

Government of India  
Ministry of Jal Shakti  
Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation  
(National Water Mission)

**Proceedings of the Eleventh Water Talk**

- National Water Mission (NWM) initiated a seminar series-‘Water Talk’ -to promote dialogue and information sharing among participants on variety of water related topics. The ‘Water Talk’ is intended to create awareness, build capacities of stakeholders and to encourage people to become active participants in conservation and saving of water. NWM had organized ten ‘Water-Talks’ on the range of topics dominating the sector concerns. The list of speakers and topics they deliberated upon are annexed.
- Eleventh Water Talk in this series was held on 17th January 2020 and was delivered by Shri Balbir Singh Seechewal. Shri U.P. Singh, Secretary (D/o WR, RD & GR) M/o JS, Shri G. Asok Kumar, MD, NWM and other officers from CWC, CGWB, NMCG, CSMRS, NWDA and D/o WR, RD & GR attended the programme.
- Shri **G. Asok Kumar**, Addl. Secy. & MD, NWM, New Delhi, welcomed the speaker, Shri Balbir Singh Seechewal and the participants. He made a special reference towards the collective efforts and cooperation of societies in achieving shared goals. He draws the example of Kali Bein River - which traverses Daoba region of Punjab - where Shri Seechewal tapped the potential of River to organize a public-led movement for its rejuvenation. Shri Asok Kumar hailed it as an glaring example of public participation where the rejuvenated surplus is now being used to sustain the economic, social and cultural needs of the villages sharing the River.
- He continued how this model of participatory source sustainability and augmentation ensured the delivery of water-related service imperatives through the collective efforts of people. He maintained that the villages have seen complete coverage of functional household taps and grey water management which can be depicted as a model case for inspiring similar actions across the country. He expressed concerns to mainstream water conservation and preservation efforts at the lowest possible unit of management. He requested the audience to imbibe key learnings from the experience of Shri Seechewal in water conservation and related service management.
- Shri **U.P. Singh**, Secretary, D/o WR, RD & GR, M/o JS enunciated key pillars of sustainability that defined Shri Seechewal’s river rejuvenation mission, stressing upon the significant role of sustained public engagement. He lauded Shri Seechewal’s vision to source the collective spirit of people for moving forward the agenda of water management in a sustainable manner. While defining public’s participation as one of the key enabling factors, he cited other factors which complemented Mr. Seechewal’s efforts in deriving the desired results which includes, user pay

principle, river's flow regime management and accounting for tributaries in the River rejuvenation programme.

- He concluded with the importance of learning from the field experiences and how it would further abet the Water Talk Series in expanding its scope from theoretical concerns to practical considerations. He urged the audience to draw inspiration from Shri Seechewal's life-story and particularly, his zeal to mobilize the power of people for delivering shared benefits.
- Shri **Seechewal**, guest speaker, thanked NWM and the Ministry for recognizing his efforts and appreciating the need for up-scaling this model of public participation. He pointed out how sustainable management of water resources in India cannot be introduced sans public participation. He introduced some key challenges facing the management and restoration of rivers in India, and made particular reference to the Kali Bein River. He asserted that the number of basins across India are simultaneously facing floods and drought like situations. He further stressed upon the need for rationalizing water management in India. He mentioned that water problems cannot be defined solely by identifying the nature of this resource in terms of its distribution and availability over time and space, rather, the real challenge is rooted in the way we manage and govern this key resource.
- He labelled public participation as one of the key intervention in completing our fragmented approach. He navigated the audience through the imperatives of his River rejuvenation efforts in Punjab and some of the key challenges and solutions that defined his case.
- He added that the Seechewal model focused on the three key dimensions of river conservation. Firstly, waste water from the nearby habitations were treated using aerobic and eco-friendly methods and the treated water was reused via underground pipelines for irrigation purposes. Secondly, to arrest the rapid drawdown of ground water in the region, thick layers of silt and sediments were removed in order to promote water table recharge. This yielded multipronged benefits, including, the increased conveyance/inflow capacity of the river, speedy draining of excess water to prevent water logging and curbing desertification through increased seepage of river water under the subsoil. A third key element of his model, as he explained, entailed plantation on the banks of the rivers for their beautification. This, not only enhanced the recreational value of water for the people living nearby but also enhanced the ecological health of river owing to increased biological activities along these planted shores/corridors.
- He highlighted that problems during the course of implementation of Seechewal Model, which can be found across the country, must be addressed holistically to ensure outcomes are sustainable over the period of time.
- He concluded by drawing inspiration from the vision of ancestors who had built water harvesting and conservation structures in bygone times and requested the audience to

continue heeding their ancestors' teachings while taking informed steps for sustainable and efficient management of water resources in India. He recollected how he and other *Kar Sewak*, experienced a state of blessedness while cleaning the river, as they had adopted Guru Nanak Dev Ji's philosophy of 'harmony with nature' as their manifesto. He enunciated that only when the human efforts are liberated from the narrow self-interestedness, the work becomes a celebration and a holy worship.

- His talk was followed by a session of questions and answers wherein members from the audience were invited to discuss their queries with the speaker. The nature of questions revolved around the challenges faced by grassroots organizations in sustaining public's participation, financial sustainability of locally adopted solutions, exceeding focus on engineering and beautification measures rather than considering the ecological needs of river restoration, &c.
- The Talk ended with Shri G. Asok Kumar presenting a memento to the guest speaker, and thanking the audience for their active and enriching participation.

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**List of Past Water Talk Speakers and Respective Thematic Focus**

<b>Water Talks</b>	<b>Name of the Speaker</b>	<b>Theme of the Talk</b>	<b>Date</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> Water Talk	Shri U.P. Singh  Co Speaker:  Shri Pushpendra Singh,  Shri Alok Sikka,  Shri Manu Bhatnagar,  Shri Sachin Oza	‘Outlining the concept of <b>Water-Talk</b> ’  ‘Water conservation in Bundelkhand - Aapna Talaab Abhiyan’  ‘Agricultural water management’  ‘Urban water supply and management’  ‘Ground water management and integrated water resource management in the command area of irrigation systems of northern water stressed areas of Gujarat’	22.03.2019
2 <sup>nd</sup> Water Talk	Shri Shashi Shekhar	“Ground Water Governance-prospective, challenges and suggested interventions”	1.05.2019
3 <sup>rd</sup> Water Talk	Dr. Nayan Sharma  Shri Pradeep Gandhi  Shri S.C Bardhan	‘Upgrading Technology in Irrigation, Hydro Power, Navigation and Flood Control for Optimal Water Conservation’  ‘Water Conservation at Ground Level’  ‘Water Conservation and Management’	24.05.2019
4 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Dr. Anil Joshi	‘Ecology Inclusive Economy’	21.06.2019
5 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Dr. Tushaar Shah	‘Governing India’s Energy-Groundwater Nexus: Old Constraints and New Opportunities’	19.07.2019
6 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Shri Popatrao Pawar  Shri Umakant Umrao	‘Hiware Bazar – A Water Budgeting model’  The Dewas Initiative: An economically viable & environmentally sustainable Water Conservation Model ‘Beyond Rivers’	23.08.2019
7 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Shri Sonam Wangchuck	Water Conservation and construction of artificial Glacier known as Ice-Stupa in Leh-Laddakh Region.	20.09.2019
8 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Shri Heera Lal	‘Water Conservation in Banda District, UP’	18.10.2019
9 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Dr. Himanshu Kulkarni	‘Groundwater Management and Governance in India’	15.11.2019
10 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Dr. Mihir Shah	‘A New Water Strategy for India’	20.12.2019
11 <sup>th</sup> Water Talk	Shri Balbir Singh Seechewal	“Seechewal’s Participatory Model of Water Rejuvenation”	17.01.2020