

CESDI Newsletter



From the
PRESIDENT

Unite to Combat Climate Change



This year on June 5, we observed the World Environment Day (WED) with the theme 'Your Planet Needs You- Unite to Combat Climate Change'. The theme reflects the urgency for nations to agree on a new deal for a comprehensive global climate regime for the period after 2012, when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires and to link it with overcoming poverty and improved management of forests.

India is one among the worst countries, affected by climate change. "The latest IPCC report says the sea-level rise will be rapid a vast swathe of land will go underwater, food security will be threatened and the millennium development goal on poverty will not be reached," The harmful effect of climate change is looming large over India, a predominantly agriculturally driven country. Changes to India's annual

monsoon are expected to result in severe droughts and intense flooding in parts of India simultaneously. The livelihood of a vast population in India depends on agriculture, forestry, wetlands and fisheries and land use in these areas is strongly influenced by water-based ecosystems that depend on monsoon rains.

Loss of coastal mangroves will not only endanger fisheries but also expose the inland areas to the onslaught of cyclones and tsunamis. Thus, a huge population reliant on riparian resources will be affected by the alteration of water regimes, saltwater intrusions and land erosion.

In a developing and densely populated country like India, climate change puts additional burden on an already overstressed ecological and socioeconomic system due to rapid economic activities. With an enormous and ever-growing population linked to a diverse natural resources base, India is indeed vulnerable to climate changes and needs to chart out a comprehensive roadmap to tackle this menace. CESDI had taken the issue of 'combating climate change' on priority in its agenda and already involved in campaigns and actions. We call up on all like minded people to join in our campaign and support the cause.

CESDI, which started its journey as an informal initiative for environment and sustainable development, by a group of volunteers from various walks of life, way back in 1993, with zero budget, had completed 15 years of its existence this year, presently having various international affiliations and recognitions to its credit. Overcoming the childhood ailments and crossing the teenage, CESDI is entering in to the youthful age, which is a crucial period of growth. Hope CESDI will be able to do more for the cause of protecting the 'mother earth' in the coming days. We are thankful to all national and international agencies, UN organizations, Governments, likeminded individuals and well wishers, who supported and encouraged CESDI in the past, and also expect the same in the future too in the journey ahead.

Fr. Cherian Thazhamon



25 years in the Development Sector: Congratulations George!

George Cheriyan, founding Secretary & Director of CESDI, completed 25 years in the NGO/Development in June 2009. George who started his carrier way back in June 1984, in the social sector, out of his commitment to the poor and the marginalized had held several key positions with various civil society organisations based in various places in Kerala, Bangalore, Lucknow & Jaipur.

Presently he is a member of UN Roaster of Consults on Sustainable Development, Principal Representative to UN offices in New York, Geneva & Vienna, Member of International Resource Team on Social Accountability with the World Bank Institute on Sustainable Development (WBISD), Washington DC etc. He is having the exposure in traveling in 22 countries and addressing various UN/World Bank international conferences and meetings.

We congratulate George and wish all the best to continue the good work in the future.

- CESDI Team

Good Governance - Key to achieving the MDGs

-Rachel George, Joint Secretary, CESDI

The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2008, claims strong and sustainable progress towards the development objectives of the MDGs. However, the report says that because of higher food prices this downward trend is likely to be reversed, pushing many people into poverty. A new World Bank-IMF report titled 'Global Monitoring Report 2008' warns that most countries will fall short on the MDGs.

Global poverty rates are falling, led by Asia. Progress has been made against hunger, but slow growth of agricultural output and expanding populations have led to setbacks in some regions. Death rates in children under age 5 are dropping. But not fast enough. Still

more than half a million women die each year during pregnancy or childbirth.

Despite sustained high GDP growth in India, latest estimates of global poverty by the World Bank suggests that India has more people, about 828 million people, or 75.6% of the total population, living below US\$ 2 a day, than even sub-Saharan Africa.

This is in the midst of India taking several initiatives in reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs through 10th & 11th five year plans. So where things had gone wrong? It is a fact that in the absence of a mechanism to handle large programmes

effectively and to ensure transparency accountability, the huge amount spent on various schemes and programmes are simply digested on the way.

There is a wide gap between perception and actual experience about corruption in public services-irrespective of recent measures to improve service delivery and curb corruption. TII-CMS India Corruption Study (2007) confirms that about one-third of BPL households, across the country paid bribes to avail one or more public services. The study estimated that Rs. 8,830 million, in all, was paid as bribe by BPL households in the last one year, in availing 11 public services. This includes availing their fundamental entitlements and availing basic services, such as access to healthcare, education, water and getting a ration card for PDS, getting registered under the NREGS etc.

Each one of the eight MDGs is intrinsically based on a genuine belief in accountability, which is a pre-condition for good governance, and its effective implementation. The accountability component embodied within the MDGs is the basic understanding that development and poverty reduction cannot transpire in the absence of a governance system where citizens themselves participate fully. Such system is one where citizens dispose of the effective and legitimate means for questioning the ways in which development is promoted.

Corruption is one of the worst enemies of development, in turn MDGs, in India, since it is diverting resources by weakening the institutions, eroding the legitimacy and credibility of state action, and ultimately, by destroying citizens' trust in government and in each other. In this context, Poverty Reduction Strategies in India need to address a broad range of institutional and governance issues through civic engagement. These include measures to improve public expenditure outcomes, strengthen accountability mechanisms, reduce resource loss through "leakages" and corruption, and deregulate excessive government controls. A major challenge for India is the improvement of service delivery and capacity development, at district and local levels, in order to properly implement and monitor very large development programmes, in turn to achieve the MDGs.

Fr. Cherian appointed as Chief General Manager

Rev. Fr. Cherian Thazhamon, President, CESDI is appointed as the Chief General Manager of Rashtra Deepika Company from February 2009. He is the first priest of the Malankara Catholic Church to assume this office in Rashtra Deepika. He holds MSW and Diploma in Journalism and in Creative Writing. He served the Archdiocese as Public Relations Officer of Pushpagiri Medical College, Vicar of St. John's Cathedral, Corporate Manager of Archdiocese, Director of Youth and Family Apostolates. CESDI congratulate Fr. Cherian in this new assignment and wish all the best.

- CESDI Team

Photo Gallery



Rachel & George in front of the 'White House' during the visit to US for participation in the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) Summit of The World Bank in Washington DC, June 2008



CESDI Joint Secretary Ms. Rachel George delivering a lecture in a function organised to observe the World Environment Day (WED) at the St. John's Public School, Baroda, Gujarat chaired by Mrs. Deenamma John, Principal.

Protecting the Mangroves

-Dr. Thomas George, Faculty at the School of Applied Life Science, MG University, Kottayam

Mangroves are essentially tropical and sub-tropical plant communities adapted to living in saline habitats where land and the sea meet. Mangroves are complex faunal and floral association of terrestrial and estuarine origin, inhabiting the inter-tidal, swampy areas. Mangrove resources are available in 117 countries covering an area of 99,000 sq. km, which is estimated to be only 50% of what previously existed. The total area of mangroves in India is currently estimated to be around 6,740 sq. km. This covers about 7% of the world's mangroves.

A study was conducted at the mangrove system at Ayiramthengu in Kollam district of Kerala. The study revealed that at least 9 species of mangroves that could be categorized as true mangroves. The plants were identified as *Rhizophora apiculata*, *Avicennia marina*, *Aegiceras corniculatum*, *Acanthus ilicifolius*, *Acrostichum aureum*, *Bruguiera cylindrical*, *Derris trifoliata*, *Excocaria agallocha*, and *Lumnitzera racemosa*. *Rhizophora* is the dominant species and this is being planted into fresh areas. *Lumnitzera* is a rare mangrove species in the coast of Kerala. A number of mangrove associated flora could also be seen, prominent ones being *Clerodendron inerme*, *Ipomea pes-carpae* and *Thespesia populnea*.

The fauna inhabiting the mangroves include a number of fishes like *Therapon*, *Etroplus maculatus*, *Etroplus suratensis*, *leiognathids*, and the exotic *tilapia* also. A few species of penaeid prawns, the typical mangrove inhabiting fiddler crab and other gastropods and bivalves are also common species that contribute to the diversity of the fauna here. Besides a number of water birds like the common egret, cormorants, paddy bird, brahminy kite etc were also seen. Studies conducted on the water samples and benthos showed that the environment was in

very good condition. The water had a salinity range between 20.8 and 24.8 ppt, a pH of 7.2 to 7.75 and dissolved oxygen content between 5.36 ml/l and 10.72 ml/l which is fairly high for a mangrove area. This is because the area is subject to a fairly high influence of tides and some amount of wave action. The primary productivity was also relatively good being about 0.4mg/l/hr. The organic carbon content was found to be 0.35 mg/g in comparison to 8 – 52 mg/l in other mangroves. Analysis of the benthos showed an abundance of diatoms and nematodes, and the presence of gastropods, foraminifera, copepods, and fish eggs. The local people report the use of mangrove plants or their parts for medicinal purposes, as fodder for feeding goats, and also as firewood. However the use of resources is sustainable largely because about 11 acres of the Ayiramthengu mangroves are now protected by the Government of Kerala since 1996. Security staffs have been appointed under the Department of Fisheries. This staff has been doing a commendable job of collecting seedlings of mangroves and maintaining a nursery. They are actively involved in taking measures of afforestation as well as protecting the mangroves.

According to estimates mangroves in Kerala were down to about 25 sq. km. in 1986 which is further reported to have declined to 17 sq.km. in 1992. About 30% of this is in a degraded or degrading condition due to negative human interventions. CESDI has been seriously concerned with the alarming rate of destruction and damage caused to mangroves in India and particularly in Kerala and involved in awareness generation about the importance of mangroves as well as the need to protect it.



PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS

Tsunami Relief & Rehabilitation

Tsunami, which caused thousands of death and devastation in Asia, hit the Kerala coast as well on December 26, 2004. With out wasting any time CESDI initiated relief activities, which was later supported by World Study Centre (WSC) in Nagasaki, Japan under the leadership of Ms. Kiyomi Nakamura. Along with the relief activities for the affected people, CESDI made long term plans for rehabilitation with 'Bodhana' (Social Service Society of Diocese of Tiruvalla). The activities were focused in two villages, Velanchira (near Kayamkulam) and Punnappra in Alappuzha district of Kerala. CESDI received Rs. 3,36,762/- from the World Study Centre, Japan during first week of March 2005, and the same was directly handed over to Bodhana. CESDI with support of the WSC and

Bodhana adopted two children, who lost both the parents. Cloths and food grains were distributed to the affected families. Damaged houses were repaired and few new houses were also constructed. In a public function held on June 1, 2005 in Punnappra, which was attended by CESDI President Fr. Cherian Thazhamon and Secretary George Cheriyan, books and other study materials were distributed to more than 100 children from the affected families. President & members of local administrative bodies, Bodhana officials and hundreds of villagers attended the function. CESDI jointly with Bodhana made long term plans for the renovation of the 'Pozhi', which is polluted and blocked as an after effect of Tsunami. CESDI is thankful to WSC, especially to Ms. Kiyomi for the support extended to the affected people.



National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC)

-Abraham Kurian, Programme Coordinator, CESDI

The Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India has selected CESDI as one of the Partnering Organisations (POs) in the NEAC for three consecutive years from 2006-07 to 2008-09. The NEAC launched in 1986, is the flagship campaign of the Ministry.

The first awareness event (for 2006-07) on the theme 'solid waste management' was organised by CESDI on

April 20, 2007 at Govt. L.P School, Ayarkunnam, Kottayam. Fr. Cherian Thazhamon, President, CESDI, presided over the meeting. Mr. K.P.Joy, Member Gram Panchayat, Ayarkunnam inaugurated the event. Shri Sunny Aimanom, Shri Skariah K.Y and Shri Suresh G. Nair spoke in the meeting. Mr. Abraham Kurian delivered the keynote address. A documentary film titled 'Surrutha Keralam' of Manorama Vision was screened during the event. About 280 children attended the event. Motivated through the event, children and parents had taken up the construction of a 'vermi-compost pit' in the school campus, children are maintaining the pit now.

A nature trail was organized in Kumarakom on March 29, 2008 (NEAC 2007-08). The event included a 'boat journey' in the backwaters, an awareness event and training in the 'identification of flora and fauna', preparation of a bio-diversity register etc. A total of 43 youths attended the training. Rev. Abraham C. Thomas inaugurated the event presided by Adv.K.K. Kuruvilla. Shri. Ajay N.V. (Kottayam Nature Society), Prathesh P. Cherian

(Director, 360 –Cochin) and Abraham Kurian had given leadership for the training. Fr. Cherian Thazhamon delivered the valedictory address and motivated the youngsters to involve in practical action for conserving the bio-diversity. As a result, a bio-diversity register was prepared and set up a small bio-diversity park.

CESDI organized a Workshop for children on 'Climate Change' at Mar Thoma Seminary High School (MTSHS),



NEAC 2007-08

Kottayam on February 11, 2009 (NEAC 2008-09). 52 students from selected schools attended the workshop. The workshop started with an inaugural session chaired by Sam Mathew, Head Master of MTSHS. Hon'ble Member of the Legislative Assembly, Shri V.N.Vasavan inaugurated the workshop and delivered an address. In his address, he said the rapid urbanization and fast life style is

resulting in climate change. Fr. Cherian Thazhamon, President CESDI delivered the keynote address highlighting



NEAC 2008-09

various issues leading to climate change. In the technical session, Dr. Thomas George, Faculty at the School of Applied Life Science, MG University made a thematic presentation, which was followed by questions & answers session and group discussions. Dr. G. Sunil conducted an eco-quiz. Prizes were given for the winners, which were sponsored by Life Tree Foundation, Kottayam. Abraham Kurian,

Programme Coordinator, CESDI was responsible for coordinating the whole event, Life Tree Foundation, Kottayam was the local partner for organising the event. The media had given wide coverage for the event.

UN - RIM on CSD 16/17, Jakarta

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure follow up of outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment & Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Regional Implementation Meeting (RIM) for CSD 16/17 was organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) in Jakarta, Indonesia on November 26-27, 2007. The RIM discussed the issues, which are of importance to the region, such as Agriculture, Land, Rural development,



Drought and Desertification. CESDI was specially invited for participation in the RIM and was sponsored by ESCAP & UN-DESA jointly, as a member of the Major Groups. Representing CESDI, George Cheriyan attended the RIM and actively participated in the discussions and presented the concerns of the region in various thematic areas.

George was part of the panel on

'Drought & Desertification' and made a presentation on the concerns of the 'Thar' desert area, the biggest desert region in the World.