

Workshop on Water Sector Policy Reforms

Khandawa: 5 August 2012

Water sector reforms have been ongoing in Madhya Pradesh. Under Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT), funds have been sanctioned in 50 cities across the state. In Khandwa and Shivpuri water supply and distribution projects have been handed over to Vishwa Infrastructure and Services Private Ltd. and Doshion Pvt. Ltd, respectively for 25 years on Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. In Khandwa local groups including, District Bar Association, Pensioner's Association, Traders Association, people's representatives, Media and others have raised their voices against water privatisation in the town.

On 5th August 2012, a workshop on water sector policy reforms was organised by '**Manthan Adhyayan Kendra**' and '**Narmada Jal Sangharsh Samiti**', committee formed by the people of Khandwa to campaign against water privatisation. Experts working on water sector in various parts of the country were invited for the talks. People from several communities across the town participated in the workshop, including the members of Narmada Jal Sangharsh Samiti. The main idea behind the workshop was to create broader understanding among the local people regarding privatisation in water sector so as to help them in developing a larger campaign against such measures.

Shri Jai Nagada, a journalist, presented about the existing water resources of Khandwa using the slide show, and emphasised that there is actually no need to bring water from far off sources and neither privatisation. He raised concerns over the monopoly of water in Khandwa by a private company. He further stated that this would be an irreparable loss for the coming generations. Mentioning the clause of 'No Parallel Competing Facility' in the concession agreement, he stated that private company cannot decide from where we take our water.

Shri Sunil Bhai, national secretary of '**Samajwadi Jan Parishad**', stated that government in the name of privatisation is corporatising natural resources. He stated that water business is a very profitable business. Adding, water freely available to private companies is sold in bottles, increasing GDP of the country. Government is knowingly degrading the public utilities, to support privatisation. It is necessary to understand the process of privatisation in its global context and to make strategies accordingly.

Shri Sitaram Shelar, associated with '**Mumbai Pani**' and '**YUVA**', said that for better management water services were being privatised in a ward in Mumbai. To control wastage and increasing efficiency, removing public stand posts and metering was recommended. Effectively ensuring no water for the poor. People's right to water was undermined and 'Mumbai Pani' protested against this proposal. The World Bank had proposed a Rs 3 crore loan to Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), which has Rs 10,000 crores of capital reserves for privatisation.

Shri Joe Athialy of '**Bank Information Centre**', New Delhi, stated that the World Bank not only provides loans but also claims to be a knowledge producer. The objectives of knowledge production are to privatise all public services including water. The World Bank is captured and influenced by USA, Japan and the European countries. Since, India is a borrower of the World Bank money the adverse affects of its policies are clearly visible in the country.

Dr. Philippe Cullet of '**Environmental Law Research Society**', New Delhi, explained the legal aspects of privatisation and clarified that under international treaties water is a basic human right but there is not enough clarity on privatisation but Supreme Court has considered water as

fundamental right. In Indian context he stated that laws can not be changed easily but policies can be. Government is free to choose its policies and much cannot be expected the judiciary. On Delhi Jal Board's privatisation, courts have not been of help. **Shri Sujith Koonan**, talked about water privatisation in Delhi, added that government is using privatisation to make the residents customers of private companies. **Shri Rajendra Hardenia**, Piparia (Hoshangabad) gave a detailed critique of National Water Policy 2012 and stated that this policy will deny people their right to water.

Shri Pranjal Dixit, Prayas, Pune shared his experiences of UIDSSMT in Maharashtra. He shared that in Chandrapur, Nagpur, Sangali, Kolhapur, Latur, Bhiwandi, Navi Mumbai, Aurangabad privatisation is ongoing and more than 70 cities are preparing for this. Implementation of pilot privatisation project in Dharampeth zone of Nagpur has shown no improvements in water services in poor colonies, however, this project is now being implemented in whole city. In Latur, privatisation failed miserably, in just three years of operation. Government continues to push local bodies to privatise water services.

Shri Rehmat, Manthan Adhyayan Kendra shared that privatisation agreements show that private consultants and officers have a major role in pushing such policies. Improper criteria and standards have been used extensively showing increased requirements of water. Khandwa experience makes it clear that claims of private company and expensive private consultant to be competent is false. They didn't even know that they signed on the incorrect copy of the agreement. Private company has not been able to complete the construction work of the project in more than 3 years, even though the time frame was of 2 years.

Shri Yogesh Diwan, Jan Pehal stressed of a need to strengthen campaign against water privatisation in the state. He said that water privatisation in Khandwa can be canceled by a strong campaign. Privatisation is failing at every level and privatisation myth needs to be broken. Many water supply schemes are coming up based on Narmada river water, an assessment is required if there is enough water in Narmada to quench everybody's thirst. **Shri Manoj Singh Bhadoriya** (Shivpuri), **Syed Mobin** (Hoshangabad), and **Gopal Rathi** (Piparia) also shared their experiences.

In strategy session it was decided that people from various cities under UIDSSMT would take initiatives to strengthen campaign against water privatisation. They would form a joint delegation to meet the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh appealing him to stop water privatization according to his statement – no water privatisation in Madhya Pradesh. It was also proposed to hold a state level activity in December 2012 in Bhopal. Intensifying the campaign against water privatisation in Khandwa was also discussed.

Shri Vikas Jain, Narmad Jal Sangarsh Samiti reported about ongoing campaign against water privatisation in Khandwa. **Shri Gaurav Dwivedi, Manthan Adhyayan Kendra** talked about the necessity of the workshop and role of Manthan Adhyayan Kendra in the campaign against water privatisation. The opening talk was by **Shri Prakash Chand Baheti**, former president of **Khandawa Chamber of Commerce** and vote of thanks was given by **Shri Devendrasingh Yadav**. **Shri Sanjav Tiwari** anchored the workshop.