

International Day for Biological Diversity, 2012

International Day for Biological Diversity was observed on 22nd May, 2012 around the world and the Himalayan states of India were not far behind. The states of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand saw numerous children participate in the celebrations through different activities that combined learning with fun.



Children with Saplings

Seven schools in Himachal Pradesh including the Doon Valley International School and Government Secondary Senior School in district Sirmour, participated in the event where children learnt about the different components that make up biodiversity. Moreover, residing in relatively untouched, scarcely populated areas of the Himalayan mountains, the children were able to relate to the plethora of flora and fauna that they encounter on a regular basis. Students of two schools planted saplings of medicinal plants to mark the day. They also learnt how to care for their plants. In addition, they learnt about forest conservation and environmental degradation. The students also participated in speech, essay-writing and

poster-making competitions.

In Uttarakhand, students took it upon themselves to create awareness about biodiversity in their village communities. They put up small skits to spread the message of biodiversity protection.

In Jammu & Kashmir, the day was observed by over 100 children and 10 teachers at Mountain Valley Education Institute, Sheeri. Members of RCE Srinagar, along with teachers of the school, spoke to the children about the history and importance of the day. Examples of positive action from



A Participant at the Speech Competition

around the globe were cited to

understand the large scale initiatives being undertaken in different countries. The speakers also stressed upon the gradual decline in local floral and faunal species of J&K. Even micro-organisms in the soil are being affected by chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Climate change is greatly impacting the agricultural biodiversity of the state. The children learnt about the theme of the day – Marine Biodiversity. Located far from seas and oceans, the audience was very interested in learning about marine species that inhabit the oceans. In addition, they understood the links between glaciers and oceans, mountains and coasts, and how all

systems are interconnected and integral to each others' survival.

These programs were organised at different locations to commemorate the day as part of *Paryavaran Mitra* and RCE Srinagar initiatives of CEE Himalaya. RCE Srinagar is a network of like-minded individuals and organisations in Kashmir working for the cause of behavioural change towards sustainable development. *Paryavaran Mitra*, the world's largest school-based climate change and sustainability education programme, covering over 2 million schools in the country, is reaching out to over 15,000 schools in the Himalayan states.



Team RCE Srinagar with young participants