people. Rev. Fr. Henry Jerome, SJ addressed the gathering and thanked the community for coming for the day's event. He also asked for their support in future events. Folders were distributed to the community members to keep their important documents as a precautionary measure by the Dean of students. The program ended with the national anthem and the people were served with refreshments.