

General Studies-3; Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

Community participation and awareness in solving water issues

Introduction

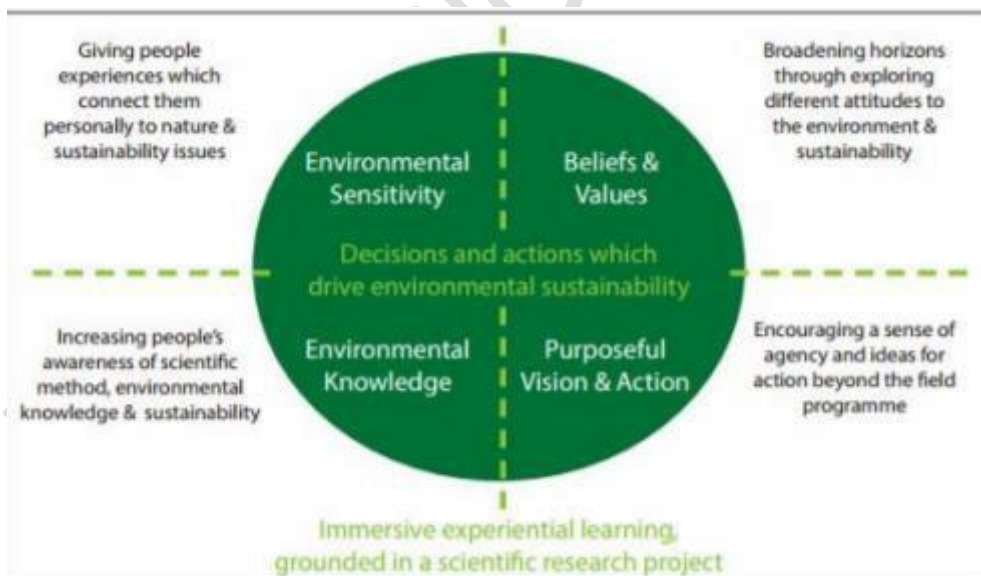
- India is a welfare state, which is envisaged under the constitution of India.
- Therefore, it is a duty of the State to provide basic amenities like water to the public and right to water is also considered as one of the fundamental rights under Article 21 of the constitution of India.
- Article 51 A of the Constitution of India casts duty upon every citizen of India, “to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures.

Scope of community participation and awareness in solving water issues

- As of June 25, 2019, nearly 65 percent of the country’s reservoirs were running dry.
- It is more and more evident that Government alone cannot tackle the situation of depletion of water bodies effectively without public participation.
- A combination of strategies including civic engagement programs will be most effective for promoting civic engagement in water resource protection.
- Public participating affords stakeholders the opportunity to influence that affects their lives.
- Recently we have seen increasing citizen participation in environmental policy making and implementation.
- The concept of civic environmentalism where local people are involved in the planning and decision-making process provides an increasingly popular alternative approach to environmental governance.
- The National Water Policy, revised in the year 2002 wherein it underscored Water Use Efficiency, Community Participation.

Participatory Irrigation Management

- Participatory approaches hold promise not only in mapping and understanding aquifers in urban spaces, but also in developing participatory strategies for urban groundwater management



Indian experiences on conservation of water bodies and participatory approach

- Reviving a Dead Kuttemperoor River

- Kuttemperoor river, after being subjected to years of severe pollution and illegal sand mining, had almost vanished into obscurity, when an initiative led by the Budhanoor gram panchayat in Alappuzha district did the unimaginable.
- The operation, involved 700 labourers including men and women from Budhanoor panchayat, who were employed for the task under the MGNREGA scheme.
- **100 Ponds in 50 Days Drive**
 - In Kochi, the district administration's 100 Ponds in 50 Days have turned out to be a role model for conservation of water sources.
 - After launching the cleaning drive, around 64 ponds in different parts of the district have got a fresh life.
- **Women fought drought by restoring Water Bodies in Karnataka**
 - In the Mandya district, women took it upon themselves to clean and desilt dry lakes and ponds, while the women of Gulbarga revived 28 water bodies.
- **Saving Bangalore Water Bodies**
 - Both the governments as well as non-governmental organizations have made efforts to bring back the health of Bangalore lakes.
- **Paani Panchayat**
 - At Badauna Guggar village in Lalitpur district in Uttar Pradesh, the women have taken charge of water management.
 - The village has a 'paani panchayat', where collective decisions are taken on conserving and using water.
- **Rural Women's participation in Water Management in Maharashtra**
 - The endeavor to have safe and sufficient drinking water helped the women in fighting not only against poverty but also oppression, exploitation and human rights violation.
- **Kudimaramathu project**
 - Kudimaramathu is an ancient tamil concept of participatory management.
 - It indicates the community's role in conserving natural resources.

Way Forward

- The biggest strength of democracy is public participation.
- Any programme cannot be successfully implemented without involvement of people, no matter what kind of policy it has or how effective the leadership is.
- Valuing citizen knowledge, interests and values is important especially at local level.
- Locals can bring value to the decision-making process with unique knowledge of region, and awareness of the social dynamics help negate any potential negative effects of any efforts to protect the environment.