

Collaboration between Future Vision and Habitat Ecological Trust

Tonia Langkam the founder of Future Vision is the main inspirational force behind the extensive work done by the organisation in the North Eastern State of Arunachal Pradesh. Having a deep knowledge of the people and the issues they face, his experience made him realise the importance of the environment, ecology in the life support systems of the people residing there. While searching the net, he came across the presentation of HABITAT's founder Dr Leena Gupta on Understanding Himalaya Trans Boundary issues and Ecological Democracy among other articles and presentations by the same author.

<http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Understanding-Himalaya-Trans-boundary-Issues-and-Ecological-Democracy.pdf>

Some of the main features of the presentation are as follows

- a. Himalayas are the third largest ice cap in the world after the North and South Pole.
- b. During the last 70 years this ice cap has shrunk to 40% The significance of this cannot be undermined because apart from its impact on the Global Climatic conditions, it is the source of water to major world Rivers flowing to the South and North. The issues are not so simple to resolve as there are thirteen countries around the Himalayas which is some way or the other have to evolve the solutions needed.
- c. Given the climatic conditions and variations, pastoralism historically has been the major livelihood support system in this region for centuries. Ignoring this relationship with the land use, first sedenterisation policies have been imposed promoting agriculture ignoring the fragile nature of the Himalayan mountains and later, massive Hydro-electric projects which have submerged the forests and undermined the traditional local life support systems. While all of these developments cannot be considered negatively, earlier the processes of transformation were slow and organic, however massive financial infusion with adequate safeguards related to Social and Environment Impact assessments brings in its wake massive ecological, sociological and political issues which need proper resolution. In the Indian context, border issues with neighbouring countries make this a very challenging task.
- d. Himalayas are also the home to a vast store of medicinal, rare and endemic plants. Issues related to Bio-piracy and narcotic are major sources of concern. In an every expanding Global economy where the North East is set for a new Global push Eastwards, proper consideration and resolution of issues is of importance. As a result of the availability of a vast variety of biodiversity and in particular medicinal plants in the region, the animal husbandry in the region also have many aspects which have been ignored by the narrow focus to promotion given by the current commodity/market approach to production. These regions were also known for health resorts, recuperation and as a place to rest and relax. In absence of a balance all-round approach, promotion of Tourism and Health industry ignores the 'soft approach' needed with the local communities for ecologically sustainable balanced all round development and local livelihood promotion.

Considering the issues in Arunachal Pradesh Tonia Langkam the founder of Future Vision felt the need to incorporate these larger issues into the work of the organisation so as to organically link up the multifaceted work done in the field of Livelihoods, Human Rights, Women and Child Care and Organic farming. Accordingly representatives of Future Vision got in touch with Dr Leena Gupta during one of her visits to Uttarakhand to understand how her work was applicable to the Himalayan regions and invited her over to Arunachal Pradesh as well.

In the course of the discussions it became clear that the work done in Chhota Udepur with Adivasi Jan Utthan Trust, Bhekadiya provided the ideal model for working in the tribal region of Arunachal Pradesh as well. For HABITAT this provided the opportunity to test out the methodology of Eco-system restoration in two diverse ecosystems of the country.

Accordingly it was agreed that a participatory Action Research Programme in the two regions would help draw on synergies and sharpen the approach of both the organisations. Since the work in Arunachal would be relatively new, it was decided to focus more there in the initial stages while incorporating critical aspects to the work in Chhota Udepur where a plan for development of a tribal university is underway.

The plan includes the following

- a. Taking up pilot activities in one District each of the two States namely Lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh and Chhota Udepur in Gujarat.
- b. Working with women, children and youth groups in 17 villages of Dibang valley and 3 villages of Chhota Udepur.
- c. In the case of women issues related to the relevance of the local species in relation to health, nutrition and livelihood for overall well being will be taken up. While in the case of children, children from Standard 5 to 9 will be engaged in a process of development of Children's parliaments around the 17 SDGs. A start has been made in Chhota Udepur and a report of the same has been submitted to the UN in relation to COP 27, The Climate Change Summit which took place in Egypt. <http://ielaind.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Report-of-UPR-pocess-in-Chhota-Udepur-for-COP-27-in-Egypt.pdf> . The involvement of youth will be with the idea of bringing this ecological perspective on livelihoods into the main discourse with the help of awareness on the relevance of organic and natural farming (which is mostly by default at present) and expanding the scope of the current work done by both Future Vision in Arunachal Pradesh and Adivasi Jan Utthan Trust in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- d. Given the expertise and wide experience of Habitat Ecological Trust across the country, the above should help develop the location specific eco-system modules necessary for decentralised governance and sustainable livelihoods which will be the basis to prepare reports, documents, research papers, hold workshops, conference policy advocacy and networking.