

Report India 2013

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Life quality for all - the main motivation of sustainable development work

Abstract

For three months I had the opportunity to become involved in solar energy / saving harmful energies, family planning / prevention of sexual transmitted infections (STI's) and wise management of land rights. My base was in Katni (Madhya Pradesh) in an ashram of the Ekta Parishad (EP) organization, which is very much involved in enhancing land to marginalized people like Adivasis or Dalits.

Through the contacts with the ashram it was possible to demonstrate solar cooking, solar drying, efficient gasification stoves and to spread the access to health and reproductive health services.

Sulabh International – a social institution managing many public toilets in India – allowed me, to use their infrastructure in order to improve the access to condoms and sexual health information. Four public toilet complexes in Katni city got involved. The respond of this pilot program was very positive so that Sulabh is interested to implement these preventative health services in further cities. 8000 public toilets are the potential in which access to reproductive health could help to prevent unwanted pregnancies and STI's.

Ekta Parishad is caring, that (Adivasi) people get (back) land rights in order to have a dignified base for survival. In this context it is important, how communities are managing land-ownership. My suggestion is, that land is owned by the community. Like that, land-rights are better protected from banks/ money lenders, who like to give loans accepting land as security. If land is in individual hands, then banks can become the future land-owners, as soon as the people cannot pay interest anymore.

Starting with solar-work in Katni (MP)

Beginning of May I started my journey with different meetings in Delhi. Since years I collaborate with Organizations like UNFPA, FAO, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHFW), National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), Sulabh International and the Ministry of Railways in order to enhance the protection of nature and the improvement of live-quality. The 20th of May I arrived in Katni, which was my base for the three month journey in India. Outside of Katni one of the Ekta Parishad (EP) ashrams was my home. The president of EP Mr. Rajagopal P.V. - a Gandhian activist - invited me to India in order to enhance sustainable development activities, which shall benefit people and nature - also in the long run. Together with local craftsmen I started to construct and use simple appropriated technologies like solar cookers, solar dryers and wood gasification stoves. During my stay in the ashram, I was lucky to meet people who were motivated to organize demonstrations in schools and invite political decision makers of the area (district collector etc.). Because of that, several solar dryers and gasification stoves got ordered to show the benefits in further communities, schools, and families.



Solar dryer can preserve fruits, vegetables and medical plants. Dried food can be stored without need of additional energy consumption.



Wood gasification stoves (pyrolytic) in a school. With this efficient stove, only half the amount of wood – compared with the „three stone“ cooking – is consumed.

Voluntary Family planning - a largely neglected Human Right

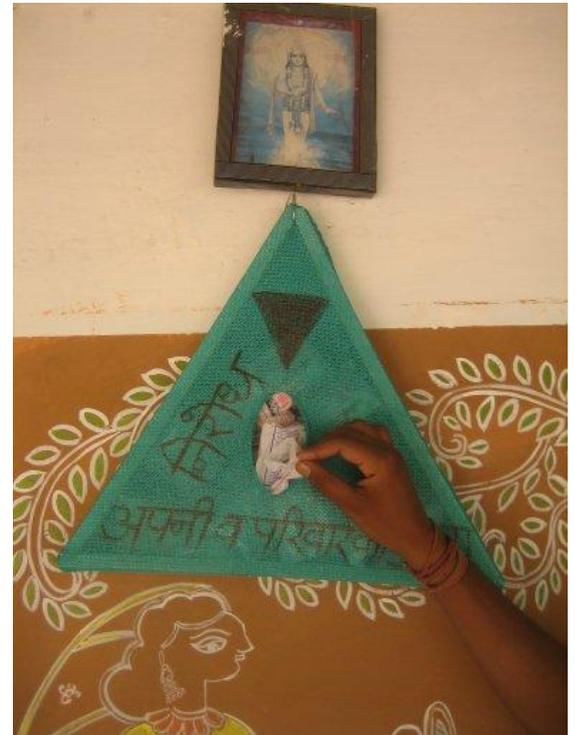


Condom Box and Health Book in a waiting section of a regional health post in Sakarigadh near Katni

The founder of Sulabh, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, agreed to start a pilot program within the Sulabh public toilets in Katni. Condom Boxes got installed in different toilet complexes near Katni railway station, near the hospital and near the bus stand. The local responsible of the National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) cared for a sustainable access of condoms; to refill the condom boxes. A local activist, leading a private school in Katni, cares, that information papers are available at the desk of the Sulabh toilet complexes. Together with a local entrepreneur, he is caring (monitoring), that the condom-boxes are regularly refilled and that the information papers about reproductive health are available to the people who want to take them. This service is free of cost for the female or male visitor of the public toilet. In order to minimize condom-misuse from children, the dispenser is fixed on a save height.

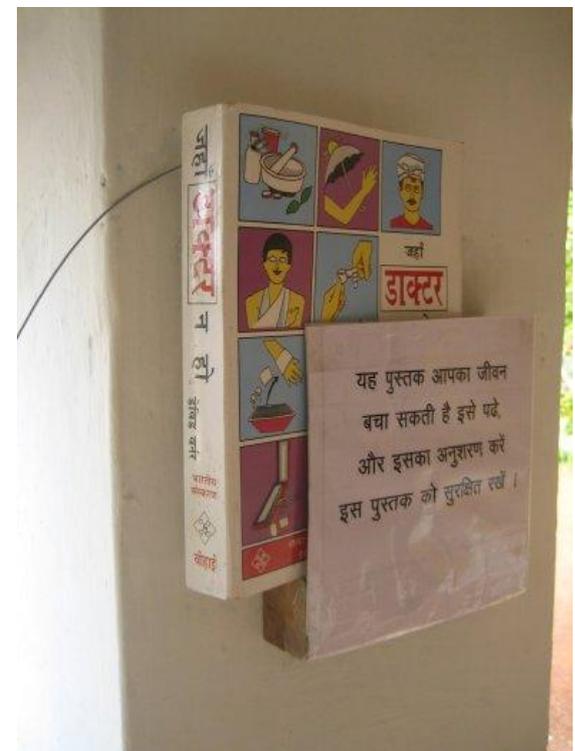
As the results of these reproductive health services were positive, Sulabh International plans to expand these services in further areas. The potential of 8000 public Sulabh toilets in India is promising.

In appropriated places, where people have leisure- or waiting time, the village book “Where there is no doctor” from David Werner can educate people



Condom Box (free of cost condoms)

The condoms are available in the female and male department of the toilet complex. So a dignified access is guaranteed.



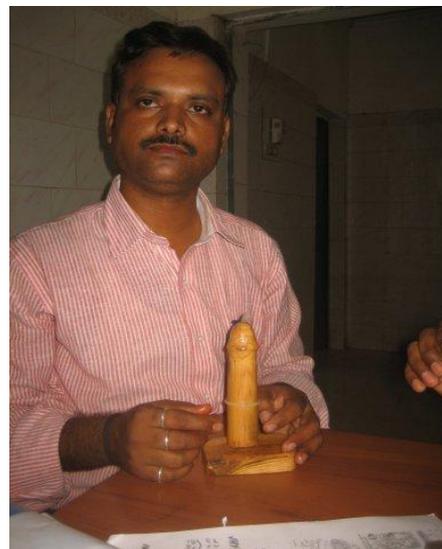
Book „Where there is no doctor“ In public places, hospitals, chai shops, ashrams. The access to health information is highly appreciated.



The awareness, that population growth is one of the biggest challenges in India can be seen on walls outside schools and hospitals. But family planning programs are much too weak in every day life.

Even the UN in Delhi has Condom-Dispensers in their toilets – but they are not capable to refill the dispenser regularly! If the UN is not able to do it – who can do it ???

about general health issues. As Ekta Parishad (EP) has many contacts with villagers, we started to install these books in waiting sections of health posts, in rain-protected chai (tea) shops and at places, where social contacts are a fact. A steel wire connects the book with the wall – so the book cannot easily be taken away from the installed place. The ashram of EP plans to install 150 books in the next few months in villages around Katni and in places, where EP has other projects.



If the access to family planning and to reproductive health services reaches people, then less sexual transmitted infections (STI's) like e.g. AIDS and less unwanted pregnancies take place. This improves life quality for individuals, families, nations and the world.

Caring for the environment – caring for people

During my stay I tried to collaborate with people about different issues:

Waste management must be organized in order to reduce materials, which harm us and others. The first step is, to reduce harmful consumption (sufficiency). If consumption/ waste takes place, then we store waste in different waste bins: **green for organic waste**, **blue for burnable (minimum harm) waste** and **red for harmful waste (plastic, oil, batteries, electronic waste etc.)**, which must not be burned. The separated waste has to be treated differently. In the ashram we discussed these issues and tried to put them into action – with little success yet.

The water table of the EP-ashram in Katni went down 3 meters the last 20 years. Water scarcity is a problem in this area. If we care for future generations, then we have to reduce water consumption – e.g. reducing rice cultivation (groundwater irrigation). The responsible of the ashram said, that they want to change these water-waste practices and invest in organic farming in the future.

Ahimsha: All Ekta Parishad members are identifying themselves with the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. Nonviolence (Ahimsha) is one of the commitment how aims are tried to be followed. This philosophy should help to reduce harmful energy consumption like diesel oil, unsustainable wood, charcoal (electricity), kerosene etc. A practical bicycle mentality supports aims like that.

Poverty alleviation: We had several discussions and meetings regarding social issues. It is a fact, that the gap between rich and poor is already extreme – still growing! In this context, education is important. People have to understand, how they can be



A holy cow tries to find food. Very often they eat plastic and have to die with incredible pain. If we really care for holy cows, then plastic material should not be available to them anymore...

400 Million people in India have not enough to eat while - according to the FAO - India is rice exporter number one. Beggars are visible in many places – communicating, that we have to change our harmful habits.

Trees are cutted every day – more, than can grow. It is not enough, to cook with the sun and to promote more efficient combustion systems: It needs more...

trapped by loans (including microfinance) asking them for usury-interest for the rest of their lives. Enhancing self-reliance is a very important point for sustainable development. Land in the hands of people/ community is the base, which helps to reduce dependency from banks and money lenders. It is important to discuss with people who get (back) land from government, what can be done, to keep the land in the hands of the communities. Ekta Parishad plays here a very important role.



Gandhi was right, when he suggested not investing in too sophisticated technologies as this creates unhealthy dependencies. Villagers with bullock carts are less vulnerable if fuel gets scarce and if energy prices rise.

PhiloSophical thoughts

If we want to improve our mutual quality of life, then we cannot ignore elements, which are growing in an exponential way. 1) One third of **population growth (exponential)** could be reduced, if no unwanted pregnancies take place. So - dignified access to family planning is a human right, which must be integrated in all development programs.

2) Exponential growth of **assets** creates on the other hand exponential growth of depts. The millennium development goals (MDG's) want to half extreme poverty until 2015. Logically, this aim can only be reached, if extreme richness is reduced. <http://www.the.rules.org/en>; <http://www.positivemoney.org/>



Every year, India has to care for 17 Million more people. Millions of pregnancies are unwanted. If people can choose how many and when they want children, then suffering can decrease with little investment. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12601> <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/What-We-Do/Global-Development/Family-Planning>

Thank you for caring

On my path I was very happy to meet sensitive people who want to be /who are part of the solution. I'd like to say thank you



to all people, who are trying to make a courageous difference.

Thanks also to following organizations and their members for the financial support which allowed me to become active in Madhya Pradesh/ India:

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