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"Safe Water for All and Always"

Science - Policy - Markets

The Context

Access to water is a basic human right. Water is indispensable to sustain decent life and health. The millennium development goals target at reducing the number of people without access to safe drinking water. Access to water has direct links to the health and economy of individuals, households and communities.

Across the globe, 780 million people lack access to an improved water source; that is approximately one in nine of the world population (WHO/UNICEF, 2012)¹. Zooming into the South Asia, only 24 per cent of the population has access to piped water supply as compared to a world figure of 55per cent. The South Asian region is water stressed and the situation will aggravate in the future as it strives to cater domestic, agriculture and industrial needs of 1.4 billion people that is half of the world's poor population.

Other than availability of water which is central to growth of economy, quality of the water available is also crucial. Consumption of contaminated water is the major cause of diarrheal diseases across the globe. 1.6 million people die every year from diarrheal diseases caused due to lack of access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and 90 per cent of these are children under the age of 5. Africa and South Asia are home to more than 80 per cent of child deaths due to diarrhea.

The Challenges

Presently the bottom of pyramid (BoP) population residing in South Asia is facing the brunt of consuming contaminated water. One of the largest barriers is the lack of awareness about the need for safe water. End users look for instant gratification. Water is a sector where providing instant gratification is often tough since health benefits are seen over long terms. Where there is awareness, there is a lack of affordable and appropriate technology options to deal with the contamination. While there is a lot of funding support available for technology research, very little of it translates into products that can be used especially by the BoP populations. Much of the research remains as papers and publications and does not reach the people who could benefit from it. There is a need for translational research to create an ecosystem of both supply and demand; encompassing technology supply systems, delivery models and enabling policy environment to bridge this gap.

For the few technologies that have reached the market, a lack of appropriate delivery channels prevents their mainstreaming. Logistics of supply are a challenge due to the lack of adequate civic infrastructure. Water purification products can be classified as push-products that require intense efforts to promote and scale demand. The delivery models used in pushing these products are very important especially since the target market is socio-economically and culturally diverse and complex. The lack of the ability and / or the willingness to pay for these products and services further retards access. Markets need to develop a better understanding of the target audience to be able to service them.

Policy in the water sector by respective South Asian Governments focuses on water availability, with limited emphasis on the quality of water supplied. There is no regulation on water purification solutions available in the market or on new technologies being introduced. Currently there are no norms on disclosure of information for this sector. Often it is seen that information on shelf life, service life, precautions, safety issues, replacement of filters, end of

¹ Estimated with data from WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation. (2012). Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water, 2012 Update.



life indication, disposal etc. is not explicitly mentioned. Quality, safety, health and environment concerns of new technologies need to be scrutinized far more closely.

It is oft said that the next wars will be on water not oil. Thus there is an urgent need to address these issues of Science, Markets and Policy for ensuring access to safe drinking water to all and always.

TARAGram Yatra²

To fulfill our mission to secure the future of our children and life on planet earth we need to cut to the heart of contemporary dialogue and advocate examples of proven practice in sustainable development. This must then lead to policies that respond urgently to the current social and environmental crises.

The theme for **TARAGram Yatra 2013** is “Access to Safe Water for All and Always: Science-Policy-Markets”. This year, TARAGram Yatra 2013, scheduled from 22nd to 24th October 2013 will focus on designing strategies for enabling access of safe drinking water to all. The Yatra will provide a forum for stimulating debate, exchanging ideas, experiences and learning of professionals working in this sector. The technical sessions at the Yatra, will initiate discussions on technical research and processes for taking technologies from laboratories to people, ingredients for successfully marketing the technologies on ground and the policy regulations for scaling these up.

The launch event for this programme is scheduled at Development Alternatives World Headquarters in New Delhi on the 22nd October 2013. The second and third day of the event will be in TARAGram Orchha, Madhya Pradesh. The three day event will include technical sessions, sustainability experiences and a *Developmental Mela* built around the theme. Discussions will focus on new and emerging technologies and barriers faced by research institutes while bringing products from lab to the ground. Successful service delivery models will be shared by professionals and organizations working in this area, to help identify triggers for scale. Dialogues focusing on behavior change interventions will bring out tools and models for awareness generation and demand creation. Yatris will experience firsthand sustainable water management solutions which can help in solving the current water crisis.

The deliberations over three days will lead to the design of a roadmap on interventions needed to scale up technology access for safe water to communities through markets. It will orient policy makers and practitioners with emerging concepts and models for sustainable development emphasizing on access to water in South Asia.

TARAGram Yatra is an annual event in India led by the Development Alternatives Group in partnership with international thinking – learning organizations, designed to deliberate on germane issues of development with the mission of inspiring sustainability in policy and practice. It brings together practitioners and policy makers from India and other parts of the World to share current thinking on and define direction of action to alleviate poverty, regenerate the environment and tackle social deprivation especially in the developing world. With a mix of dialogue and field visits, the Yatra provides a platform for exchanging cutting edge ideas on how to realize a sustainable future. The event provides leads for follow-up on policies and action at the global, national and local levels. In the past two years, the TARAGram Yatra has contributed to form opinions around the concept of ‘Green Economy’ debated intensely at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro and helped build ideas for action for the Asia Pacific region presented to the International Poverty and Environment program.

² Yātrā (Sanskrit, 'journey', 'procession') generally means pilgrimage to holy places One who goes on a Yatra is known as a yatri