

MILES to go...

Glimpse of TBS's Future Strategies

Climate change & natural resource conservation

Major issues that India faces in addressing the challenge of balancing increasing human requirements for adequate water supplies for overall development are as follows:

Governance: India faces a governance crisis, rather than a water crisis. Good water governance requires effective and accountable socio-political and administrative systems adopting an integrated water resources management (IWRM) approach with transparent and participatory processes that address ecological and human needs.

Capacity Building: The need for capacity building, education and access to information for enhanced effectiveness in water management is unquestioned. These critical elements of the water development process are often treated as an add-on to programs, with scant regard to local capacity-building institutions, gender mainstreaming, cultural diversity and traditional knowledge or to long-term commitment.

Financing: Financing infrastructure for the water sector comes mainly from the public sector of developing countries and is "topped-up" with contributions from foreign aid, international financial institutions, commercial loans and private equity. Despite the link between water security, development and poverty alleviation, overall investment in water resources management has been seriously neglected. Several models for combining public, donor and/or private funding have been attempted, and the results have been mixed. The debate concerning public-private partnerships has not been resolved.

Participation: In many regions, states and local communities have come to realize that water is a multi-stakeholder issue, and that partnerships of all interested and affected parties are a viable mechanism to translate IWRM into practice, yet large segments of society, especially women and the poor, are not given a voice.

Actions committed for future

Keeping in view the above issues, TBS has committed to support, strengthen and implement the following actions;

Promote IWRM approach to address adaptation to climate change: TBS would communicate the impact of climate change on the water cycle and facilitate capacity development to support better management of water resources at all levels, national, regional and local, including river basin organizations to build resilience to climate change. Application of the IWRM approach will balance social and economic impacts, minimize environmental impacts and preserve ecosystems.

Scale-up the rainwater harvesting systems: Development of irrigation systems would be required at a large-scale to achieve the required increase in food production, eradication of poverty and hunger and protection of the environment. Therefore, TBS would support and facilitate rainwater harvesting in semi-arid and arid regions of the country so as to improve rain fed or dry land agriculture.

Creating National Awareness and political support: TBS will continue to conduct numerous campaigns, satyagrahas, workshops, meetings, seminars to underscore the importance of water for development and therefore have set goals and targets for priority action. TBS will continue to be engaged in dialogue with state governments to develop people inclusive water policies, strategies and laws for water resources development and management, most often following the principles of IWRM.

Building Bridges between stakeholders: Efforts shall be made to bridge the gap between the food and environment sectors and to develop mechanisms to increase the productivity of water for food and livelihoods in a manner that is environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable.

TBS would facilitate dialogue and interventions to build bridges between water managers, climatologists, hydrologist and disaster management organizations, as well as raising awareness amongst water policy makers, water managers and society about the need for better adaptation to climate change and increasing meteorological hazards. The sustainability of groundwater represents one of the major water challenges. Programs that provide technical and financial support to local initiatives are required to better understand and manage these resources.

Strengthen Local Action to Improve Water Governance: Several local and regional scale initiatives on disaster preparedness and adaptation to climate variability (and change) need to be launched, but funding for such activities has been very limited and most have yet to mainstream their recommendations into national policy. Gender-sensitive participatory processes at the community level have proved effective but there is a need to devise and implement gender inclusive policies. In this perspective, TBS would give attention to water education in primary and secondary school, and higher-level water-sector education and training needs to be re-oriented towards IWRM.

Increase the number of River and Lake Basin and groundwater organizations, their strength and capacity: TBS would encourage establishment of river and lake basin, coastal, marine and groundwater institutions or organizations where they do not exist. As these river basin organizations would promote cooperation, mutual understanding and confidence building. Where river basin organizations do exist, TBS would strive to strengthen their capacity to confront the complexities of changing circumstances, including global changes.

Institutionalize pollution prevention: TBS would continue to struggle for enforcing clear and enforceable regulations at the government level to prevent pollution of water resources by agricultural, industrial or domestic waste.

Build on existing local knowledge: Local community is at the front line as they are the first in addressing local problems. They hold valuable knowledge and experience and this still too often goes unrecognized. TBS would document, disperse and build knowledge and experience, as well as technology, so as to sensitize the decision makers to realize the need to learn from these stakeholders and apply the lessons learned, such that they use local capacity and knowledge, work with local reformers, build capacity of local institutions and civil society, and apply the subsidiary principle to empower the local actors.

TBS would strive at both national and local governments to create an enabling environment so that the customary law, informal water use practices and cultural diversity are formally recognized and accommodated in appropriate reforms of water policy and legislation.

Women & education

It has been recognized that woman is the main donee of the water & forest conservation. However, her position and social status continues to be defined by traditional norms, as is evidenced by their lack of access to education, poor health and exclusion from decision-making on 'public' issues. In spite of the fact that women are the primary managers of natural resources, particularly water and forests, they are still seen as consumers and users of natural resources, rather than as planners and managers.

Even though improvements in the local economy have taken place due to interventions by TBS, children continue to work in these sectors. This is exacerbated by the lack of basic school infrastructure and facilities which forces a large number of children to be out of school and at work. Several socio-cultural, economic, infrastructural and other institutional problems which have acted as barriers for universal access to schooling need to be addressed.

TBS has started some preliminary work in taking up issues of education and health with women's SHG. The need is now to build on the gains of the earlier work in order to ensure that women become active participants in the entire resource management process. Their traditional knowledge of biodiversity and herbal lore can become a valuable resource for the community, and a good starting point for women's empowerment.

Another problem has been that the existing SHG do not have strong linkages with the panchayats. It is critical that these groups formed in the area with TBS support be linked more closely to the local panchayats, which would be to the advantage of both. Panchayats would become more accountable to the local community and through panchayats, the community could access more resources from other departments and institutions. This would also serve as a platform for the emerging women leaders.

TBS addresses issues of sustainable human development in a direct manner, through attempting to build the values and competence necessary for evolving and managing a process of development which is pro-poor, pro-women, pro-nature and pro-children. The area where it will be implemented is one with a rich tradition of conservation of bio-diversity and common property resources, and the sub-strategies will build on these to re-establish a holistic and ecologically sustainable livelihood system. The focus of the TBS is to develop the capacity of the economically and socially disadvantaged groups, particularly women's groups to deal with community resource management with a focus on natural resources and

environmental issues. In addition, capacity will also be developed in areas such as health and education.

Also as part of the strategy, the links between child labor, poverty and development would be strengthened. The process would include building an enabling environment of education for children employed in industries from the area. A multi-dimensional approach has to be followed to address the problem. This would include building the local economy through strengthening natural resource management on one hand, and mobilizing the community and the employers of child laborers, on the other hand, towards education. More educational centers will be set primarily in areas where there are no government-run schools and will have all the working children going to these schools.

A major component of the strategy will be the selection and training of animators and village level workers, who will facilitate the learning process of women's groups. TBS already has expertise in facilitating processes of planning and implementation of resource management programs. The experiences and expertise of other organizations working to organize women and on issues such as women's health and education will be accessed. Exposure visits and study tours for TBS workers and community representatives will be organized to ensure cross-fertilization of ideas on women's empowerment. Trainers and resource persons from other organizations will be contacted to provide hands-on support to women's groups in implementing their ideas. The focus in all cases will be on ensuring women's equal participation in all activities, as well as on building their capacities in a focused way on issues related to education and health. In the process of capacity building, the panchayat members, government functionaries, other NGO workers will also be oriented to the people-centered concept of development through exposure and exchange visits.

In order to ensure financial independence of the women's group in the long run, the village fund (gram kosh) initiative would be linked with larger development funds such as lead banks, government schemes and other financial institutions. The village fund will be used for capital generation for any future natural resource development and other community development activities and thereby, achieving a greater financial autonomy.

Marginalised groups particularly women and other village level workers of TBS's work area are the main target group. In addition, poor families and other community members in these villages would benefit from the assistance provided on water resource management, bio-diversity conservation, community health, education, etc.

Health

During the present phase, the health program of TBS has reviewed many of its existing activities in an effort to understand exactly where and how it making a contribution. In the coming year the focus of TBS will be on expanding the range of activities that are being carried out to secure health. In addition to this, efforts will be made to strengthen and further systemize the work to explore new ways of engaging with the bigger health system. Although this will undoubtedly present many challenges, TBS feels that without intervention on this front it will not be possible to ensure a good health status for the people in its work area.