

Event Report

Partners' Meet
Green Action Week (India) 2020



December 22, 2020, Jaipur, India

Background

The Green Action Week (GAW) Fund-India is a joint partnership established between the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) and CUTS International in 2020. The purpose of the grant is to fund short-term campaigning activities to raise consumer awareness on environmental issues. For over 20 years, SSNC has conducted an annual ‘Shop and Act Green’ campaign in Sweden, of which the focal point Green Action Week has led to very good results. The campaign always takes place during the first week of October. It always promotes the consumer has an alternative choice, different ways of consuming and acting and where it is possible for the consumer to make a difference. GAW is a global campaign to promote sustainable consumption. In 2020, 52 civil society organizations (CSO’s) from 30 countries participated globally.

Under the GAW 2020 campaign, ‘Sharing Community’ was the theme to promote sustainable consumption. Access to goods and services are unequal and planetary boundaries are being beached. Campaign wants to ignite cultures of sharing and collaboration, as a way to create sustainable access for more people and, at the same time, reduce stress on the planet. It would be an attempt to challenge the norm of private ownership and consumerism through creation of strong, collaborating communities.

Eleven partner organisations from 10 states of India were selected by CUTS for implementing the campaign in their respective areas. Partners conducted various activities in October 2020 focusing on the theme. To evaluate activities conducted by partner organisations of GAW India, a meeting was held at Jaipur on December 22, 2020. Out of 11 partners, 10 participated in the meeting.

Proceedings

Amar Deep Singh, Senior Programme Officer, CUTS, welcomed the partners of GAW India 2020. All partners briefed about their organisations. He briefed about campaign and highlighted the importance of the partner meet. This meet will give us nationwide perspective due to its outreach. This was a meeting on circular economy and sustainable consumption. He also briefed about past years’ experience and activities under Green Action Week (GAW). This year, the theme for GAW 2020 is sharing community.

The specific objective of the campaign is to strengthen the role that consumer and environmental organisations play in raising awareness on environmental and other impacts of consumption and promote sustainable consumption amongst consumers, policymakers and other key stakeholders. He mentioned the highlights of the GAW and activities conducted in 10 states of India. He further stated that the theme of the campaign is very relevant in the Indian context and many NGOs participated in the campaign, though only 11 were selected.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, welcomed all the participants and said that COVID-19 has thrown travel plans around the globe into disarray. He appreciated the courage that the participants have shown. He also thanked CUTS Team for organising the meet. He explained about Green Action Week. Green Action Week is a global campaign to promote sustainable consumption. Green Action Week is an initiative by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), starting in Sweden in 1990 and growing to become an international partnership from 2010 – and it is carried out in coordination with Consumers International (CI).

This year, 50 civil society organisations in 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the Americas will participate in the campaign. The theme since 2018 has been ‘Sharing Community’. “We want to ignite cultures of sharing and collaboration to make sure everyone has sustainable access to goods and services”. He stressed upon few challenges while observing the GAW 2020 in India. These challenges are the unprecedented pandemic and the recently amended Foreign Currency Regulation Act (FCRA). Due, this amendment, CUTS could not transfer the remaining amount and has shortlisted 11 organisations instead of 12.

Mr. Cheraian also stressed that, due to COVID 19, the Asia Pacific region is failing to meet targets for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 (Sustainable consumption and production). Asia Pacific region must speed up action on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and arrest the trend of depletion of its natural resources. SDG12 is an orphan in India. There is no dedicated department for this goal, unlike other Goals.

The novel coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-9) will have severe negative impacts on most of the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The pandemic impacts are visible. There is pressure to loosen up regulations on circular economy and postpone the adoption of new measures and increased plastic pollution (e.g., used to produce personal protective equipment). The concept of sharing community and caring for others is the need of the hour to deal with COVID pandemic.

Sanjay Sharma, Sahbhagi Samaj Sevi Sansthan(SSSS), Chhattisgarh, showcased activities conducted in Raipur. An effort was made to give information to the people by distributing posters in meetings, camps and government offices. SSSS also conducted a study in Raipur city on the subject of sustainable consumption and production. Fifty people have been interviewed in this study. The objective of the study is to find out the status of continuous consumption and production. Webinars also conducted on topics related to sustainable consumption, e-waste, solid waste, kitchen waste and the environment. A signature campaign was organised by SSSS which aims to make people aware of sustainable consumption and production and sharing community. SSSS organised five demonstration camps of reused materials. In these, people were informed about the methods of residual management. SSSS concluded its activities by organising a stakeholder consultation.

Bibhu Sahu, Youth for Social Development (YSD), Odisha, presented the activities conducted by YSD in Orissa. The activities of campaign were organised at Berhampur city in Odisha. It is the 3rd-largest city in Odisha with a population of 355823 (Census, 2011). Major activities of the campaign include Demonstration Model of E-waste bin, wall of sharing, virtual awareness and consultative workshop, public awareness and IEC activities. YSD has installed four Demonstration Models of E-waste bins in prominent electronic market areas. Two wall-of-sharings installed in four places in the city (Berhampur). Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) has agreed to replicate these in other places. YSD has organised virtual awareness and consultative workshops for three different groups on sharing community and circular economy. More than 300 students, academician and members of civil society participated and discussed circular economy its impact and best practices.

Mini Sebastian, Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women (CDEW) Society, Bangalore, shed light on GAW India activities implemented in Bangalore. For GAW (India) 2020, there are certain specific objectives, which are to build the atmosphere of sharing in the communities, educate all the stakeholders on SDG-12 and its significance and promote organic kitchen garden. Some activities are awareness generation on pipe composting at Bandapura, awareness generation on waste management and circular economy at Ulsoor and Kaverinagar, distribution of 20 bins and demonstration on organic manure production at Ulsoor and Kaverinagar. CDEW also organised cycle rally at Kaverinagar to generate awareness about GAW. CDEW concluded its activities by organising a stakeholder consultation.

John Packiaraj, Peace Trust, Tamil Nadu, conducted awareness workshop on kitchen garden (distributed seeds), refuse plastics, sharing ride (Cycle/Two-Wheeler), sharing books/magazines, sharing excess organic food (joy of giving), groceries, used bicycle, used iron box and cooking materials. Peace Trust also undertook planting saplings (palm tree saplings), promotion of jute bags (distributed jute bags) and community library. A programme captioned avoid plastics and don't waste food was organised on FM Radio. Due to cyclone NIVAR and Bruvi, Peace Trust has faced challenges while organising the above activities. Peace Trust concluded its activities by organising a stakeholder consultation.

Mohan Joshi, CECOEDECON, Indore, said the objectives of the campaign are to promote culture of community sharing and collaboration to create sustainable access to goods and services and generate awareness among consumers about sustainable consumption practices. Activities carried out under the campaign are awareness generation/mass mobilization on sharing community, street play and demonstration of kitchen garden in the city. They conducted the state level consultation on sustainable consumption and sharing community.

Dharmendra Kumar, Shohartgarh Environmental Society (SES), Lucknow, said that under Green Action Week 2020 drawing competition among girls, seed distribution to women for kitchen gardening, awareness on menstrual wastage and distribution of menstrual cups to women are the main community activities.

For e-promotion of sharing community, SES has a Facebook page on sharing community. SES concluded its activities by organising a state-level consultation on sustainable consumption and sharing community. It was attended by prominent participants from the Central Ground Water Board, Horticulture Department, well-known environmentalist Prof B R Singh and journalists.

O.P. Joshy, Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP), Wayanad, created a green chain in the context of COVID-19 pandemic for addressing harmful waste and its management, involvement with various local stakeholders to create a health and clean Kottathara under Green Action Week 2020. SSP has established a common platform for a healthy environment through local action in partnership with buyers, sellers, producers, Gram Panchayat, Kudumbashree, Haritha Karmasena, Sakhi Farmers Group and other civil society organisations. The activities conducted under the campaign are orientation and training on eco-bricks making, bio-waste and its management, sharing platform creation meeting with stakeholders, printing of awareness stickers and celebration of green action week publishing user fee guide on waste management.

Avdhesh Kumar Sharma, Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK), Dehradun, said that seven awareness generation campaigns-cum-meetings were organized by Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (hereinafter referred as RLEK) with 30-35 people in each ward in three municipal wards in the capital city of Dehradun from 28th September 2020 till 13th October 2020. RLEK organized one camp on 13th October 2020 for creating Neki ki Deewar (Wall of Kindness) where the target group came together with their old/un-used electronic items, utensils and books. A one-day stakeholder's Consultation on the theme "Sharing Community" with title "Awareness Generation for Responsible Consumption and Production: Efforts Towards Sharing Community" under Green Action Week 2020 was organized by RLEK on 4th December 2020 (Friday) at RLEK Auditorium, Rajpur Road, Dehradun. The workshop was attended by 38 participants from all walks of life.

Ms. Anwesh Mishra, Jeevan Rekha Parishad (JRP), Odisha stated, that the organisation has conducted several activities based on sharing community, such as 25 senior citizens in Bhubaneswar with an interest in gardening, beekeeping and crop pollination were identified and assisted to set up 25 individual rooftop gardens with bee hive boxes. Two special digital Trainings in organic gardening and beekeeping and one physical meeting-cum-training were organized with support from Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) and City Farmers Association. A webinar meeting was conducted to enable participation of senior citizens to engage with, exchange learning and learn from each other about community sharing, sustainable consumption and circular economy. JRP concluded its activities by organising a stakeholder consultation.

Devendra Sharma, Environment & Social Research Organization (ESRO), New Delhi, showcased the activities which were conducted in the awareness campaign by organising quiz, IEC materials and drawing competition and workshops on sharing community through online and physically. ESRO has established Yamuna Sharing Community Centre at Meet Nagar, Delhi, for collection of old and used material (electric and electronic gadgets, books, toys,

clothes, etc.) as resource from community. Preparation and distribution of bags made from old or unused cloths, minimising plastic bags from community and wall writing and display of posters, flaps among community and schools were organised by ESRO. ESRO also organised plantation programs with the support of community leaders.

Nimisha Sharma, Programme Associate, CUTS, Rajasthan, gave a power point presentation about the activities conducted in our localities (Jagannathpuri, Meenawala, Sanganer and Dhawas) in the city of Jaipur under GAW. The major key activities of this year were kitchen gardening, community library, Six E-Waste Bins Awareness Meeting, wall of kindness (*saanjha ki deewar*), community-level and a district-level stakeholder's consultation meeting in Jaipur. District level awareness workshops was organised in Banswara. Awareness Workshops on Sharing Community were organised in Dausa, Kota, Sawai Madhopur, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Pratapgarh, Jhalawar, Jodhpur and Udaipur Districts. Hundred kitchen gardens, four Cottage Meetings, two Community Libraries, one Community Wall "Saanjha Ki Deewar" and Six E-Waste Bins Awareness Meetings were the main outcome of this year's campaign. Various activities of the event have got media coverage. CUTS Rajasthan concluded its activities by organising a stakeholder consultation.

Open House Session

In the discussion, various queries were raised which were suitably answered. One of the participants raised a query about Earth Overshoot Day and sustainable consumption. Cheriyan answered that Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. In 2020, it fell on August 22. People should reduce consumption and live within their ecological limits.

Cherian has suggested, on the question of sustainability of campaign, that one should established partnership or collaboration with various stakeholders to sustain this campaign throughout the year. Participants also shared various traditional practices on sustainable consumption. The Impact of COVID-19 on sustainable consumption has highlighted the importance of environmental awareness campaign.

Vote of Thanks

Amar Deep Singh gave the vote of thanks to partners for attending the meeting. Cheriyan opined that, in India, the traditional concept has always been the circular economy, where resources are used for as long as possible, extracting maximum value, followed by recovery and regeneration of products and materials at the end of each service life. He said more organisations should participate in the campaign to achieve the goals.

List of Participants

S.No.	Name	Organisation's Name and Address
1	Ms. Anwesh Mishra	Jeevan Rekha Parishad - JRP Plot no 387 Damana Square, C.S.Pur, Bhubaneswar, Odisha-751016
2	Mr. John Pachiaraj	Peace Trust Near Police Colony, Dindigul 624005 Tamil Nadu
3	Mr. Mohan Joshi	Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (CECOEDECON) F 159-160, Sitapura Industrial and Institutional Area, Tonk Road, Jaipur
4	Mr. Avdhes Kumar Sharma	Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK) 68/1, Suryalok Colony, Rajpur Road, Dehra Dun- 248001, Uttarakhand
5	Mr. Sanjay Sharma	Sahbhagi Samaj Sevi Sansthan In front of Boys High School, Village- Ratesara, Post- Jaisakarra NH-30, Charama, District- Uttar Bastar Kanker, Chhattisgarh
6	Mr. Bibhu Prasad Sahu	Youth for Social Development (YSD) 9 th Govinda Vihar, Near Ruby Eye Hospital, Lochapada, Berhampur, Ganjam, Odisha, Pin-760001
7	Mr. O.P. Joshi	Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) MTC Building, Pallikkunnu P.O – 673122 Kalpatta, Wayanad, Kerala
8	Mr. Dharmendra Kumar	Shohartgarh Environmental Society MS-1/17, Ground Floor, Sector-A, SBI Colony, Lucknow-226021
9	Mr. Devendra Kumar	Environment & Social Research Organization- ESRO A-325, Gali No.-2, Near 25 Futa Road, A-Block Meet Nagar, New Delhi-110094
10	Ms. Mini Sebastian	Centre for Development and Empowerment of Women (CDEW) Society, Bangalore Bandapura, Virgonagar P.O. Bangalore -560049
11	George Cheriyan Director	CUTS International
12	Amar Deep Singh Senior Programme Office	CUTS International
13	Nimisha Gaur Programme Officer	CUTS International
14	Amit Babu Programme Associate	CUTS International

Some Glimpses of the GAW Meeting (India), 2020

