

CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT, NEW DELHI, INDIA

GLOBAL SOUTH MEDIA BRIEFING
DESERTIFICATION

Field Trip to Laporiya, Rajasthan
September 7-8, 2019

Water and its management is the cornerstone of any effort to contain land degradation and desertification. After two days of in-session briefing on various aspects of desertification, we felt it would be appropriate to offer the participating journalists an opportunity to travel to Rajasthan to witness at first-hand and experience how communities are managing water to keep the desert away. Hence, Laporiya.

Laporiya

Located in Dudu block, 90 kilometres from Jaipur, the capital of the state of Rajasthan in western India, Laporiya (also spelt as Lapodiya) has been celebrated for its innovative work in managing water in a landscape which is otherwise only known for its unforgiving deserts and aridity. Over the last three decades, the village, inhabited largely by agro-pastoralists, has emerged as a model of rainwater harvesting and pastureland development (*links to videos and other resources provided below*).

The name ‘Laporiya’ is significant. In the local dialect, it means a homeland of people who can be termed as ‘good-for-nothing’ wastrels. What is significant is the amazing transformation that Laporiya and its residents have effected – the village is now prosperous and villagers are anything but wastrels: their collective efforts have created this veritable oasis in the desert.

And the man and the organization who have been behind this transformation are Mr Laxman Singh, who heads the Gram Vikas Navyuvak Mandal Laporiya (GVNML). Mr Singh and GVNML have played a pioneering role in mobilizing the village community to rejuvenate the village ecosystem through afforestation and protection of water bodies. The conservation movement that started in Laporiya has now spread to 58 villages and is run by villagers themselves. We will be travelling to Laporiya to see some of these rejuvenation and management systems and interact with Mr Singh and his community members.

What will we see in Laporiya – the *chauka* system of managing water

Laporiya's "water warriors" have built two-foot high *chaukas* (small embankments) all around the village, in fields and pasture lands. The *chaukas* hold rainwater; they do not just insure the village against drought, but also protect it from floods. Excess water is diverted across agricultural fields and pastures through canals. As the amount of water stored by the rectangular enclosure rises, it flows into the neighbouring *chauka*, and so on. After reaching the last *chauka*, excess water flows into a monsoon drain along the gradient. The most important characteristic of the system is that it spreads water evenly over a large area, at the same time ensuring that the amount of water does not rise above the level that prevents the healthy growth of grass.

Field Trip managers and coordinators

CSE has researched and advocated on water and its management for close to 30 years, and a considerable part of this work has been done by units in CSE which work with communities on water management. This Field Trip will be coordinated by a team which will include Ms Rashmi Verma, Senior Researcher with CSE's Rural Water and Sanitation unit. Sukanya and Vikas are the other members of this team.

The Field Trip itinerary and essentials

- **Departure from Delhi** -- September 7, 2019, 6.00 AM. Please note – there will be two buses which will ferry the participants. The buses will leave

from Mapple Hotel. En route, we will arrange to pick up any participants who are staying at India Habitat Centre. Delhi journalists who will be registered for the Field Trip will need to board the bus at Mapple Hotel. Make sure you are on one of those buses before they leave at 6 AM. We will not wait for stragglers.

- It will be a six-hour bus ride. Please carry sunshades, good walking shoes or sandals and a hat or a cap. We will provide packed snacks and water on the way. The first stop will be between 9.30-10.00 AM at a roadside eatery where everyone can have a quick breakfast. We should target to resume our journey at 11 AM.
- **Reaching Laporiya:** We expect to be at Laporiya at 2 PM. The villagers there are going to serve us a basic vegetarian lunch. We will then walk to the location of the *chauka* systems – the walk will take about one and half hours. We plan to leave Laporiya by 5 PM.
- **Reaching Jaipur:** From Laporiya, we will head to Jaipur where we plan to stay the night. We expect to reach Jaipur by 7.30 PM. Everyone will have double sharing accommodation in Jaipur for one night. Since we will be reaching late in the evening, there may not be any time to take in the sights of this beautiful city – but if you are lucky, maybe you could catch some of the shops open. Jaipur is known for its textiles, gemstones and jewellery etc. Perhaps our journalist friends from Rajasthan could guide us better.
- **Leaving for Delhi:** On September 8th, the buses will leave for Delhi at 8 AM, after an early breakfast. Please board on time. They will stop on the way once for lunch. Those of you who have to catch their return flights, will be dropped at the airport. The rest will be taken to the hotels.

Resources and links:

A Google search on Laporiya will unload a lot of links to scour through. But you can perhaps find the time to check through some of these before you embark on the Field Trip:

- http://www.rainwaterharvesting.org/Jal_biradari/GVNML.htm
- <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/the--chauka-magic-20492>

- <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/droughtproof-village-in-bone-dry-district--34474>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWceRoNnfU0>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVMI9QyWnDQ>

For any clarifications related to the Field Trip, please contact the following:

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