

FLUORIDE AND ARSENIC KNOWLEDGE AND ACTION NETWORKS

Assam Water Quality and Health Resource Centre

An Idea in the Making

Proceedings of Meetings in Guwahati from 9 till 13 March

2015

INREM FOUNDATION, GUJARAT AND SACIWATERS, HYDERABAD

Proceedings of One week Water Quality Networks Programme in Assam 9 till 13 March 2015
Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network ¹ Arsenic Knowledge and Action Network ²

This is a brief report into proceedings from the One week programme under a banner of “Unite for Water, Unite for Assam” organized by the two Water quality networks on Fluoride and Arsenic in Assam from 9 till 13 March 2015.

What Happened	What came out
Advocacy meeting with Minister of PHE and PHE Secretary	Endorsement for Water quality and Health Resource Centre by Government Departments (PHE, WSSO, Health) , Civil Society (various NGOs and citizens), Academics (Several department of Guwahati university and other colleges, IIT, others such as Cotton College), UNICEF, and by Minister and Secretary, PHE
Consultation meeting with all Stakeholders	
Advocacy meeting with WSSO and PHE Department	
Health Training on Fluorosis and Arsenicosis	Formation of Assam Forum on Water quality with Online/Offline presence, Newsletter (whats happening and people’s views on it)
Consolidation with UNICEF and key stakeholders	
Outreach through print media – English and Assamese, and Television channel	Acceptance of networks on Key inputs to Government programmes – Water & Sanitation Awareness Programmes, Health department Fluorosis programme, Arsenicosis Health surveys, A Communication Strategy for Water quality issues focusing on Possibility and Hope for Prevention & Recovery,
Development of Initial Resource Material for Water quality issues in English, Hindi and Assamese	Expansion of Data monitoring programme through civil society networks, Focus on 2-3 Districts such as Guwahati-Kamrup, Nagaon, Jorhat, and areas such as Majoli for demonstrating multiple sectoral mitigation and recovery programme on Water quality issues through district Water quality coordination centre
	Study on Institutional landscape for Water quality issues

¹ INREM Foundation, Ground floor, Tower B, Paramkrishna Apts, Anand, Gujarat 388001

² SaciWaters, B- 87, 3rd Avenue, Sainikpuri, Secunderabad, Telangana 500094

Background

Since December 2013, there have been constant engagements with both the Fluoride and Arsenic networks trying to bring water quality related health problems to the forefront in Assam and trying to get more and more institutions and people interested in it.

The first of these engagements was a team from the Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network visiting Assam from 9-14 Dec 2013. The main aim of this initiative was to talk to important entities in the state that included government departments, NGOs and others to work closely on the issue and forming a regional alliance to work on Fluorosis.

There were a series of meetings that the team had with different stakeholders during this first visit, important among these were; meetings with the Director WSSO, the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister, the secretary PHED, the Director NHRM, Coordinator UNICEF and representatives from regional NGO's i.e. Centre for Microfinance and Livelihoods (CML) and Environ.

Besides engaging with different stakeholders the team also made a field visit to Nagaon District and gave a set of recommendations to the government based on the visit as well.

A communications campaign, "Unite for Water, Unite for Assam", was launched by the Network from August 15, 2014. The purpose of the campaign was to get the issue out in the open and to take it to wherever it could, i.e schools, colleges, government offices, non-governmental organisations. First activities of this campaign happened with a visit to Assam and a few initial sessions in colleges to make young people understand what Fluorosis was.

In September 2014, the Arsenic Knowledge and Action Network organised a round-table inviting important stakeholders to deliberate upon the activities that the Arsenic Network could undertake up in the coming time. The round table highlighted needs such as communication reassessment and planning along with a collection of existing knowledge and building capacity of existing partners to take forward action.

There have been a series of discussions series in Jorhat and Tezpur organised by the Arsenic Network where academia, affected communities, governmental representatives and people with interest on the issue have come together to bring forward their views on what they've been involved with and what they think might help.

To advance existing initiatives to the next level, the two Networks felt that it was now time to provide a structure to activities and efforts so as to enable concerted action and a progression towards concrete interventions.

This began with a one week Consultation programme by the Networks in Assam.

Discussion Briefs of each meeting

In all, five separate meetings were conducted in the week 9-12 March 2015. The overall purpose was to bring a momentum to water quality and related health issues in the state with both shorter term measures as well as contributing to building institutions which can contribute in the longer run.

Advocacy meeting with Minister of PHE and PHE Secretary at Assam Secretariat on March 11	Consultation meeting with all Stakeholders at IIBM Guwahati on March 10	Advocacy meeting with WSSO and PHE Department at PHE meeting hall on March 11
The two meetings took place with a view to apprise the Minister PHE as well as the PHE secretary about the water quality problem in Assam, developments that have taken place through the two networks so far and to place the idea for a resource centre on water quality issues in Assam.	The meeting invited stakeholders from diverse areas of work, i.e. academia, ngo's, government to come together and understand the problem of Fluorosis and move towards a wider forum on water quality in the state.	The meeting was held to discuss jointly with government departments the roles they could play in proposed water quality efforts in the State.
Continued in Appendix 1	Continued in Appendix 1	Continued in Appendix 1
Health Training on Fluorosis and Arsenicosis at Health Department on March 12	Consolidation with UNICEF and key stakeholders at UNICEF Guwahati on March 11	
The Health training on Fluorosis was held to have a basic orientation for medical professionals on Fluorosis and Arsenecosis	The meeting took place at the UNICEF Office to see how UNICEF and other major stakeholders could be brought into the mix of things for to influencing the issue	
Continued in Appendix 1	Continued in Appendix 1	

Reporting in Media (click on the images below)



Pathways Ahead

The pathway that lies ahead in Assam for the water quality movement started by the two Networks is for establishing a wider forum around water quality and to give this forum a platform to act.

1. We see a resource centre on water quality as being one such platform which not only binds all efforts on water quality but also enables different actors to organize and collect together, access as well as use all information and act. As of now the Centre for Microfinance and Livelihoods (CML) in Guwahati has agreed to incubate the centre for a period of one year.
As we go further along the road we see the resource centre constantly being fed with information that would come in through different actors and the information being made available being used by a variety of actors for their different purposes
2. Better communication with all stakeholders was an important need expressed by the Water as well as Health departments. We plan to enable this through a partnership with these departments in several Water quality affected districts. The idea is to engage with existing government efforts, understand the communication gaps and try to fill it, in order to evolve a communication strategy for Water quality issues in Assam. Eco Concepts would be coordinating this activity on behalf of the networks.
3. The placement of this Resource centre within the current institutional landscape of Assam is important. An initial study of institutions and their roles will be done to bring out what is already happening on this front in Assam and how we could come in to bring out a focused effort. Aaranyak will be coordinating this effort on behalf of the networks.
4. Finally, as advisor to both the networks in Assam, Mr A B Paul and his team, comprising dedicated persons such as Mr Dharani Saikia are the backbone of the network effort in Assam. They provide linkage to the issues faced by communities and explore newer affected places across the state.

With this dedicated group of people in Assam, helped by individuals such as Dr Ruby Kotoky, Mr Rushabh Hemani, Dr Arundhati Deka, Mr Nripendra Sarma, and others, the Water quality team of Assam is in able hands.

People who participated

Government				NGO		Academics		Independent	
<p>WATER SECTOR</p> <p>Sukur Ali Ahmed PHE Minister</p> <p>Ashok Kumar Das PHE Secretary</p> <p>A.K Handione PHED Golohat</p> <p>Abdur Rashid Hojai PHE</p> <p>Abedur Rahim PHED</p> <p>Akhtar Hussain PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Banasri Sarma WSSO, PHED</p> <p>Bhupen Bayse PHED</p> <p>Charu Malakar PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>D.K.Das PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Deepika Dey PHED</p> <p>Dr. Banasri Sarma WSSO (PHED), Assam</p> <p>Dr. Enny D Kotoky PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Er Milanjit Bhattacharya Hon. Secretary</p> <p>G. Chakraborty CRPF/175BN</p> <p>H.A.Ahmed PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Hafiqur Rahman Nagaon PHED</p> <p>Harekrishna Deka PHED</p> <p>Harmuj Ali water resource dept</p>	<p>Hemanta Borbaruah PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Jyotirmoy Purnagartha Barshapara PHE</p> <p>Kakali Kalita PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Mahmuda Begum Hojai PHE</p> <p>Manabendra Sarma PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Md.Nozubul Hussain PHED Golohat</p> <p>Mila Ram Deeri Hojai PHE</p> <p>Moinul Haque Chowdhry Hojai PHE</p> <p>Mr. Mohan PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Nripendra Kumar Sarma PHED</p> <p>Nripendra Kumar Sarma PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Pankaj Kr Deka PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Queen Bora PHED</p> <p>Ranjit Debnath Akashi Ganga</p> <p>Ritismita Devi PHED, Guwahati</p> <p>Ritismita Devi WSSO (PHED), Assam</p> <p>Sarat Kumar PHED</p> <p>Suresh Hazarika Nagaon PHED</p> <p>Nalin Ch Borah PHED</p> <p>AGRICULTURE SECTOR K.C Saikia Agriculture department</p>	<p>N. St Barbhuiya Agriculture department</p> <p>EDUCATION SECTOR</p> <p>Deep Borah Nagaon</p> <p>HEALTH SECTOR</p> <p>Amaveendra Basumatary Boko PHC/CHC</p> <p>Arup Das Nabajeevan Sarathi (NGO)</p> <p>Dr A. Awal Joint DHS</p> <p>Dr AK Bora Joint DHS</p> <p>Dr Jugal Ch. Das Halogaon MPHIC</p> <p>Dr. Anamika Das P.C.H Assam</p> <p>Dr. Arundhati Deka C/o DHS</p> <p>Dr. Atindra Das Jhargun BPHC</p> <p>Dr. Biswajit Dey Nagenbera BPHC</p> <p>Dr. HK Borah Boko CHC BPHC</p> <p>Dr. M Bora Joint DHS (Kamrup)</p> <p>Dr. M. Banerjee Sualnuchi BPHC</p> <p>Dr. P.Sarmah Rangia BPHC</p> <p>Dr. R Baruah Upartiati BPHC</p> <p>Dr. RC Das Chhay gar BPHS</p> <p>Dr. Santanu Kumar Bhattacharya TRB Kamrup</p> <p>Distt civil Hospital</p>	<p>Dr. Suman Das Nilbagon</p> <p>Md. Nazir Ali Bihdia PHC</p> <p>Nila Kanta Kalizaboko PHC</p> <p>Pramod Kalita Bihdia PHC</p> <p>Sanjib K Purkayantha Health dept</p>	<p>Ani Gopal Nath Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha</p> <p>Ashok Kumar Nath Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha</p> <p>Dr. N.D Bundola Purvottar Development Society</p> <p>Dr. Rathin Sharma ENGECORC</p> <p>Masfiqur Hazarika Aaranyak</p> <p>Moniram Ronghang PIRD</p> <p>Partha Jyoti Das Aaranyak</p> <p>Partho Patwari Centre for Microfinance Limited</p> <p>Pijush Goyarny Centre for Education and Communication, CEC- Delhi</p> <p>Pradip Kumar sarma Gramya Vikash Manch</p> <p>Raju Teron ACTED India</p> <p>Tinku Baishya GVM, Nalbari</p> <p>Bichitra Kalita MaidanGaon Pani Jogan Samiti</p> <p>Dharani Saikia Environment Conservation Centre</p> <p>Dr. Subhash Chandra Goswami MaidanGaon Pani Jogan Samiti</p> <p>Gini Das Lakhimnagar Pani Jogan Samiti</p> <p>Girish Deka PraKrupa Pani Jogan Samiti</p> <p>Md.Abdul Malik Chaudhary Sijubari Natboma Pipe Water Supply</p> <p>Niba Ram Garo No-1. Patrkachi W/S Scheme</p>	<p>Nilima Das Lakhimnagar Pani Jogan Samiti</p> <p>Sanjib Kumar Purkayantha Village Patarkuchi, PO. Baristha</p> <p>Subarnalata Devi Lakhimnagar Pani Jogan Samiti</p> <p>Udal Baruah No-1 Patrkachi W/S Scheme</p> <p>Usha Dewani Ecoconcept</p>	<p>Mamata Goswami Dept of Zoology, Cottons College</p> <p>Moharana Chaudhry Tezpur University</p> <p>Naven Om D.U</p> <p>Rachel Therieh Raj Saikia Guwahati University</p> <p>Dr. Manjit Baruah PHED, Guwahati</p>			
				<p>Dr. D.N. Kakati HMRI, Assam</p> <p>Ajay Prasad Bhattacharyya Karunadhara Samiti</p> <p>Chandreswar BamaI Worldvision India</p> <p>Dhan Mohammed Saharia Pathik (Tezpur)</p> <p>Jyoti Prasad Sarmah Global Organisation for Life Development</p> <p>Khagen Lal Karunadhara, Samiti</p> <p>Mr Isfaqur Rehman Jagreeti Cultural Centre</p> <p>Samuel Therieh Worldvision India</p> <p>Saurabh Sharma Diya Foundation</p> <p>umesh kerketta Worldvision India</p> <p>Victor Rajkumar Pathik Guwahati, Assam</p> <p>Ami Gopal Nath Sanatan Unnayan Sangsthan</p> <p>Amit Chakraborty Sanatan Unnayan Sangstha</p>	<p>Bitopan Sarma Communication Dpt. Guwahati Uni.</p> <p>Joyprakash Sharma Communication Dpt. Guwahati Uni.</p> <p>Kalyan Kishore Kashyap Communication Dpt. Guwahati Uni.</p> <p>Manash Pratim Dutta Communication Dpt. Guwahati Uni.</p> <p>Pritam Ranjan Deka Communication Dpt. Cottons College</p> <p>Rituraj Deka Communication Dpt., Cottons College</p> <p>Dr. Abu Hasan Sarkar Jorhat Medical College Hospital</p> <p>Dr Gunjan Nath Jorhat Medical College Hospital</p> <p>Dr Pranjal Tamuli Jorhat Medical College Hospital</p> <p>Dr. Prahlad Kalita Appolo Hospital, Hyderabad</p> <p>Dr. Raini Sarua Assam Medical College</p> <p>Prof Bishnu Jorhat Medical College Hospital</p> <p>Prof Bishnu Ram Das Jorhat Medical College</p> <p>Dr. C.R Hira C-NES, Guwahati</p>	<p>Dr Raja Reddy Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad</p> <p>A.B Paul Independent</p> <p>A.K Endow GMDA</p> <p>B.R Gogoi Industrial Dept</p> <p>Bhagaban Kalita Maidan Bakarpura Ashram</p> <p>Kritul Borah Nagaon/PK Bhattalkar/PREF</p> <p>S.B Sarma PREF</p> <p>Ajay Agarwal Independent</p> <p>B.P.Sarma PHED, Guwahati</p>			
						<p>Media</p> <p>Gaurav Das Times of India</p> <p>Ajit Patowary Assam Tribune</p>			

Material Produced and Presented

- Fluorosis Facts in Assamese
- Draft Assam Policy Brief
- Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network Newsletter
- Powerpoint on Understanding Fluorosis
- Fluoride Knowledge and Action Network activity updates presentation
- Arsenic Knowledge and Action Network activity updates presentation
- Dr Raja Reddy, Presentatation on Fluorosis
- Dr Kunal Kanti Majumdar's presentation on Arsenicosis
- Short films on Water quality and health success stories across India
- The need for Water quality and Health Resource Centre in Assam

Appendix 1: Detailed notes of all meetings

Civil Society Consultation on Water quality on the 10th of March, 2015

Background

What's been missing in Assam so far, as far as initiatives on Water quality are concerned particularly those that affect rural people is well thought out messages going out clearly to policy makers on what needs to be done.

With water quality problems reaching their peak, we think now is the time the messages need to go out strongly and like-minded people needed to come out in the open and do something.

The civil society consultation on the 10th in Guwahati was held keeping this very purpose in mind; so a variety of thoughts could come together as one for discussing ways forward.

There were people from all fields; Academia, researchers, NGO's, media and students. People who came shared their own unique perspectives on what they felt can be done

The Sessions

The sessions were a mix of things; to start with there was a brief session on what the issue was and what it meant. A brief run through of activities of the two Networks for people to get a sense of what they were involved with at the moment..

This was followed by three separate group discussions on Fluoride, Arsenic and other water quality problems. People participated in different groups to discuss possibilities that existed in Assam.

In the end a possible framework of efforts that were possible was presented to the group

What came out of it?

What came out of the event was a need, a need to act and put up a front to counter the water quality problem in Assam. The idea of a resource centre on water quality came to the forefront during discussions.

Health training for Medical Doctors on the 12th of March, 2015

Background

Within the medical curriculum, water related diseases such as Fluorosis and Arsenicosis are much neglected subjects. As a result, there are very few trained health practitioners who are able to detect these diseases, can offer counseling support to patients.

In fact even a bare minimum starting point; a health survey that can detect the extent of these diseases in communities isn't possible at the moment..

Taking this into account, the two Networks on Fluoride and Arsenic joined hands and brought two eminent doctors who have worked extensively on these diseases for decades.

The two doctors, Dr Raja Reddy, and Dr. Kunal Kanti Majumdar are renowned in their respective fields of understanding fluorosis and arsenecosis respectively.

Dr. Raja Reddy is an eminent Neurosurgeon, a practicing doctor at Apollo Hospitals and also one of the foremost experts on Skeletal Fluorosis.

Dr Kunal Kanti Majumdar is one of the leading Arsenecosis experts who is practicing at KPC Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata besides participating in numerous Arsenic mitigation efforts with UNICEF and other agencies.

The training

The two aspects that this training focused on were how to detect and mitigate Fluorosis and Arsenecosis.

There were presentations which the two specialists on Fluorosis and Arsenecosis made followed by interactions with those present.

What greatly worked for the workshop was the range of questions that were put forward to the two experts

The interactions were immensely useful as it helped the medical professionals who attended get basic insights into dealing with the two problems.

What came out?

Doctors/ Medical professionals who attended this training found this training to be very useful and expressed a need for the network assisting them with detecting the problem in the field on a sustainable basis. Universities and doctors agreed to take up further detailed training so as to enable more informed action against the diseases related to the water quality problems.

Meeting with Government on the 11th of March, 2015

Background

To build upon deliberations that took place with civil society actors as well as to give strength to the idea of the resource centre which had germinated at the civil society consultation; a meeting was organized with select government departments

It was felt that for any efforts to be sustainable government were needed as able partners

The meeting

The idea of a “State water quality and health resource centre” as a multi-stakeholder initiative which could give shape to efforts in Assam through a converged institutional structure was put forward to the group here.

What came out?

Unfortunately because of the meeting coinciding with an overall government web-conference that day which all department heads, secretaries had we could only have a small group to attend, consisting mostly of some WSSO staff, a few PHED Officials as well as a former PHED Secretary.

Those present unanimously felt that having a resource centre on water quality was a step in the right direction and that the government departments had an important role to play in it.

Meeting with UNICEF on March 13 2015

Background

A summary meeting was held in UNICEF Guwahati at the end of all other meetings as a wrapping up and summarizing with key persons of Guwahati. It was attended by Mr Partho Patwari, Mr Partha Jyoti Das, Dr Chandan Mahanta, Mr A B Paul, Mr Rushabh Hemani and network secretariat members.

The meeting

Key discussions of the meetings were put forward here. It was felt to now focus on what can be done in the next one year and how the suggestions in these meetings could be taken ahead.

What came out?

The areas which came out of this summary were:

- a) The need for the Water quality and health resource centre
- b) Advocacy and technical/field support to cover more blocks for data testing
- c) Develop a communication strategy for water quality issues giving a sense of possibility
- d) Coordinating with the public health and medical side of the problem
- e) Visiting other states and institutions such as DFMC Nalgonda to learn and utilize