

Key learning & Recommendations from:

“Exchange Meeting on Safeguarding Future Rural Drinking Water Supply in Odisha”

Bhubaneswar April 29 and 30th 2010

Odisha as a state with abundance of natural resources is blessed with significant water resources. However, the availability of fresh water varies from place to place based on its hydrogeology & natural resources. At present, clear trends of groundwater depletion are evident. Clear threats to groundwater quality are also evident from water quality sampling undertaken by several different agencies. Hence, sustainability is a key worry for all participants but it was agreed that there is not even adequate understanding yet of groundwater in hard rock aquifers such as those found in Orissa.

Recommendation 1: More research and data collection and sharing are needed for Orissa aquifers focusing on water levels, recharge mechanisms and water quality.

There is a need for documenting best practices in the State and for up-scaling these – these will require key collaboration between Govt and NGO and other organizations. One potential starting point for collaboration can be a ‘State of Water in Orissa’ report / a regular meeting forum for all parties interesting only in better synergy in the sector. The participants indeed saw this meeting as a starting point for increased technical knowledge sharing and data sharing. Each organization at the meeting brought unique abilities to the table e.g. technical ability, grass roots understanding and mobilization, implementation capacity, communication skills etc.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the alliance of all water and sanitation actors via a regular forum of the meeting participants which can lead to increased technical knowledge sharing / data exchange platform and help galvanize cooperation and collaboration to address the serious threats facing us.

There is a felt need that more momentum needs to be generated to bring about change through committed involvement of all stakeholders. Increased community involvement is essential for improving operation & maintenance but will require substantial hand-holding. One group comprising of Govt officials recommended more regular meetings for convergence and listed a strategy of State level bi-annual meetings for policy decision while quarterly District/ Block level planning and implementation meetings complemented by monthly meeting at GP/village level for problem discussion and solution action plan.

Recommendation 3: Linked to Recommendation 2 convergence and capacity building at District/GP/Village levels can cascade downwards from a State level knowledge sharing and dissemination alliance.