

Community Water Walk

(An initiative towards Community Water Management)

Community Water Walk is a process oriented method evolved at the TN-IAMWARM Project in order to initiate Community Participation in Water Management. In the context of water being commoditized through privatization, it is highly imperative that the prudent actions, both at micro level as well as macro level, are initiated and sustained to combat commoditization of water. It is widely believed that Community Water Management is the best alternative, but pertinent initiatives are only sporadic. Tamil Nadu, being one of the most water stressed states in India, cannot afford to go for Public Private Partnership in water management, instead it should promote Public Public Partnership.



The Change Management Group of Pennair Upto Krishnagiri sub-basin which comprises of district and block level officers and field functionaries from 8 line departments, has initiated the process of Community Water Management through a unique methodology known as “Community Water Walk”. Pillaikothur village, Soolagiri Block and Tathaganapalli village, Hosur block of Krishnagiri district have been selected for organizing and conducting “Community Water Walk” on 22nd November 2008.

As preparatory activities for “Community Water Walk”, the field functionaries visited both the villages and contacted Village leaders, Youth clubs, Women SHGs and School teachers to persuade them to assemble at a common place to discuss about water context of the village. They were also informed that 8 line departments would be participating in “Water Walk”.



Officers and field functionaries of 8 line departments reached two villages in two batches on 22nd November 2008. Despite the preparatory works, the field functionaries had to revisit all those people who had been contacted and informed earlier. Farmers, few youth and children, elders and Women from SHGs assembled at a common place. The dialogue started informally when one of the line department officer asked about water context of the village. Farmers informed about water resources of the village – tanks, ponds etc. Women were drawn into discussion on drinking water facilities. Elders were asked about the water context in the past (10/20 years back). The youth and children were asked to compare the present water context with the water context of the past as narrated by the village elders. The youth could list out lot of changes such as change in rain pattern, disappearance of small ponds, shorter duration of water in the village tank and etc., Women, though happy about drinking water being

supplied through taps in the streets, complained about quality of the water. They said that their children have weakened teeth. High Fluoride content in the water has been the problem. One of the line department officers asked since when they had this problem. It was revealed that they had no such problem when they were drawing drinking water from open well. The Water Walk started with visiting the well that was serving drinking water to the village until 10 years back.

The Pillaikothur village community led Govt. Officials to the open well which has become dumping pit and then to the village tank which has been polluted by untreated effluent from a nearby granite factory. The village community was emphasized the need for rehabilitating the open well so as to serve as water recharger. They have determined to stop dumping waste material in the well.



Before reaching the Panchayath Tank, few farmers of this village showed SRI fields and explained the merits of the novel method of rice cultivation. Women were able to list out salient features of SRI –

Square planting, single planting, cono weeder, requires less water and labour and higher yield.



Once the Water Walk team reached the village tank, one of the farmers whose livelihood is depended on milch animals started to indicating at untreated effluent that is coming from a nearby granite factory. “ It is not only polluting the water in the tank, but also the cattle grazing field”, said the distressful farmer. WRO officials discussed

about encroachment and the need for clearing them off. Then there was discussion on formation of Water Users Association on the tank bund. Pillaikothur village farmers receive irrigation water from Kalavarapalli Dam. From the tank, the water walk team returned to the place from where they started.

During the “Water Walk”, the line department officials and filed functionaries caught hold of village community in groups and had discussions on different aspects of the village. This was the strategy adopted by them mainly to sustain the interest of the community to take active part in the water walk till the end of it.

After Water Walk, village community and line department personnel assembled again to sum up the water walk and discuss the responses in order to rehabilitate the water context in the village. The village community also brought some of the other issues that need to be addressed. The line department personnel briefed about their interventions under IAMWARM Project in specific and other programmes in general. One of the farmers stood up firmly and said that they had

lost confidence in Government departments and officials. The other farmer accused Government officers are target oriented and they would not turn up again once they complete their targets. All the 8 line department personnel who were present pledged before the village community that they would be along with them till the end of the development journey.

While discussing about AEDs interventions, WRO assured water for farm ponds. There are 4 farm ponds being dug in this village. Fisheries department has planned to arrange for training on aquaculture in fish farm ponds. The need for MIS was also stressed upon.



TNAU and Department of Agriculture have SRI fields in 12 acres and farmers have expressed their satisfaction over the performance of the crop so far.

“The Water Walk brought rain to our village”, said one of the WRO personnel as it started drizzling. The meeting concluded with this positive statement.

Water Walk Methodology

1. Preparations	Need to visit village prior to water walk in order to contact Village Panchayat President, SHGs, Fan clubs and brief them about the programme.
2. Participation of all from the village	<p>Elders : To share their past experience Active farmers, SHGs : to analyse the present situation.</p> <p>Youth : To be aware of the crisis and plan for future.</p> <p>Other water users: Pot makers, Dhobi etc.,</p> <p>School children and teachers: Teachers should be persuaded to consider “Community Water Walk” as part of curriculum for school children and take part in “Community Water Walk”.</p>
3. Meeting place	Common place which is acceptable to all sections in the village. It can be SHG hall, Panchayat community hall, under a tree.....
4. How to sustain the interest of Villages from the beginning till the end of water walk.	The line department officials and field functionaries to catch hold of village community in groups and discuss on different aspects of the village. This is the strategy to be adopted by facilitators mainly to sustain the interest of the community to take active part in the water walk till the end of it.
5. Water context analysis	Past, Present and forecast the future..
6. Water Walk : Sequence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefing meeting 2. Facts about Water 3. Water as livelihood source 4. Village water context 5. Visiting Water resource spots in the village (Ponds, tank, canals, marshy lands etc,) 6. Visiting agriculture fields 7. Coming back to starting point (meeting place) 8. Consolidation of issues 9. Presentation of responses by line departments under IAMWARM Project.
7. Participation of Press, Media	Publicity media may also be involved at appropriate stages of Water Walk so that wider coverage of stakeholders will be easier at later stages.