
State Level Consultation on Water Quality Issues in Uttar Pradesh

Venue: WaterAid Office, Lucknow

Date: 7th August 2015

Objective

To initiate a collaboration of the diverse knowledge and action nodes within UP on water quality issues, a state level consultation meeting was organized in Lucknow on 7th August, 2015. This meeting was to discuss what would be the starting points and how collaborations can take shape between individuals and institutions working on water quality issues in UP and also to understand what is required, needs of the region and essential step necessary for sustainable and effective mitigation.

Proceedings of the Meeting

Mr. Puneet Srivastava welcomed participants on behalf of WaterAid India and shared the agenda for the meeting giving a background to participants for this meeting.

The meeting began with a round of introductions of the participants and their areas of work. There is increasing water quality issues that we are being faced with in India and Uttar Pradesh specifically. For starting sharing of knowledge and taking action on water quality issues in Uttar Pradesh, the group came together in Lucknow to work on starting steps towards understanding what is required, needs of the region and essential step necessary for sustainable and effective mitigation.

The discussion within the group was also on how to bring together people and institution together for a state level workshop on water quality, the concept note and power point presentation for which has been shared by WSSO and WaterAid (as attached) . A part of the mandate of the discussion was to consult on the direction to take within the state level workshop being planned in September this year for bringing awareness and prioritization of the water quality issues in UP .

A presentation was made by Vikas Ratanjee regarding water quality issues (Presentation attached) , the purpose of the workshop and also about the activities that the Arsenic Knowledge and Action network and Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network are carrying out within different states of India.

Following that there was open discussion. Some questions that were raised by the groups were:

With regard to water quality what are the issues we want to work on?

Within the scope of drinking water where do we want to keep our focus?

Do we need to bring to front the big issues and what needs to be done on it?

And how do we bring these issues to the people? Is the challenge bringing people to join on these issues?

Such discussions have happened at the National level, however in the efforts to bring it to the level of people we need to create district level nodes for networks for knowledge exchange and action. State level engagements would bring to the front several partners. We also need to think about

district level workshops and which are the regions in UP that needs more work and consultations on water quality issues.

Form the discussion it came up that UP had an arsenic Task force- The Principal Secretary was the head of this group however, it became inactive for some reason or the other. There also had been efforts towards awareness in six districts by WSSO in recent past. What we need to focus on is also to understand what is happening on the field. Is the reporting of status and data creating panic?

For example district Balia, where there is highest arsenic concentration. Within such regions health impact is also dependent on long exposure however, not everyone is impacted in the same way. After training of doctors on this issue and conducting health camps it was seen that only one person was clinically impacted. Ten blocks in this region are arsenic contaminated and when the symptoms will be visible we don't know. Permissible limit and acceptable limit are changing and within this scheme tolerance of people to these levels also needs to be understood. All said and done the, intervention should not be based on the whether there has been present health impact or not.

We need to also look at the issue from a systematic and scientific way. People who lack economic resource are the most vulnerable to this issue. Water is a basic right and regardless of the situation, quality should not be neglected.

Group exercise to understand priorities

An exercise was carried out by Mr. Puneet Srivastava with flash cards to understand what are considered priorities. To understand the direction of what we consider important issues in UP and what do we do? On flash cards we wrote down three most important parameters of concern in UP and three priority districts to focus on Water Quality in UP.

The parameters of concern and districts of concern expressed by members are listed in attached power point presentation.

This exercise brought out that even within this small group there is much diversity in understanding water quality priorities, and affected districts. This underlines the need for knowledge and action sharing on this issue within the state of UP and to build the consensus among the governments, research institutions, and Civil Society Organizations on key parameters of concern and key districts of concern within state of UP. One direction for this group would be to jointly agree on which the priorities area and aspects that we will focus on immediately are.

Recommendations

Following were the recommendations that came forward during the discussion:

1. Create a report from this meeting on status of water quality issues in UP which would include the needs and experience and issues of UP on Water Quality and Water Security and State of sector on what is happening on water quality
2. We need to bring to the front issues pertaining to water quality in UP, need to also look at the immediate needs of the region
3. We need to start working on instant removal of vulnerability of the affected populations, devise solutions and provide safe water and enough water to the affected communities

4. There is a need to consolidate the present information. This consolidated information will benefit us in understanding water quality issues in UP in its totality
5. We need to decide on our priorities and work towards making policy recommendation
6. There is an ardent need to develop communication strategy for communities
8. Explore the benefits of surface water and rain water harvesting
9. Conduct periodical meetings in the form of 'Jal Choupal' in different places in UP to share knowledge and work towards addressing the issue of water quality

List of Participants and Institutions

Name	Institution
Dr. S P Pathak	Water Quality Expert, WSSO,UP
Mr. N.K. Choudhary	Senior Hydrogeologist, WSSO,UP
Dr. Prashant Rai	Central Ground Water Board, Lucknow
Mr. Rakesh Jaiswal	Head, Eco Friend, Kanpur
Dr. A.C.Shukla	Eco Friends, Kanpur
Dr. Abhas Singh	IIT Kanpur
Dr Amritanshu	Post Doctoral Fellow, IIT Kanpur
Ms. Safa Fanian	Arsenic Knowledge and Action Network, Hyderabad
Mr. Vikas Ratanjee,	Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network, Anand
Mr. Puneet Srivastava	Manager Policy , WaterAid
Mr. Saurabh Kushwaha	Consultant, WaterAid North office