

PRESS RELEASE

Aaranyak's J4L exposes college students to eco-tourism

Guwahati, December 6 : A group of 5th semester students from the Department of Geography, of 'Devi Charan Baruah (DCB) Girls' College, Jorhat explored the Kohora River Basin for a three-day Journey For Learning (J4L).

The community based eco-cultural tourism was organised under the Community Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) initiative of Aaranyak. In this event, Aaranyak subsidised the cost of the fees and fully-sponsored two students of the department to ensure their participation.

The programme was organised at the Community Resource Center, Chandrasing Rongpi Village, Kohora, Karbi Anglong Assam, from 1st December to 3rd December last. This exposure trip for the Geography students was designed for a comprehensive study of the traditional village landscape with the perspective of Disaster Risk and Management under Participatory and Experiential Learning Approach.

This experiential Learning, designed to promote sustainable use of natural resources, this curriculum traversed their horizons towards the understanding of the requirement of social capacities in a cultural landscape for disaster risk mitigation.

On the first day, an orientation about the field works, its modalities and their importance in Geography was deliberated by Dr Jayanta Kumar Sarma, Academic Coordinator of J4L. He explained how geography cohabits in the leisure activities of an individual, as with folk culture, traditional food etc., if one emphasises on one's analytical skills.

The next activity was 'village walk' for the students divided into two teams to two villages each. The exercise focused on understanding the village landscape in the context of disaster risk.

The trek was guided by Sarlongjon Teron, Senior Project officer, Aaranyak while other team members Rangsing Phangcho, Bhaskor Barukial, Mongolsing Rongpher and Sanjib Bey assisted the students throughout the exercise. The students interacted with a few villagers.

At the end of the day, one group discussion on the Kohora River Basin-Place & People, with special reference to disaster risk was conducted by Sarlongjon Teron and Dr

Jayanta Kumar Sarma. The students were also assigned to assess their respective homestays where they had put up, from disaster risk perspectives.

On the second day, the students were sensitised on the application of GPS and GIS, by Aaranyak's Researcher Sourav Gupta followed by a field exercise on the use of GPS and GIS for mapping. The students were divided into five groups and each of the groups was instructed to locate their sampling points by using GPS to carry out water discharge and water quality assessment particularly- pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrate, phosphate and water temperature using field testing kits. It was followed by a focused group discussion (FGD) with villagers of Phumen Engti Village to learn about river Kohora and its association with the people.

Post lunch, a briefing on approach for exploring disaster memory, perception and experiences as a part of disaster risk and vulnerability assessment, followed by toolset design for FGD on disaster risk and vulnerability assessment under Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodology was deliberated by Dr Jayanta Kumar Sarma who also scheduled a report in a scientific format for the students as an assignment explaining the day's activity.

The third day started with the briefing of the PRA adopting FGD with the village community. The students were divided into two groups and guided to their respective villages for the discussion.

Working kits for the field work were distributed and as per instruction, the groups interacted with the villagers and penned it down in the form of thematic maps. Each group was later asked to give a presentation regarding their observations on the disasters (natural and man-made), their disaster memory and the disaster experiences of their allotted village.

The activity was followed by a quiz and there was a feedback session held where the team of students and Aaranyak shared the experience of this trip. The faculties of DCB College shared that such practical experience of the subject through living and learning with the community is of important for the careers of the students and expressed interest for more such collaborations.

This journey for learning of nature, culture and people, learning with the subject experts about the usage of Natural Resources and Participatory Natural Resources management, in such biodiversity rich area of the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape, whether the technical sessions by experts, the field activities or interactive sessions with the community people, keeps an enhancing and enduring redolence of the collective world of nature in the mental mapping of each and every individuals involved in the process.

The three days Journey for Learning programme was smoothly conducted by the Aaranyak team members at Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKL) and the village women group who provided food during the programme. The programme concluded

with a vote of thanks by Dr. Jayanta Kr Roy and group photograph, followed by group lunch.

About Journey for Learning: Journey For Learning (J4L) is an experiential learning programme initiated by Aaranyak under its Natural Resource Management Programme (NRMP) that facilitates Cultural and Natural tourism along with science based learnings for both groups with carried interests. The initiative supports alternative sustainable livelihoods, community development and nature conservation led by indigenous Karbi and Bodo communities of Assam.

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