

formation involving all households directly benefiting from the forest resource and formation of a village apex organization were important activities in July 2003. The group members assisted by officials and other facilitators prepared a resource management plan which includes forest protection. The awareness and education activities of the plan resulted in improved awareness about forest fire and the need for fire prevention. The action plan was co-ordinated and managed by a committee representing members from each of the groups.

The most obvious success of the pilot experiment has been the prevention of burning of *Nikawekanda* through community efforts for the fourth consecutive year. It is likely that community efforts will be continued into the future. The paper also describes the results of community engagement including women actions in fire control and forest management. Based on the outcome produced through community actions as well as its potential sustainability, the paper recognizes the pilot as a success story.

The final section of the paper highlights lessons learned from the success story at *Nikawekanda*. The multi sector approach focusing forest as well as the management of the entire resource base, providing community support on vital areas of livelihoods, participatory planning and learning approaches throughout the experiment, the employment of seven different methods aimed at forest protection, encouraging small groups and their federation to the village organization and collaborative work relations with all agencies are highlighted. Recognizing that the full benefits of forest management can only be realized in the future, the paper discusses the need for continued community support until such time the village organization is adequately empowered to manage the forest resource in collaboration with FD officials and others.

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### **Positioning sustainable development as a people's programme -the institutional response**

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Institutionalization and intervention strategies today have come to play a major role in the public discourse. This is a truism of environmental law especially in the third world which is trying to keep pace with the global economic development while also carrying the burden of environmental degradation heritage that was passed on by the unscrupulous development strategies, both indigenous and transnational. Developing countries today are increasingly indulging in redrafting their economic policies within the language of environmental conservation.

Thankfully in India, this redrafting has been conditioned by a conversation between the institutions of governance, the judiciary and most importantly organized groups of the public. Policies and policy implementation in India have been the results of this conversation.

My paper brings out instances of how such conversation can be an effective instrument in making sustainable development an achievable goal. Today in India environment and sustainable development have become a people's programme which is not just aimed at drawing judicial attention but translating such judicial directions into achievable programmes. I highlight here an example of organized group activity making sustainable development not just a constitutional guarantee but a people's movement for better life.

The judicial statement in *Tarun Bharat Sangh Vs. Union of India* (AIR 1992 SC 514) is a reflection of sustainable development becoming a campaign. The court said, "Litigation should not be treated as the usual adversarial litigation. Petitioners are acting in aid of a purpose high on the national agenda. Petitioners concern for the environment, ecology, and the wildlife should be shared by the government". This statement sums up the philosophy of public life today, a conversation between the institutions in the society today.

Such conversation has a demonstrable effect in environmental policy today. Today the administrative policies are directed at insisting environmental audit of every economic activity.