

National Consultation: Water, Livelihoods and Climate Change
Tarun Bharat Sangh, Bheekampura, Alwar, Rajasthan
13th and 14th March, 2013

13th March, 2013

Our generation today has come face to face with the challenges of water, climate change and the livelihood issues that it brings with it. The National Consultation aimed to address these issues in a 2 day workshop. Participants from different fields first introduced themselves. The consultation was officially opened by Mr. Rajendra Singh, Chairman, Tarun Bharat Sangh, who informed of the genesis and aim of this workshop. The idea emerged in the Bhopal workshop named 'Chandela Tank Revival Workshop'. It was decided there that the campaign for livelihood issues of the poor related to climate change should be carried out throughout the country, starting with arid and semi arid regions. This was followed by the presentation of Tarun Bharat Sangh's work over the last 30 years, during which it has addressed the issues of livelihoods for the poor with a focus on the traditional water conservation methods, using a community participatory approach.

The three key speakers of the consultation were:

Mr. Om Prakash Sharma, Wells for India

Mr. Joachim Schwarz, WHH

Mr. Sandeep Chachra, Action Aid India

They spoke about the idea of this consultation. They all agreed about the need for this campaign, for the revival of traditional water systems, and their entitlement, especially in weak and poor societies.

The representatives of Indian Agricultural Research Institute, GOI said that government should encourage this work and give a special focus on community driven participatory approach in water conservation.

Five small groups were made for discussion on different issues. These are as follows:

- 1) Identifying working areas
- 2) Identifying organizations
- 3) Identifying resource organizations
- 4) Identifying other partners, such as governments, organizations and community based organizations (CBO)
- 5) Identifying logistical needs for campaign implementation

To better understand the issues, a field visit was done in the afternoon session, visiting the rainwater harvesting (RWH) structures made in the catchment area of the Aravari River.

The evening session started with all the participants giving their opinion about water, forest and land conservation. Mr. Joachim Schwarz talked specifically about the objective, strategy, methodology and outcomes of this campaign. Participants discussed the methodology; and whether we should take the help of government, or whether it should be done only through a participatory approach of the people. Dr. O P Sharma considered that traditional water conservation methodology is more useful for the communities than large water structures. The evening session concluded with the decision that the campaign should focus on small traditional water systems throughout the country, with a community participatory approach for addressing the issues of climate change and livelihood.

Objectives decided for this campaign:

- 1) To help communities, particularly the poorest, regain rights, responsibilities and control over access to water resources.
- 2) Equity in water distribution
- 3) Technically, the focus will be on the renewal of indigenous traditional water systems, also as a resilient response to climate change, using a participatory approach.

14th March, 2013

The day started with a field visit in the Gopalpura village to see the changes brought by the community driven participatory approach to water conservation efforts in the livelihoods of the people. The discussion during the field visit strengthened the objectives decided yesterday.

Scientists of the apex body from Agriculture Institute, Delhi also declared their interest to join the campaign and supported the participatory approach of community in water conservation efforts. It was decided that it should be a nationwide campaign, as water, climate change and livelihood issues are essential throughout the country, although arid and dry land areas will be among the priorities. Mr. R. B. Singh, President, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, also emphasized that the people's interests must be at the center of the movement; that smart, efficient conservation and utilization of water is essential everywhere and in all uses; and the principle that water cannot belong to private individuals, being a commons belonging to the people.

Outcomes of the Meeting

- 1) Campaign name is finalized as 'Jal Jan Jodo' Campaign or 'People's Water Alliance'
- 2) Dry areas identified as priorities: Karnataka, A.P., Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Bihar, U. P., Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, some parts of Delhi, West Bengal.
- 3) Leadership will be provided by Mr. Rajendra Singh,
- 4) Campaigning Organization will be Rashtriya Jal Biradari,
- 5) Campaign office at Tarun Bharat Sangh,
- 6) Another, larger strategy meeting was fixed for the 18th and 19th April 2013, as a 2-day consultation in Gandhi Peace Foundation, Delhi, for the 'Jal Jan Jodo' Abhiyan.
- 7) WHH is charged with making a write-up for this strategy meeting.
- 8) Mr. Sanjay Singh will be responsible for arranging the meeting.

The last round of talks included a discussion on the role of various participants and their organizations. Also the scientists Mr. R. P. Singh, Secretary, Indian Agricultural Universities Association and Mr. R. B. Singh, President, National Academy of Agricultural Sciences, talked about the role that government can play in this campaign. Mr. Joachim Schwarz talked about resource mobilization and arranging the funding for the campaign, and about the focus points of the write-up for the meeting on 18th and 19th April, 2013. Also it was decided that more than hundred participants will be invited in the meeting from varied fields of experience with participation from government representatives as well. The consultation concluded with final words from Mr. Rajendra Singh, whereby he talked of taking the movement forward and coming well prepared at the strategy meeting of April.