



BIODIVERSITY DAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE REMOTE VILLAGES IN KASHMIR VALLEY, INDIA

International Biodiversity Day 2009 was celebrated by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) with students and teachers in the remote hill villages of Kashmir Valley in India. Three hundred fifty students and twenty six teachers from 7 schools participated in these celebrations which were held at 2 different locations in Baramulla and Kupwara districts. Students and teachers were apprised of the



importance and history of the International Biodiversity Day and the theme for this year's celebrations. They were informed about the definition of alien species, their characteristics and how they pose threat to the local biodiversity through small and simple lectures by the CEE staff. Examples of alien species reported from different parts of India as well as the Kashmir valley were cited during the discussions. For example the Congress grass (*Parthenium hysterophorus*) which came from America to India with wheat but it has now spread in almost all over the country. It causes allergy, skin problem, and lung problems to humans and is serious threat to native ecological and economical species. Another example cited was the water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) which is found predominantly in the water bodies in Kashmir. The famous Dal Lake in Kashmir has large area encroached by the water hyacinth threatening the fish population and local plant biodiversity. Discussing on the ways to control the problem of invasive alien species, students were told about prevention, eradication, containment exclusion, site specific control and biological control as some method to control such species.

Students from 6-12 standards participated in quiz, painting and essay writing competitions organised on the theme of IBD 2009 and the winners were facilitated with prizes. Representatives from Jammu & Kashmir Education Department were invited as the guest speakers on this occasion.

Districts Baramulla and Kupwara were the worst hit areas during the 2005 Kashmir earthquake and CEE is working with J&K Education Department to create awareness



on Disaster Risk Reduction & Preparedness in above 2,000 government schools falling in five districts. Since Climate Change is an emerging threat in the region, efforts are going on to build the resilience of mountain people through preparedness & awareness for adaptation and food security. Himalayan region is one of the hotspots of biodiversity.

