The Annual Kangra Earthquake Anniversary
School Safety Shake-Out Drill 2012
4 April 2012, 107th Anniversary of the 1905 Kangra Earthquake

In Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi & Haryana
Background: The annual Kangra Earthquake Anniversary School Shakeout is an earthquake preparedness drill which has been organised by GeoHazards International (GHI) and GeoHazards Society (GHS) in collaboration with various other regional organisations. This is to commemorate the anniversary of the 1905 Kangra earthquake that killed over 19,700 people and to generate awareness of the earthquake hazard in their location. GHI & GHS started the initiative as the ‘Tibetan School Shakeout Drill’ in collaboration with Library of Tibetan Works & Archives (LTWA) in April 2009 and have been organising earthquake drills in Tibetan Schools across the country with increased numbers of participating schools every year.

The Annual Tibetan School Shakeout Drill: In the year 2009 the drill started with schools from Central Tibetan Schools (CST), Sambhota Tibetan Schools (STS) and Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV) schools, with participation of 7500 students in the States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Meghalaya. The initiative started spreading to new states and schools with increase number of participants in 2010 to 16,500 and in 2011 it reached 17,500 in 37 Tibetan Schools covering new states like Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, West Bengal, and Arunachal Pradesh. With more awareness of this annual event, many non-Tibetan Schools also expressed interest to take part in the drills.
The 4th annual School Safety Shakeout Drill: This year the drill included several non-Tibetan Schools within the country who had been trained over the last year in comprehensive school safety by GHI & GHS. One of the schools that had been trained by us in Bhutan also decided to take part in this event, ensuring that the drills start influencing schools outside India as well.

At 11:00 am IST on Wednesday the 4th April 2012, School children in 37 Tibetan Schools (in J & K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh), 8 schools in Kanpur, 15 schools in Ghaziabad, 3 schools in Delhi and 1 school in Thimphu (Bhutan) took part in this mass earthquake preparedness activity with active participation of 28,410 students and staff members.

Though many schools carried out the drills differently in accordance to their preparedness plan, the underlying theme was to test and enhance the levels of awareness and preparedness among the staff and students. On the 4th of April at 11:00 am a special siren/bell/drum beat is sounded in the participating schools. Students immediately did the Drop, Cover and Hold on exercise and waited for the second signal, before starting to evacuate, as planned, under the guidance of the teachers and School Safety Committee members. Once students were evacuated to safe areas, teachers took a roll call of the students in their care, to ensure that no one was missing or injured. In cases where children were ‘missing’ or found to be ‘injured’ a Search & Rescue mission as per plan was despatched or First-Aid administered. In most schools the staff members have been preparing for the drill
days before with sensitization of the new students, re-assigning responsibilities to the staff and defining the evacuation routes and assembly area.

The local government agencies and Disaster Management authorities of the concerned districts also played an important role in carrying out the activities. District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Kanpur and DDMA, Ghaziabad have taken the initiative to collaborate with us to mark the anniversary of the earthquake that once had affected their districts albeit moderately. Officials from agencies like Department of Education of Tibetan Government in Exile, the Central School for Tibetans, Sambhota Tibetan Schools, and Tibetan Children’s Village Schools also played an important role in coordinating with all the participating schools.

The preparation of conducting the drill began many months before, with distribution of resource materials on earthquake safety including colourful posters on how to do *Drop Cover Hold on* and the training sessions. Before the actual drill all schools conducted awareness programmes for their students.

In words of Ms. Dorjee Dolma, Headmistress Sambhota Mewoen Petoen School Gangchen Kyishong “I would like to say that this preparedness drill helped make the children much more aware to protect themselves during emergencies.”

Sambhota Tibetan School Paonta reports “During practicing for this drill, the school has established the School disaster Management groups which can prove extremely invaluable during any natural disasters.” According to Mr. Namdol Tashi, Principal T.C.V. School, Chauntra, “To give practical training to the students and staff to
practice Drop, Cover and Hold on
techniques to protect themselves in the
event of a major earthquake and to get them
all out safely is most important.”

Principal of Sambhota Tibetan School
Chauntra feels “The drill was successful
preparedness against any possible
earthquake in future.” The class IX students
of Mewoen Tsuglag Petoen School in
Dharamsala feel that as precaution
measures should be taken before the
earthquake, the drill is an excellent
opportunity to check these measures. They
also felt the drill would spread awareness
among students, staff and family members
on how to face natural disasters like
earthquake.

One of the prominent non Tibetan school
participated in this year’s drill was DAV
Public School Sector 14, Gurgaon with 3200
children and 245 staff. Other schools in
Delhi like Saraswati Bal Mandir and
Balvantrai Mehta Vidya Mandir also
conducted drills efficiently. The Jigme Losel
school in Thimphu is the first school outside
India to take part in the drill, but surely will
not be the last as many more schools
across Bhutan will be taking part in 2013
Shakeout. A total of 866 students and staff
members took part.

With the success of this massive drill in generating awareness about the seismic
hazard, GeoHazards International and GeoHazards Society, India are planning to
expand the reach of this drills to other regions and also to take up a massive drill to
mark the anniversary of another earthquake that has affected India, Bhutan and
Bangladesh; the 1897 Shillong earthquake.

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