

National People's Water Forum Declaration

JAL SWARAJ ABHIYAN

RASHTRIYA JAL BIRADARI

JAL SURAKSHA, ADHIKAR, MUKTI DECLARATION

15-16th March 2003

Water is nature's gift. The right to water is a natural basic right of all living beings, and a human and fundamental right for human beings.

Communities are the custodians of water resources and the highest rights for conservation, management, sustainable utilisation and equitable distribution should be with the community.

Water cannot be commodified and privatised.

Rivers are natural living systems, which are the lifelines of ecosystems, biodiversity and human settlements.

Water conservation and rejuvenation, and river rejuvenation need afforestation of catchments and decentralised water harvesting and management throughout the basin.

Increasing water availability requires reduction in water wastage in agriculture, mining, industry and urban domestic utilisation. Excessive water demands for wasteful activities is the main driving force for long-distance transfer and over-exploitation. Recycling, pollution prevention and improving water use efficiency are necessary. In the urban context, water supply for potable and non-potable use should be separated.

Sustainable traditional water systems in rural and urban areas should be rejuvenated and resources for their maintenance and repair should be ensured to all local authorities to keep water as a common natural resource.

We reject the water privatisation in the New Water Policy and demand that the Community Rights be the foundation of the New Water Policy.

Water cannot be treated as private property or an asset to be bought and sold, but as a natural common resource.

We condemn the backdoor privatisation through schemes like the Pani Panchayat in Orissa and Water Users' Associations across the country, Swajal in Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh and Swajal Dhara. Using Panchayats and NGOs to dismantle public systems and universal entitlement is the first step towards privatisation.

Across the country communities have created sustainable alternatives that conserve water through reforestation and water harvesting, and improved efficiency through water

prudent agriculture such as organic farming. Rivers have come alive as in Alwar, Rajasthan, and ground water levels have risen as result of people's community efforts.

In spite of the proven experience of improving water availability and quality through conservation, reduction of waste, prevention of pollution, the government is rushing through the River Linking Project which will be socially and ecologically destructive, killing our rivers and creating new sources of endless conflict.

Water is a state subject. The River Linking Project amounts to a subversion of the federal structure of the Constitution and the balance of rights between state and centre.

The Project is being rushed through without assessment, proper planning or transparency, or any attempt to secure a people's mandate. We condemn this fait accompli and its use for narrow political agendas.

We demand that all project documents related to River Linking Project be put in the public domain and that the entire planning exercise be subjected to the Right to Information.

No implementation of this Project should begin without democratic clearance through a people's mandate and scientific clearance through independent evaluation. The JAL SWARAJ ABHIYAN and the RASHTRIYA JAL BIRADARI will be doing such evaluation through the JAL YATRAS that are being undertaken across the country.

If all of the above conditions are not met, the JAL SWARAJ ABHIYAN and the RASHTRIYA JAL BIRADARI will be compelled to launch JAL SATYAGRAHAS.

Signatories:

Dr. Vandana Shiva, Founder, RFSTE, N. Delhi
Raghunath Prehan, Orissa Left Irrigation Emp. Federation, Bhubaneswar.
Rama Chandra Panda, Orissa Left Irrigation Emp. Federation, Bhubaneswar.
Janakiram Panda, Manav Adhikar Seva Samiti
Arjun Kumar, Rastriya Jal Biradiri
Prof. K.R. Choudhary, Centre for Action Research & Development
Dr. A.K. Panigrahy, PPBSA, Balasore
Mrs. Kusum Mishra, PPBSA, Balasore
Mr. A.M. Gokhale – Secretary, GOI, Chairman FCI
Mrs Savita Gokhale, Earth Care Foundation
Ambuj Kishore, Rashtriya Jal Biradari
A.C. Hemalatha, University of Agricultural Science
K. Shankar, University of Agricultural Science
Shalet K. Varghese, U.A.S., Dept. Of Economics, Bangalore.
Shailendra Badlao Foundation
Lal Shankar Pragi, Manav Sewa Rashtriya Ekta Jal Jagrithi
Narendra Singh Rawat, Karuna Social Service Society

Prafulla Samantra, Lok Skakti Abhiyan
Alex Ekka, Indian Social Institute
Rajani Mani, Elephant Corridor Films
Prof. V. Ranganathan, I.I.M., Bangalore – 560 076.
E.M. Koshy, A.O.F.G.
Uma Shankari, Neeti Samekhya
Ramaswamy R Iyer,
Dr. Anuradha, R.C.D.C., Bhubaneswar.
B.K. Jaggi, B.M.S.
S.A. Naqui
C. Srinivasan, Pasvmai Thayagam, Chennai
Urvashi Prasad, Centre for Environment Education
Aditya Patnaik
Jasbir Kaur, AIPWA
Lalita Sehgal, Gargi College
Pradeep Hooda, Habitat Centre, Panipat.
Dr. Parivesh Mishra, Chhattisgarh Jal Biradhiri
Aniket Alam, The HINDU
K.L. Pathelaa, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh
Dr. Binayak Sen, Rupantar
Akhay N Jha, SEEDS
Rajan Pandhara, Adivasi Ekta Parishad
Suresh Nautiyal, Vasudhaiva Kutuimbakam
Dr. M.A. Haque, Ministry of Environment & Forest
Janakiram Panda, Mass
Raghav Nawsalay, Focus on the Global South
Benny Kuruvilla, Equvatopms, Bangalore
Shalender Singh
Indira Chakravarty, All India Inst. Of Hygiene & P.H.
G.C. Mohapatrh
Smitu Kothari, Lokayan
Dr. Mira Shiva, AIDAN
Dr. A.K. Arun, Azadi Bachoo Andolan
Hari Dang, The Technology Mission
H. Shivaram, K.R.R.S.,
Prof. K.C. Basavaraju, KRRS
Sunanda Jayaram, KRRS
Abhoy Singh, JEEVAN
Damodar Jena, Institute of Socio Economic Development
S.A. Maqvi, Group of thout
Gopal Krishna, Toxics Link
A. Amalng, Indian Social Institute
Dr. Santosh Satya, R D A I
Lalita Balakrishnan, AIWC
Bipin Chandra, SANDRP
S.K. Sharma, People First

Gaurav Joshi, CECODECON, Jaipur.
Ashish Purohit, PAJRVI
Surechwav D Sinha, Paan Morcha
Aneel Hegde, HMKP & Samajwadi Andolan