

Year of Awareness on Science & Health (YASH) (2020-2021)

National Council for Science & Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science & Technology launches a programme on health and risk communication “Year of Awareness on Science & Health (YASH)” with Focus on COVID-19. A comprehensive and effective science and health communication effort for promoting grass-root level appreciation and response on health and risk would be an advantage for saving and shaping the lives of the people at large, as well as building confidence, inculcating scientific temper and promoting health consciousness amongst them.

In order to facilitate necessary actions and preparedness of the society to address the challenge, the strategies have been worked out by involving academic, research, media and voluntary organizations. The translation and usage of authentic scientific and health information to communicate the risks and facilitate risk management, an immediate and effective science communication for promoting community level response are planned. The initiative is targeted at encouraging public participation in risk related reciprocal communication processes to open routes for better decision making and stakeholders’ involvement to build capacities and enable communities to develop a sense of awareness, an analytical mind, and take an informed decision especially when it comes to healthcare and risk for their wellbeing.

Important objectives of the YASH programme are:

1. To minimize risks at all levels with help of public communication and outreach activities at large.
2. To promote public understanding of common minimum science for community care and health safety measures like personal sanitation and hygiene, physical distancing, and maintaining desired collective behaviours, etc.
3. To develop and disseminate science communication software, enhance science coverage in mass media including illustrative interpretations especially to reduce the fear of risks and build confidence with a dose of necessary understanding.
4. To assess and rationalize community preparedness and perceptions.
5. To inculcate scientific temper for adopting sustainable healthy lifestyles, and nurturing scientific culture among masses and societies.

YASH envisages specific outcomes, like improved risk understanding amongst target groups including working with local sensitivities, belief systems, traditions, and indigenous knowledge by way of using different channels of communication; attitudinal changes among target groups about appreciating risks, associated challenges, solutions, and coping up the situation with courage and confidence; better working relations with community leaders, influencers including faith leaders, doctors, etc.; improved ability to clarify mis-perceptions, mis-beliefs, mall-practices based on authentic knowledge duly verified by scientific processes; trust in scientific competence of solutions and service providers; science communication about risk reduction measures; target group specific interpretations for emergency readiness and behaviours; assessment of public perceptions and encouraging public engagement; enhanced public participation in health and risk related reciprocal communication processes to open routes for better decision making and stakeholders’ involvement.

The programme encompasses development of science, health, and risk communication software in terms of publications, audio-visual, digital platforms, folk performances, trained communicators, especially in regional languages to cater to various cross sections of the society in the country. It includes campaigns, exhibitions, mela, jatha, competitions, and different communication approaches especially to reach the unreached. The current scenario of a pandemic has posed concerns and challenges all around where scientific awareness and health preparedness play a significant role to help combat the situation with

translation and usage of authentic scientific information to convey the risks involved and facilitate communities to overcome the situation.

Special call for proposals has been announced for science, health and risk communication with focus on COVID-19 - building improved risk understanding, an analytical mind, and informed decision making capacity amongst target groups including working with local sensitivities, belief systems, traditions, and indigenous knowledge; translation, target group specific interpretations and usage of authentic scientific and health information to communicate the risks and facilitate risk management; attitudinal changes about appreciating risks, associated challenges and solutions and assessment of public perceptions; improved ability to clarify mis-perceptions, mis-beliefs, mal-practices based authentic knowledge duly verified by scientific processes; trust in scientific competence of solutions and service providers and better working relations with community leaders, influencers including faith leaders, doctors, etc.; science literacy for risk reduction; development of science, health, and risk communication software in terms of publications, audio-visual, digital platforms, low cost learning aids, folk performances, trained communicators, especially in regional languages; campaigns, hands-on science, demo/exhibitions/fairs, mela, jatha, competitions, children centric outreach, etc.
