

VOICE FOR CHANGE

Agrarian Communities' Action Plan on Climate Change

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Voice for Change - Agrarian Communities' Action Plan on Climate Change



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Democratising Global Policy Making and Processes through Participatory Research

What is a Ground Level Panel

The Ground Level Panel consists of 13 farmers and agricultural workers from six districts across Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand who have come together to evolve an action plan on climate change. The expertise of the panellists lies in their lived experience and not as researchers, policymakers or academicians. Over three days from May 29-31, the panelists collectively explored their local realities, experiences, perspectives and strategies they employ to cope with the effects of climate change. This process was aimed to lead to policy formation through the members of the farming community and their informed responses to how Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCC) affects them. The ground level panel process enabled the community members to transition from being carriers of knowledge to the owners and users of knowledge.

Background

Climate Change is a significant issue for India. During the period 1901-2009, the annual mean temperature for the country as a whole has risen by 0.560 Celsius¹ and globally there has been an increase of around 0.74°C in surface temperature over the past 100 years (1906 - 2005). A warming of about 0.2°C is projected for each of the next two decades.² A recent World Bank commissioned report mentions that these are not challenges looming at the end of the century but severe impacts that can begin to appear in the next 10-20 years. Expectedly, the issue of climate change is among the highly visible agenda points in global policy debates. However, there is a distinct lack of community participation. This is of concern, especially in a country like India, where 70% of India's population is still dependent on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture, fishing and forests. People at the margins – the landless, small and marginal farmers, Dalit and indigenous people, rural women and children and other such relatively voiceless communities, are pushed further away from policy debates.

Taking lessons from a Ground Level Panel organised by Praxis in 2013, where a group of 13 people living in poverty and marginalisation came together to respond to the UN High Level Panel's recommendations on what should replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a second Ground Level Panel on agriculture and climate change was facilitated. Praxis, with support from Oxfam India, Dialectics and Partners in Change (PiC), brought together 13 farmers from thirteen habitations located in 6 districts across Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to discuss the impact of climate change on their lives and the need to examine the state level action plans on climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Process and goals

The Ground-Level Panel employed a deliberative and participative dialogue process, during which the 13 participants discussed how climate change has impacted their lives and shared their inputs on the State Action Plans on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals. The panellists derive their expertise from their day-to-day experience. The aim of the panel is to ground policies and global agendas in knowledge from the margins.

This is a collation of the findings and key messages emerging from these deliberations in order to understand climate change from the perspective of agrarian communities. The panelists have deliberated on key questions which relate to the impact of climate change on their agricultural practices, livelihoods, environment and life styles. They have reflected on state and global policies and made recommendations, giving reasons for their recommendations, which are being shared with civil society, government agencies and the media through this document to collectively voice for change.

¹ http://www.imd.gov.in/doc/climate_profile.pdf

² <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp>

Ground Level Panel - The Panellists



Gajodhar (42) is a farmer from Haretha, a remote village in Uttar Pradesh. He owns two acres of land and as produce from his own farm is not enough and hence seasonally migrates for daily wage labour to states like Delhi and Haryana. He is a member of the

village panchayat and has helped villagers access government schemes like the Indra Awas Yojna (IAY) and granting of “pattas” (land papers). He has experienced changes in agriculture in his village over the years such as increased use of fertilisers and pesticides. He aspires for a world where all are given equal importance and where the government facilities are used by even the most marginalised farmer.

Gulab Singh (60) is from Pankhal village, Uttarakhand. He is a farmer with 0.3 acres of land. When he was much younger, he worked as an agricultural and daily wage labourer. He has in-depth knowledge about agriculture that has been accumulated through years of hard work as a farmer and farm hand. He emphasised the need to strengthen irrigation facilities as well as to rejuvenate the traditional crop varieties. He felt that if these needs are catered to, he could continue farming for another 10 years.



Mohammed Iqbal has helped the village in addressing various issues which farmers face by approaching officials at the block and district levels. He hails from Bhoojhaheeri in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. Iqbal is married with three daughters and two



sons, all of who are studying. He owns four acres of land. He relates to the issues and problems faced by small and landless farmers. He tries to help them in times of need.

Ombiri hails from Abdulpur village in Purkazi block of Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. She is married with two sons and a daughter who are studying currently. Ombiri rents out land from landlords to grow crops and sells the produce in the market.

She also works under the Mathma Gandhi National Rural Employment guarantee Act scheme as and when



work is available. She has raised awareness against alcoholism and domestic violence and led protests on such issues. As a volunteer in the Mahila Samakhyia group she has worked on issues of maternal health and is vocal about issues faced by women. She feels women play a very important role in agriculture and emphasises that when men migrate for alternative work opportunities, the woman is overburdened with agricultural work in addition to household chores. She feels such inequity should be addressed.

Prakash Chand (30) is a farmer from Amroli, Uttarakhand. He is an avid singer and a painter. He has spearheaded the formation of a ‘kirtan mandli’ (a community which normally meets once a month to organise ceremonies in the temple to pray) , which has



helped the community in creating a formal community credit system. He helps raise awareness about new agricultural practices among fellow farmers. For the last seven years, he has also been involved in helping the community grow napier grass (used for fodder) to sustainably increase the population of cattle in the village. He understands the needs of the community and has the ability to put forth the words of his fellow farmers before others. He is attached to farming and feels that even during distress, the land should never be left fallow as to avoid erosion of the soil which would further degrade the quality.



Pyaari Devi (55) is a farmer from Phalenda village, Uttarakhand. Her family settled in the village 20 years ago. She owns 0.3 acres of land, which was always enough for their family of five. But in the last 10-15 years, the yield has reduced. They grow a mix of

traditional grains and commercial crops. She is a part of a local dairy run by women and a member of a Self-Help Group (SHG). She is also a trained Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM). During the floods in 2013 she suffered huge losses but is still awaiting compensation. She is very critical of the ways in which government responds in times of crisis. She feels that the government has become corrupt and inefficient.

Ram Lachan Majhi is a farmer from Bashaha, Sitamarhi, Bihar. He has passed his matriculation examination and owns 0.6 acres of land. His wife works at the



Anganwadi Centre. He works towards raising awareness about health and sanitation issues in the village. He is also at the forefront of helping farmers in accessing agricultural inputs and information from the government. He additionally works against corruption in the village. Belonging to Mahadalit community, he is keen on putting forward the voices of the marginalised section of society. He feels that many of the government entitlements such as land, schools for Mahadalits and recruitment in Anganwadi centres are empty promises. He is particularly concerned about incidents of land grabbing by some people from the upper caste communities. He wants to amend such practices for the betterment of his community.



Sabnam Parveen (24) is a farmer from Basaul, Sitamarhi, Bihar. She is pursuing her bachelor's degree and is a volunteer for a local NGO. Her father owns 1.6 acres of land. She has been part of the Nehru Yuva Manch for about a year.

Through it, she has set up women's Selp Help Groups (SHGs) in 23 villages. Her expertise is on the problems which women face in agricultural and household practices. She has also worked with women for better access to government entitlements, including public distribution system. Her family has faced a lot of pressure because of the courageous way in which she puts forward her views related to the problems faced by women in her village. But this has not stopped her from raising her voice.

Shail Devi (43) is from Karhar village in Muzaffarpur, Bihar. She and her family possess 0.8 acres of land. She works as a daily wage labourer as yield from her land is not sufficient for sustenance of the family. She works with women in her community and raises awareness about menstrual and personal hygiene. Being involved with the community members, she understands the role they play in the development of each individual. She feels that nowadays, people are more dependent on market due to declining livestock and agricultural yield.



Sumitra Devi is from Kodiah, Sitamarhi, Bihar, and works as an agricultural labourer and as a cook in the village school. Her family incurs a lot of medical expenses because of her husband's ill health. Two of her three sons

migrate to urban areas for work. She is a volunteer in one of the local NGOs and founded the 'Mahila Kisan Club', a local group that raises awareness about new techniques related to farming.

Uma Devi is an agricultural labourer from Sankarpur, Uttar Pradesh. Her husband owns 0.2 acres of land. Besides working on their field, she also engages in sharecropping. She works as a cook in the primary school and helps the local NGO as a volunteer. She is a staunch believer in equality and asks, "If everyone has the same blood running in their veins, why is there discrimination in society".



Upendra Paswan (46) is from Karhar village of Muzaffarpur, Bihar. He has passed his matriculation examination and is married. He owns 0.8 acres of land. He also takes up wage labour during lean agricultural periods for his family's subsistence. At the

local level, he raised various issues related to the development of the village like lack of electricity, involvement of villagers in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and increase in agricultural productivity. He helps raise awareness about new techniques and methods in agriculture. He has sound knowledge about vegetable farming. He feels that climate change has led to increased dependency on markets for agricultural inputs, particularly for seeds. He is seen as a mediator for many social disputes within the village. He also works towards preventing alcoholism and increasing literacy.

Urmila Devi (38) is a farmer from Phalenda, Uttarakhand. She belongs to a family of eight members. She owns 0.2 acres of land and engages in agriculture as well as livestock rearing. About a decade ago, this amount of land was enough for the family but due to climate change, the yield from the field has reduced. As a result, Urmila Devi's family has become dependent on the market for basic sustenance. She grows a mix of traditional grains and crops on her field but the yields have deteriorated in the last few years. She is also part of the local Selp Help Group (SHG). She feels strongly about her experience related to women's engagement in agricultural practices and the role they play in adoption of new farming techniques.



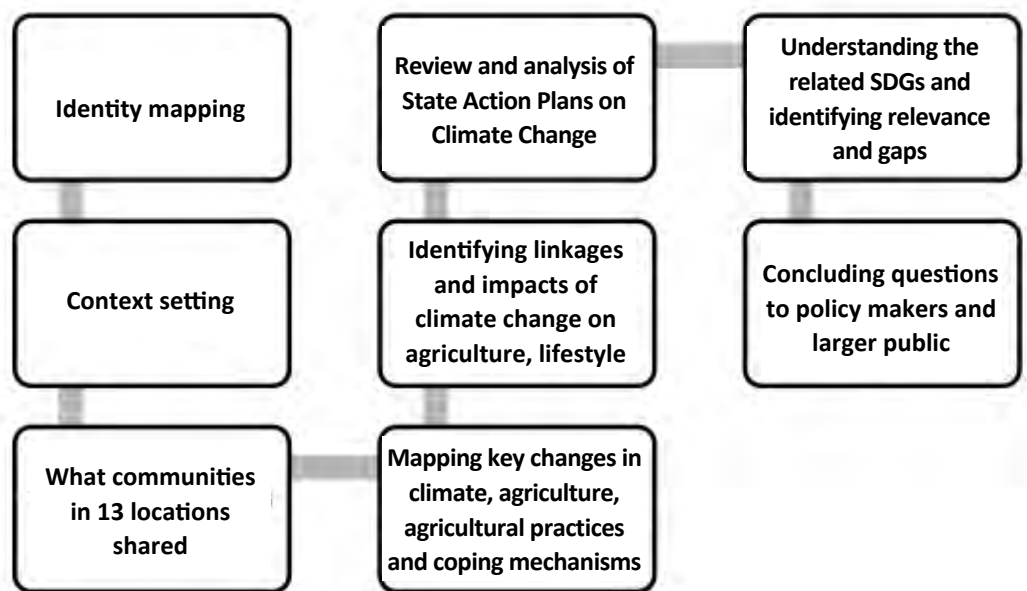
The word cloud here illustrates the identities represented in the group. The sizes of words in the image below represents the frequency of occurrence of these identities.



The 13 panelists are from agrarian communities in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. They represented several identities - there were seven women and six men in the team, of whom one was less than 25, four were in the 26-40 age group and eight were above 40. Three of the panellists were landless, while the others owned some amount of land. The group had religious diversity, with one following the tenets of Dr Ambedkar, two Muslims and the rest Hindus. There were eight farmers, five who worked as agricultural labour and five who engaged in daily wage work along with working on the fields. There were eight Dalit panellist and five from the OBC community. There were also three who migrated on work to supplement their income.

The Process

The 13 GLP participants spent three days dialoguing and deliberating various issues in the context of climate change and agriculture, set against the backdrop of the Bihar, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh State Action Plans on Climate Change as well as the proposed Sustainable Development Goals being finalised by the United Nations. The broad discussion themes and process followed are indicated in the adjacent figure.



Kal aur Aaj (Historical Transect)

In order to understand how communities experienced different kinds of climatic changes and their resultant impacts, a participatory historical transect was facilitated in the various locations. A series of variables evolved

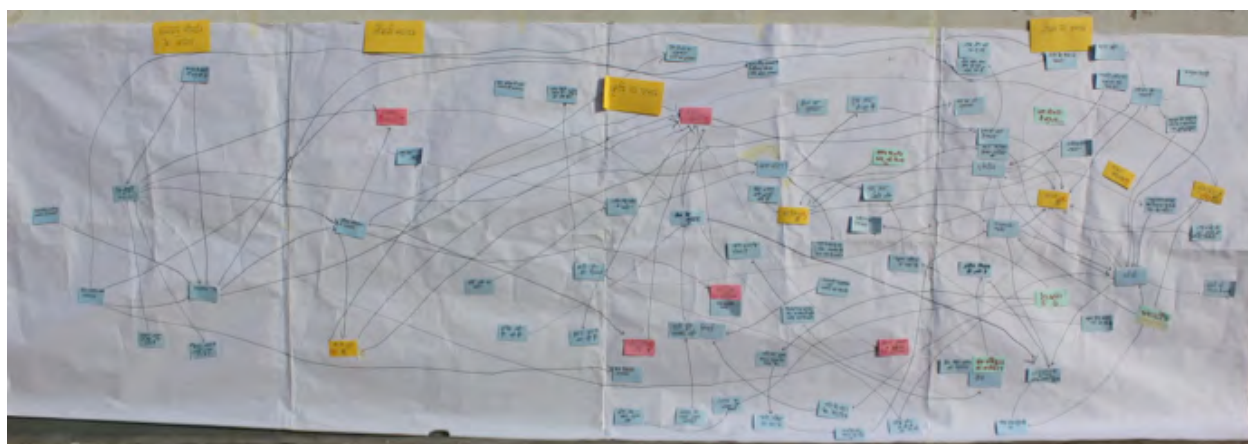
from the field interactions were collated together to understand which specific locations among the thirteen (represented by the panelists) experienced these.

For the community, climate change has a multitude of variables which range from climate to agricultural production and from agricultural practices and other vulnerabilities which result from this to their coping mechanism for the same. It would be inappropriate to simplify this complexity as climate change.

	State	Bihar					Uttarakhand					Uttar Pradesh		
		Banbirwa	Kodiahi	Kharhar	Asiya	Pattsharma	Chauki	Dilsaud	KoshKhandi	Kuroligaon	Phalenda	Bhojaheeri	Haretha	Shankarpur
A Climate Change														
1 Drought		Y		Y	Y	Y					Y	Y	Y	
Increased dry spell		Y					Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
2 Floods		Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		Y	Y			
Cloud burst							Y	Y	Y	Y				
3 Erratic rainfall		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
4 Unseasonal rainfall		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Reduction in snowfall							Y	Y	Y	Y				
5 Frost/hailstone		Y									Y	Y	Y	
6 Rise in temperature		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
B Change in Farming														
1 Low productivity		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
2 Increase in pest attack		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
3 Loss of cattle		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
4 Increase in cattle disease		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
5 Increased use of fertilisers and pesticides		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
6 Loss of food diversity		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
C Changes in Lifestyle														
1 Migration		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
2 Increase in disease			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
3 Drudgery of women			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y	Y	Y	
4 Loans from moneylenders		Y		Y	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y	Y	
D Other Vulnerabilities														
1 Landlessness		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					Y	Y	Y	
2 Sand mining												Y	Y	
3 Hydroelectric dam							Y			Y				
4 Child labour		Y									Y	Y	Y	
5 Lack of Irrigation facilities		Y					Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	
6 Ineffective implementation of social security and livelihood programmes		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
7 Sharecropping		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y					Y	Y	Y	
8 Cattlesharing		Y	Y	Y	Y						Y	Y	Y	
9 Selling of land			Y		Y						Y	Y	Y	
10 Non-receipt of compensation		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
11 Cutting of forests/ tree-reduced tree cover		Y		Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	

Jal-Vayu Jaal (Climate Change Trap)

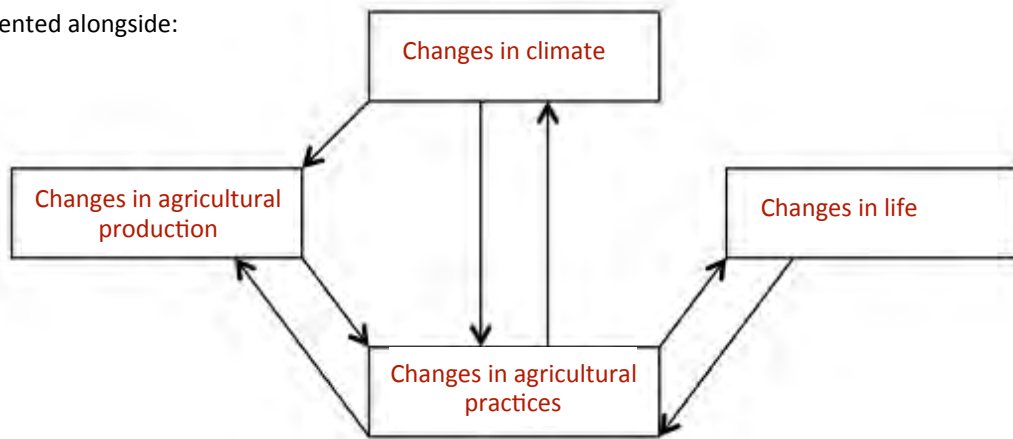
Through the three days of deliberations the panellists discussed the changes in climate over the last few years and the resultant changes to agriculture, the modifications they had to make to their agricultural practices and how they coped with these in their lives. They mapped the relationships between these variables on a causal loop as seen in the image below:



Bhool Bhulaiya (The Labyrinth)

While the web highlighted the complexity between the specific manifestations of climate change, its causes and consequences, the panellists further analysed the issue and concluded that they were trapped in a maze and it was difficult to get out of it.

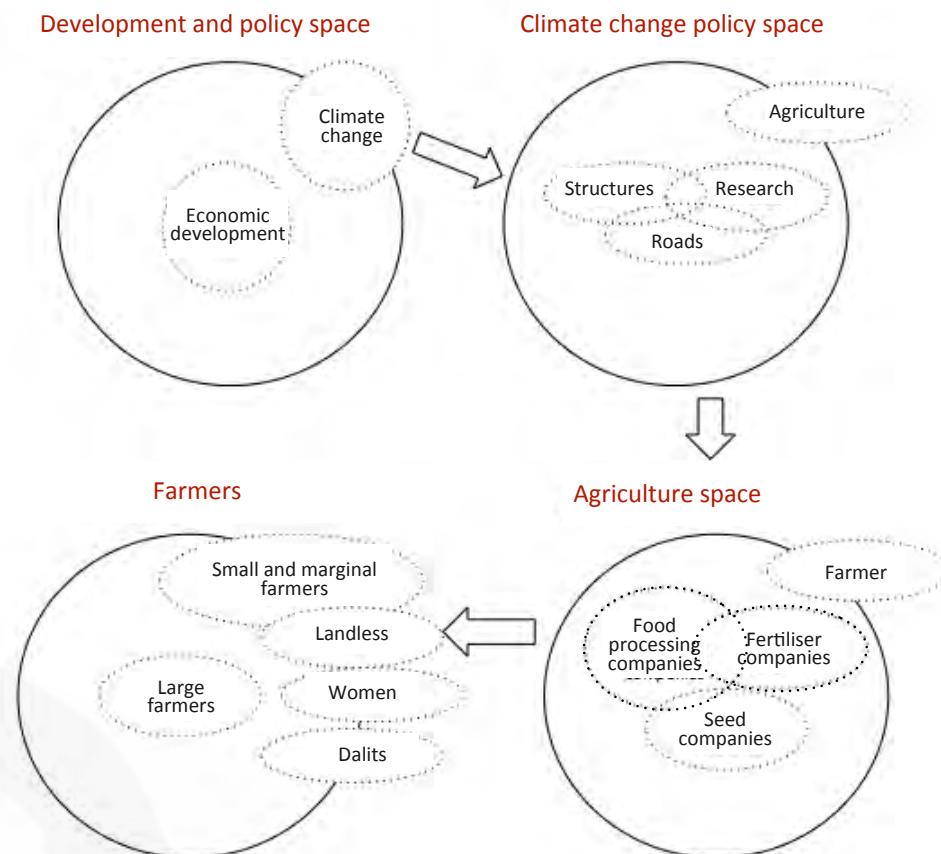
This maze is presented alongside:



One of the examples that the farmers mentioned is that they were encouraged by the State to use fertilisers to improve yield. These were supplied widely and while it did serve the purpose initially, they had to keep increasing the quantity of fertiliser and water as years went by. What has happened is a complete depletion of soil quality and an accusation that farmers are contributing to climate change with the use of fertilisers.

“Agriculture is not about farmers anymore”

The participants went on to analyse and share how this manifests itself by marginalisation of issues, phenomenon and people - things that should be at the centre are continuously pushed to the periphery. They detailed this through the image below:



State Action Plans on Climate Change

The panellists went through the three state action plans on climate change in detail, to understand what it contained related to agriculture and water conservation, shared their comments and identified some gaps in the same. The tables below detail key relevant elements from the respective state SAPCCs as well the comments from the GLP panellists on the same.

BIHAR

S No	THEMATIC AREA	BIHAR SAPCC STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	GLP'S COMMENTS
1	Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Building institutional linkages - developing strategic plans •Collating, disseminating and flow best management practices - expanding automatic weather stations to GP level and linking them to insurance mechanisms •Resource conservation to minimise soil/ water losses •Improving irrigation efficiency - solar, wind power systems for irrigation •Weather services, early/ warning systems •Integrated nutrient and pest management •Conservation agriculture •Capacity building of stakeholders •Support women's role in adaptation •Gender disaggregated data to enable gender specific planning and interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use of vermi-compost should be encouraged •Compensation should reach the poor and marginalised as invariably it is taken by the influential people. •Share croppers do not get access to benefits (subsidies) and compensation •It is difficult for women share croppers to get access to land •Adequate canals from the river that can keep the fields well irrigated as water is a big problem. • Providing vacant land to poor for agriculture •Access to seeds is difficult
2	Water resources/ Irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Water resource strategies •Review hydrological and weather observation stations and services •Ground water monitoring and geohydrology networks •Monitoring erosion and carrying capacity •Monitoring surface and ground water quality •Adoption of modern technology •State Water Policy Framework •Revival and repair of traditional systems of water storage •Conservation and micro irrigation •Conservation of wetlands •Involvement of PRIs •Ground water recharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Boring and electricity •Canals to improve linkages with the rivers so that irrigation can take place •Lift irrigation provisions •Sluice gates enabled dams to release water as and when necessary •Measures to combat floods that take place when the rivers from Nepal get flooded and the water is released indiscriminately •Large scale irrigation solutions are not feasible nor preferred as the area is prone to flooding
3	Livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Action on hunger and poverty •Implement Agriculture road map with focus on farmers rather than farms •Address humanitarian dimension to agriculture as well as food security •Transfer of technology and extension •Income generation schemes •Marketing - breed management •Livestock entrepreneurship •Strengthening of veterinary and dairy services •Improved extension services •Surface and ground water schemes •Drought proofing •Community owned electricity operated tube wells •Ground water monitoring •Capacity building of functionaries •Renovation of traditional irrigation system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There is the need for dairies •Need to look into livestock diseases as animals are already reducing and are also vulnerable to diseases •Measures should be taken to provide fodder to prevent livestock death • Grazing land should be there •Landless people do not have access to livestock rearing as a livelihood opportunity

UTTARAKHAND

S NO	THEMATIC AREA	UTTARAKHAND SAPCC STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	GLP'S COMMENTS
1	Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in adaptation research capacity • Policy changes • Infrastructure for water management / soil conservation • Relocation to more productive areas and practices • Insurance coverage for farming • Improved information • Dissemination of CC information / adaptation options • Alternate livelihood options • Exploring role of private sector / financial sector • Research projects/initiatives proposed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most government workers share information on climate change etc, mainly with the people who are located in major areas and not with the ones who stay in remote areas like on hill tops. Need for information flow to these areas. • Government assistance furthering agriculture - In case of fallow land, government should take it up after five years and cultivate it. • Need to incentivise agriculture
2	Irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of improved hydrological observation stations • Hydro-meteorological and hydrological data • Ground water monitoring • Monitoring erosion, river carrying capacity • Surface and ground water quality monitoring • Appropriate policy framework > incentivising water harvesting Encouraging non-agricultural type developments • Regulations/frameworks for water withdrawals of industries – royalties, licenses, subsidies and incentives for recycling and recovery, revision of water tariff based on cost recovery principle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent water pollution in three ways – a) Check on industries for pollution so that effluents don't poison the crops b) Make industries responsible for treating polluted water; c) penalise errant industries. • Rainwater should be stored in tanks near the villages and for irrigation the stored water can be diverted to the small ponds located in the fields. . • Need to construct check dams which would help retention of water on one hand as well as divert the water into the fields.
3	Livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investment ▪ Capacity to conserve and manage livestock for sustainable income ▪ Policy support ▪ Opportunities in animal husbandry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government should provide good breed of livestock and invest more investment should be done by the government. • Income generated from livestock should not be taxable. • Livestock rearing should be incentivised. • Loans at low interest rates for livestock rearing



UTTAR PRADESH

S No	THEMATIC AREA	UTTAR PRADESH SAPCC STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS	GLP'S COMMENTS
1	Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Climate Change and suitable agro based systems to be priority topics through agro-science centres •Effective extension of direct sowing systems to discourage sowing of rice through transplantation •Consultants to be appointed to take advantage of clean development mechanism •Effective regulator to be arranged for scientifically monitoring the climate change strategy •Thrust on organic fertilisers, pesticides, farming and production of organic fertilisers •Planned programs designed for agro forestry and horticulture. •Soil and water conservation programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmers need to get timely and appropriate information from whatever channels are easily accessible to them • While direct sowing might be more effective to do this, its is not so profitable to us and as a result small farmers will be further marginalised
2	Irrigation / Water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Water efficient cropping •Ponds to store the rain/ flood waters in river basins to maintain minimum water flow in rivers •Reduce subsidies in water prices •Drip irrigation and sprinklers to be used •Regulate ground water extraction •Ground Water Control and Management bill •Irrigation and Geology Departments to be re-organised and strengthened •Early warning system to monitor water flow and weather parameters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More information about this needs to be shared and made available at the block level •The older ponds and lakes that the Government has allowed private people to take over (especially mining companies) and destroy or fill these should not be allowed. They need to protect ponds and lakes. •Subsidies are meant for the poorest and most marginalised but the benefits never go to them. It is usually the Government and other big companies that get the subsidy and are negligent with water use. •Small farmers should be provided subsidised pump sets and sprinklers •If the Government implements control on ground water they need to make an alternate arrangement for this so that we get access to water. •The poor farmers are unable to access ground water and they should be prioritised to get water •Canal system to be developed

Having unpacked the action plans on climate change of their respective states and identifying the positive elements and gaps in these, the panelists then went on to discuss the proposed Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations which were related to their context.

Sustainable Development Goals And the Ground Level Panel

They identified two goals associated with them and shared their thoughts and recommendations on the same. These are summarised in the table below:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)	WHAT THE SDGs PROPOSE	WHAT THE GLP SAID
<p>Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishermen • Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices • Double the agricultural productivity and incomes • Facilitate timely access to market information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus on vulnerable communities and increasing outputs is very positive, but how this will happen is not explained. If farmers are never involved in any policy process or discussions then how will they find an appropriate way to do this? • The goal is not intrinsically linked to agriculture but the focus is on high yield and production so that hunger can be eradicated. • It does not talk about inequality within agriculture • Inputs are made by farmers as well as fertiliser companies, but when the crop fails only farmers lose. The companies should also be made liable or not be eligible for any subsidy and pay a higher tax
<p>Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards • Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning • Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning • Operationalise the Green Climate Fund • Promote mechanisms for raising capacity, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalised communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is imperative that our resilience is built and for the Government to work out a way to receive compensation from disasters quicker - these natural disasters will only increase with climate change • All discussions related to policy matters are made in capital cities far away from us where people are least affected by climate change and at the village level its behind closed doors. Communities need spaces to be consulted and to discuss • The idea of the green fund is noteworthy but there is a fear that with the current levels of corruption, the money meant for people will never reach them

The panellists highlighted through their deliberations that climate change, agriculture and related phenomenon have discrimination embedded in them, thereby requiring a lot of political will and negotiation, to change. There needs to be recognition of the fact that there are a set of people with specific vulnerabilities and that the poor and marginalised are not a homogeneous group. And goals set can therefore not be achieved through a mechanical process. The relationships among communities and between the community and the state are important and require transformation.

Once this process of discussions on the various goals and plans was completed, the panellists deliberated on a series of questions that arose from their discussions. They brought the three-day long process to a close by raising four questions which they thought were pertinent to raise with policy makers and the wider public to seek some answers.

Their key questions are summarised below:

1. Climate change is complex and we have seen that multiple issues are linked - it began as a web of connections and is now a labyrinth in which we are trapped. The need for high yield, use of fertilisers and its consequent impacts -all together, have reinforced a vicious cycle in which the farmer is now trapped? What is the way out of this?
2. The biggest challenge is that climate change is not the focus of the government. Within that, agriculture gets a minimal mention and farmers seem to be cut out of the picture altogether. Farmers' voices are nowhere to be heard. Why is this so and why are we not consulted?
3. The agricultural sector is a profitable one with traders, companies and other large interest groups earning profit. Why is it that farmers bear the loss continuously? Why do farmers not reap any benefit and pay a heavy price as well?
4. Experts say that agriculture is an important contributor to climate change and blame farmers for their practices - such as excess use of fertilisers and pesticides. Why does the Government not provide us with knowledge and inputs for sustainable agriculture?

Quotes from panellists

The Government and fertiliser companies have a nexus and that's why fertilisers are promoted and we are compelled to use them --- **Mohammad Iqbal**

Loans the government takes from the World Bank should benefit poor, not fill pockets of some powerful people --- **Gajodhar**

The floods in 2013 destroyed my fields, but nobody listens to me because I'm a woman, so I haven't got any compensation yet --- **Pyari Devi**

People don't have water to drink, from where do we give water to animals? --- **Prakash Chand**

What is the point of having lots of money if even a single crop is not grown? You cannot eat money --- **Ram Lachan Majhi**

With men migrating for work, we face a lot problems, such as managing the field and the children alone. The problems increase during floods when we have to move with our young children to embankments to keep ourselves from getting washed away by the water --- **Sumitra Devi**

Everyone knows about ill effects of alcohol, yet there is an alcohol shop at every step because our lives are worthless. They don't have any value --- **Gajodhar**

The quality of rice has gone down while price has risen. We now spend Rs 24/kg on rice that used to cost Rs 2.5/kg. The quality is also poor, but we cannot afford anything else --- **Prakash Chand**

With continuous sunlight, crops and seeds get destroyed --- **Upendra Paswan**

I don't get to taste even a drop of milk from my cow, but the people sitting in Delhi eat the cream --- **Ram Lachan Majhi**

Sharecroppers have to pay the labourers Rs 700, food and tobacco to get their field ploughed, and the yield is worth only Rs 1200 --- **Pyari Devi**

Livestock has declined so much that milk has to be bought from dairies --- **Shail Devi**

If the Indian Constitution followed in the way Dr Ambedkar visualised it, we would all be developed now. We all have the same blood, so why is there discrimination? --- **Uma Devi**

The rural employment guarantee scheme is not serving its purpose. The need of the hour is to create job opportunities --- **Ram Lachan Majhi**

Everyone working on dam sites are all engineers and people from outside. Why? Aren't we capable enough? We want job opportunities here --- **Urmila Devi**

If the Government hears what all we are saying here, then we will be rich and all our issues will be gone! First we find a way to put oil in their ears. - **Pyari Devi**

Labourers are being substituted by machines that do more efficient work than us humans. But how is that our fault?" - **Ombiri**

I am 60 and if our area get irrigation facilities, I can happily cultivate next ten years of my life --- **Gulab Singh**

Earlier, floods were useful in planting three crops. The earth was fertile enough for sowing even four crops. But that has changed --- **Sabnam Parveen**

Dissemination of the Ground Level Panel on Agriculture and Climate Change -
The Constitution Club of India, New Delhi.



"The agricultural sector is a profitable profession. But we are not the ones reaping the profits. Traders, companies and other large interest groups are earning profit while we are bearing the losses continuously."

This quote by Gajodhar was one of the most hard-hitting statements made by the panelists at the dissemination organised for civil society, media and experts on June 1st. Besides sharing their action plan, the various charts and outputs made by them during the three-day Ground Level Panel process was exhibited at the venue, The Constitution Club of India.

Summing up the irony of agriculture, he added: "We are forced to sell our produce for Rs 20 a kilo, whereas, it is made into chutney, bottled, branded and sold at Rs 80 for 100 grams. Why does this happen? Nobody asked me before fixing a rate for my produce."

The panelists also highlighted the apathy of state-level as well as global policies for agrarian communities. "Initially, the government encouraged the use of fertilisers by giving subsidies and promising increased yield. But the result was the continuing need to increase the dose of fertilisers and water, ultimately leading to the depletion of soil fertility," Ram Lachan Majhi said.

The panelists spoke about their discussion on the proposed Sustainable Development Goals related to sustainable agriculture. Highlighting its gap, they said that it was all about ensuring high yield to eradicate hunger and not to address their plight.

Pooja Parvati, Research Manager at Oxfam India, set the tone for the discussion by highlighting the forces of marginalisations in understanding and experiencing agriculture and climate change.

Ramesh Sharma, an activist from Ekta Parishad, who was one of the experts at the interaction recalled the fact that no other country has as high a rate of farmer suicides as India. He wondered at the logic and the practicality of several policies oriented on climate change and stressed on the need to use local and traditional knowledge.

Food and Agriculture Organisation India representative Kevin Gallagher, who was also invited to speak at the event, promised to convey the voices of the farmers and agriculturists to the relevant audiences globally.

The panellists also released the ***Voice for Change: Agrarian Communities' Action Plan on Climate Change.***



Organisations that have supported us in identifying participants

Adithi, Sitamarhi, Bihar

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