



Highlights of the Rio Conventions Pavilion UNCCD COP 14



3 September 2019
“DAY OF SYNERGIES”

Highlight 1: Climate co-benefits of programmes to combat land degradation

Centre for Science and Environment

The first programme at the Rio Conventions Pavilion commenced with Centre for Science and Environment's panel discussion on Climate Co-Benefits of Programmes to Combat Land Degradation.



Chandra Bhushan, Deputy Director General of Centre for Science and Environment introduced the panelists for the session- Madhav Gholkar (Manager, Watershed Organisation Trust), Prof.C.R. Babu (well-known environmentalist and Professor Emeritus, Delhi University) Rohini Chaturvedi (Senior Fellow, Global Greening Alliance) and BKP Sinha (Amity School of Material and Sustainable Development).

The first presentation of the session was Tarun Gopalakrishnan Deputy Programme Manager-Climate from Centre for Science and Environment, opened the session with a detailed presentation on Climate Co-Benefits of Programmes To Combat Land Degradation. He spoke about land carbon sequestration potential and stressed that development projects in India have mixed record of sustainability and delivery of socio-economic benefits. Selected districts of case studies in Jhabua, in Madhya Pradesh and Jaisalmer in Rajasthan were discussed in detail.

According to him, the study revealed that track record of watershed development in MP is mixed. Jhabua consistently identified as a top performing district, both in ecological and socio-economic indicators. In 2015-16 regional rainfall deficit of nearly 50% (42 of MP's 51 districts declared drought-hit) - Jhabua's groundwater development tided it over a potential crisis and the key factors in this were political will, competent and committed bureaucratic support, and people's participation.

In Jaisalmer from 1990 to 2002 - 70300 hectares covered by shelter belts (or 5800 additional hectares each year), Soil carbon loss from wind erosion - 45 kg per hectare per year, cumulative avoided emissions from soil erosion - 35900 tCO₂e, carbon sequestered in shrub/tree biomass in Jaisalmer - 0.6 - 5 tonnes per hectare, total carbon sequestered by shelter-belt biomass - 154,800 to 1,290,000 tonnes of CO₂ and Initial investment - INR 655 crore over 12 years (adjusted for 2017 prices).





Prof.C.R.Babu spoke on Ecological Restoration of Degraded Lands for Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality and Climate Resilience. Speaking on the issue, he said that globally 43% of vegetated earth surface has lost its productivity potential and about 60% of global landscapes are degraded. In India, 56% of total geographical area is considered as waste land. Annually, 1000s of hectares of productive lands are degraded due to open-cast mining. Pointing out the drivers of land degradation, Prof. Babu said that deforestation, soil erosion, mining, grazing, climate change, habitat conversion, unregulated irrigation, and dumping of toxic waste have all led to the compounding problems of deterioration of land fertility and degradation. According to him, land is the most important issue for a sustainable livelihood and there have been good case studies livelihoods derived from restored ecosystem.

He sites the example of limestone mined out site in the hill ranges of Purnapani in Sundergarh district of Odisha state in India which have been restored with sustained efforts by the government and local people for ten years to turn the area into luxuriant three storied tropical moist deciduous forests having six different forest ecosystems and people have explored different options of livelihood by successfully rearing cocoons of silkworm reared on plants at the restored site of Purnapani.

BKP Sinha spoke at length about the role of macro-economic policies in conservation and development of carbon sink, linkages between a developing economy and its ecosystem- development of one requires the development of others.



Highlight 2: Economics of land degradation: Development Alternatives

WOTR & The ELD Initiative

Development Alternatives, The ELD Initiative and GIZ jointly organised a side event titled 'Economics of Land Degradation (ELD): Evaluating the Impact of Land Remediation through the Lenses of Natural Capital and SDGs in the Bundelkhand Region in Madhya Pradesh, India' at the Rio Pavilion of the UNCCD CoP 14 on 3rd September 2019.

The session featured a vibrant discussion between eminent speakers on the panel that included Dr. Anil Markandya from Basque Center of Climate Change (Spain), Dr. Jagdish Krishnaswamy from ATREE and Dr. Rohini Chaturvedi (independent consultant) amongst others. The session started with a film on ELD being screened followed by an introduction to the ELD approach by Hannes Etter from GIZ. This was followed by two inputs presentations on successful experiences of land remediation - by

Development Alternatives in Bundelkhand and by WOTR in Maharashtra, presented respectively by Gitika Goswami and Madhav Gholkar. The final key panelist was Pran Singh Lodhi, a farmer from Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh who shared his experience of making the shift to a climate resilient model of farming and leading his community in sustainable management of land and water resources in his village. The panel was moderated by Dr. Ashok Khosla from Development Alternatives.

Following the initial inputs by the panelists, the floor was opened for questions and interaction with the audience. The following overarching questions were posed to stimulate the discussion:

- Can economics of land degradation (ELD) play an important role in reversing land degradation and achieving the LDN targets?
- Can ELD contribute to decision making and incentivize investments in land restoration?
- Can ELD influence biodiversity conservation and restoration of ecosystem services?



Madhav Gholkar of Watershed Organisation Trust speaking on role of watershed management in preserving soil erosion and nutrient losses at Rio Conventions Pavilion

Some of the thoughts and perspectives that emerged during the discussion are reproduced below to provide an indicative though certainly not comprehensive idea of the breadth and richness of the discussions:

- Undertaking studies for economic valuation of land remediation interventions are critical for generating evidence that can influence scaling up of investment in land remediation, including through policy mechanisms but also through private investment.
- In India, large programmes have been implemented on land management at scale and this provides an opportunity to conduct studies that can yield valuable insights and evidence on the scale and nature of investment and interventions and the economic models that can be most effective in achieving the country's LDN targets.
- Partnerships that enable the convergence of efforts being made by various stakeholders, including government, academia, private sector and civil society will be crucial in the scaling up of land remediation and the achievement of the LDN targets.

The session proved to be a great success with animated and insightful discussions and sharing of knowledge and experiences amongst the participants who agreed to keep the very pertinent dialogue alive.

Highlight 3: Art for Greening: Role of artistic works to combat desertification with tree planting and enlightened hearts

Eritrea

The concluding programme of the day was a visual and auditory extravaganza titled 'Art for Greening'- Role of Artistic works to Combat Desertification. Heruy Asghedom, UNCCD National Focal Point and Director-General of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture of Eritrea, presented the 'Greening Campaign' to the audience enumerating the state's novel ways of conserving energy and turning toward greener choices in food and lifestyle to stop degradation of land resources.



Eritrean artist, Habteweld Misgina displayed his paintings at the venue which echoed the state's green practices. Misgina also communicated through his flute rendition of a shepherd's love for the land and enthused the audience to think of the serious nature that the problem of land degradation poses for the future generation.



(Noted Eritrean artist, Habteweld Misgina playing the shepherd's song at Rio Conventions Pavilion)



(From left to right: Habteweld Misgina, Alem Tsehaye, Heruy Asgedom 'Art for Greening' programme at Rio Conventions Pavilion)

Alem Tsehaye, Ambassador of Eritrea to India and Heruy Asgedom of UNCCD and National Focal Point of Eritrea also joined Misgina to stress the importance of sharing about the state's progress and best practices towards a greener tomorrow. Ambassador Tsehaye reiterated the importance of coming together and working as one force to combat the growing problem of desertification





Exhibition of paintings by Habteweld Misgina at Rio Conventions Pavilion

