

**Centre for Environment Concerns
Hyderabad, India**



1984 - 2003

Celebrating
Twenty Years
of
Collective Endeavour

INSTITUTION

Impact and Success an Overview

- ❖ Introduction of environment subject in school syllabus.
- ❖ The first *State of the Environment Report* of Andhra Pradesh
- ❖ CEC partners AP State Govt. in preparation of the *State of the Environment Report 2003-04*
- ❖ Research and advocacy on environmental hotspots in AP.
- ❖ Enhance capacities of NGOs, Govt agencies and activists to address environment & sustainable development.
- ❖ Community mobilization in natural resource management.
- ❖ Land restoration and afforestation through waste management and use of fly ash.
- ❖ "*Foreign Funding in Andhra Pradesh*" - a pioneering study.
- ❖ Research, advocacy and projects for agriculture in semi arid areas.
- ❖ Strategic partnerships to develop technologies for sustainable farming systems
- ❖ Negotiations and Networking on issues of debt, development, food security, poverty and safety nets in international forums - FAO, World Bank, UNCTAD, WTO
- ❖ Advocacy and approaches for people-based participatory forestry
- ❖ Networking of NGOs and facilitating independent civil society movements
- ❖ Food assurance - an innovative approach to address hunger in chronic food deficit drought prone areas.
- ❖ Dialogue on sustainable use of river water for poverty reduction and agricultural development.

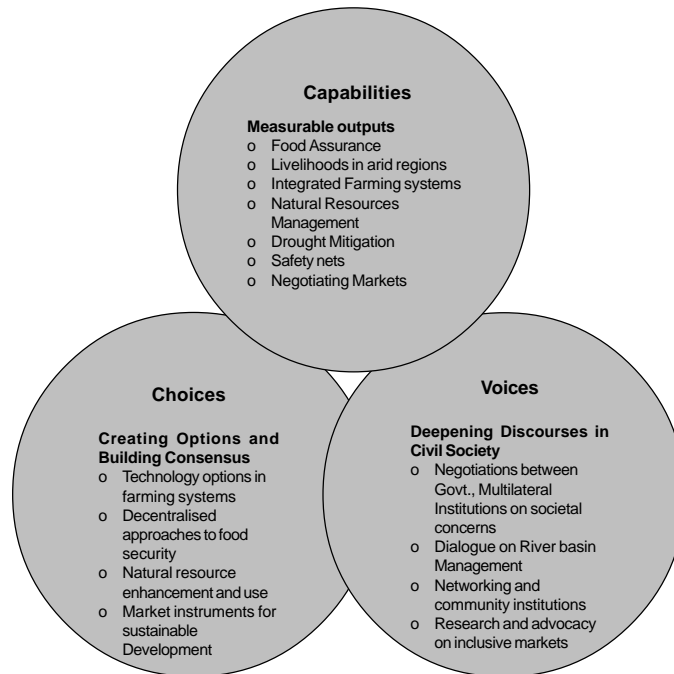
The Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC) is a non-profit organisation founded in 1984 by a group of well known academics and activists to address and advocate sustainable development, environmental management and improve the livelihoods of the poor. CEC is a registered society under the Andhra Pradesh Public Societies Registration Act and to receive international funding under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. CEC donors include Multi-lateral agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Global Environment Facility, Govt. of India agencies, Canadian, US and European organizations, WWF, Private Corporations and Individuals. Our banker's are Indian Overseas Bank, Secunderabad and an annual budget of ten million rupees.

The activities and management of CEC are a staff responsibility with a Board of Directors, drawn from different fields that oversee the affairs of the organisation. CEC activities involve working closely with, or assisting civil society formations, volunteers, motivated professionals and rural communities. A core team of ten qualified personnel with demonstrated commitment to the mandate of the Centre with skills in research, extension, technology development, knowledge management and community-centered participatory approaches to sustainable development. CEC works with volunteers drawn from academics, experts and activists in furthering the projects. The team is headed by K. S. Gopal, who has a management and teaching background and with the development sector for over two decades.

MANDATE

The mandate of CEC is to address poverty and the environment management through activities including extension, research, pilots, institution building, synergy with civil society and Govt in the semi-arid tropics which have a weak natural resource base and the largest concentration of rural poor. CEC's action are identified to address the existing gaps in knowledge and action, or innovation in terms of process and products to creatively further larger societal concerns through praxis. From inculcating environment consciousness among activists and in large 'development' projects, improve the natural resource endowments and enhance human potential to negotiate, CEC addresses a portfolio of interlinked ideas and synergetic activities towards its mandate.

ACTIVITIES PORTFOLIO FROM THE YEAR 2000 ONWARDS



CEC recognizes its core competence and validity for working on the development of rain-fed agriculture and natural resource management for the semi-arid tropics, drought mitigation and de-centralized food, livelihood and water security. Simultaneously it will continue its research and advocacy on macro-economic development issues and policies for sustainable development business models to address poverty, including processes, institutions, approaches and markets.

- ❖ Innovations
- ❖ Technology partnerships
- ❖ Food assurance
- ❖ Farming systems
- ❖ Market deepening
- ❖ Community institutions
- ❖ Societal consensus
- ❖ Policy reforms

(1) CAPABILITIES

a) Food Assurance

Chronic drought, lack of irrigation, and government policies relating to agriculture and food procurement has created a few resource-rich areas that feed the rest of the country. The food deficit areas are characterized by dry land farming in the habitats of tribals and marginalized people. These areas lack political influence, physical infrastructure, and the markets are

underdeveloped and highly exploitative. These are the areas with large concentrations of poor and hungry people. A study of these markets and consumer behavior shows that, in such areas the cost of food to the consumer is at least thirty percent higher. Food does not necessarily get priority in the expenditure basket.

Food Assurance

- ❖ Through this scheme, poor households get their monthly grain requirements on an assured basis, just as salaried people get their monthly pay cheques.
- ❖ The entire scheme, managed by village-level women's self help groups (SHGs), is the most sought-after food intervention reaching poor households in areas having the highest mass of hungry people.
- ❖ Within two years the scheme has provided 60,000 tons of rice in Andhra Pradesh and now has extended to drought areas in the other states of Rajasthan and Jharkhand.
- ❖ It also changes the focus of our approach from monetary-based development to other resources that are available in the economy for advancing the well being of our people.

While on one side we witness widespread hunger, the nation has unprecedented surplus food stocks and ability to produce even more. CEC felt that addressing this paradox with a sustainable business model alone could help to meet the food needs of the poor and ensure that none are denied food.

CEC pioneered the idea in a small way through the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, an autonomous body implementing poverty alleviation projects for the World Bank and other international donors, to extend the scheme to select chronically drought-prone areas using Government food stocks. CEC piloted a scheme of "Food Assurance" in the chronically food-deficit and remote areas with small habitations to reach monthly cereal needs to the hungry.



The first meeting on food assurance in K.V.Pally Mandal of Chittoor district



Self Help Group members supervising the unloading of rice bags in Laveru Mandal of Srikakulam District

This model of Food Assurance is being expanded to the drought-prone tribal areas in other states. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand are the three states which have evinced keen interest in delivering food assurance while working with other crops such as wheat and jowar. The Government of India has extended this approach to cover select drought areas in the country. CEC is providing the technical and managerial support for extending the scheme. A further extension of this scheme is being piloted to bring the Food for Work programme within this ambit, in which labour rather than contractors and displacing people with technologies, thus challenging and forcing a change in the factors of production.

b) Livelihoods, Farming and Women

The semi-arid tropics are where the bulk of the poor live in India. In a country known for land scarcity, we find that most productive lands were lying fallow and farmers were losing interest in dry land and rain-fed agriculture.

Global experience also demonstrated that most interventions and projects in improving farming systems in semi arid tropics have failed or had very little success. This poses a challenge to development organizations. CEC chose to work on issues of livelihood, food security and natural resource management suited for such areas. The field experiments, ideas and advocacy for attention to these areas having the largest concentrations of the poor and hungry are ongoing with some measures of success and learning. CEC was the South Asian NGO representative at the World Food Summit.



- ❖ 1,653 women are involved in the implementation of these initiatives.
- ❖ A corpus, used as a revolving fund among the groups is currently worth Rs.3,500,000/-
- ❖ Villagers have constructed a Community Centre building, investing over Rs. 300,000/- with half the contribution coming from CEC.
- ❖ The harvest from this intervention is supporting food kitchens in extreme drought areas.
- ❖ The corpus provides free food, books and clothes to vulnerable households.

CEC is the only NGO in the state to be involved in a UNDP funded project under their Country Co-operation Framework on Food Security. This recognition of CEC is due to its pioneering fieldwork and advocacy on rain-fed farming systems and livelihoods. The project focuses on "women as food farmers" in the twenty most backward villages in the Nyalkal and Jarasangham Mandals of Medak District in Andhra Pradesh.

Under this programme, ownership and usufruct of land is by poor women who work collectively and teach development workers by bringing in their perspectives, experience and expectations from development interventions, enabling learning, innovation, synergy and creativity.

It helps make investments in areas which women see as crucial for their economic and social empowerment, significantly improving their bargaining and negotiating power with the rest of the male-dominated and exploitative economy.

c) Natural Resources and Livelihoods in Semi-Arid Areas

Current Project Approaches

- ❖ bringing back into production the fallow lands
- ❖ enhancing employment opportunities through innovative leasing and collective farming arrangements
- ❖ micro-capital as investments for increasing incomes
- ❖ development of Government lands as pastures, seed multiplication and post-harvest technologies
- ❖ village level grain storage and food security using traditional coarse cereals and local crops
- ❖ accessing of markets to move up in the value chain.
- ❖ reducing the drudgery of farm-work among women through capacity building and technical expertise
- ❖ household lighting through solar PVC systems

This is a project supported by the Canada India Villages Association, a Vancouver-based donor agency. It is experimenting and promoting sustainable farming systems for small and marginal farmers living in the semi-arid areas. It covers interventions on land, natural resource management, comparative advantage assessment and participatory forestry and biodiversity development, including plantation of a wide spectrum of local species using technologies that can tackle the harsh drought conditions. CEC and village level community groups have focused their attention on various aspects of social development, risk management, safety nets and public action.



Meeting of villagers, CEC staff and technical experts at the CIVA-funded building for women's activities



Women collective farmers standing in front of leased land and their sorghum crop fields

Along with investments for income generation activities and in building livelihoods, the fund plays a crucial role in building the capacities of the women to manage their own affairs. While the three-year project has ended, the activities are continuing due to the revolving fund developed from the project, and by leveraging finances from other institutions. The next phase has taken ten months to conceive, consult and develop a proposal that builds on the existing capabilities. It is innovative and addresses the multiple dimensions of rural community life. It is worth the while in terms of effective use of financial resources, and articulates the requirements of women's groups in planning sustainable development interventions.

d) Drought Mitigation

An area engaging CEC is the issue of safety nets. This assumes greater import as CEC field areas have recurring drought and seems to be a permanent feature in the semi-arid tropics. CEC works closely with the Raithu Sahaya Committee, a citizen's initiative, in addressing relief measures to the poor caught in drought situations. The Food Assurance scheme has emerged in the course of CEC's fieldwork on developing livelihoods in semi-arid tropics and relief measures taken to address hunger.

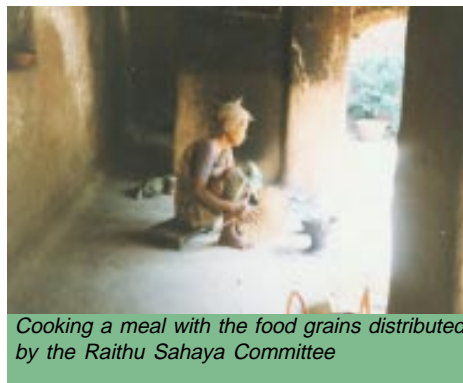
The funding for these activities comes through small donations coming individuals and some institutions. CEC is developing a drought code and a relief framework including specific steps such as forecasting, involvement of local institutions, resource mobilization and measures/partnerships by Government and development agencies to this recurring calamity.

Drought mitigation work

- ❖ Documenting drought and its effects to seek relief measures
- ❖ Lobbying for appropriate and reorient mitigation
- ❖ Running food and work camps to offer food to the needy and fodder for cattle
- ❖ Evolving long term measures and social safety nets in disaster management



Convenor of the Raithu Sahaya Committee distributing foodgrains in Chittoor District



Cooking a meal with the food grains distributed by the Raithu Sahaya Committee

e) Negotiating Markets

Poverty reduction efforts and income generation for the poor, in the experience of CEC, has not delivered the desired results. It is often a zero sum game. This is because the entire dimension known as the market, is overlooked in NGO activities. We have at best succeeded in serving existing customers and their rising demands at increasingly lower prices. This is because markets are growing, but not expanding. We observe lateral rather than a horizontal expansion that could give opportunities to products of the poor to find markets. CEC is clear that merely increasing production or productivity through processing-based value addition is not enough, unless the markets provide a favorable framework for the poor. This failure of the market can be illustrated from the fact that India has huge food stocks along side with growing hunger. It can be further seen by the share of employment falling in relation to other factors of production. Thus technology and finance capital get greater attention than natural resources and employment, in exploitative policies of economic development.

A historical study of rural commerce shows a bruising encounter between the traditional vendor and better-equipped new entrants, especially corporations. An important adjunct to this is the emergence of branded goods, with even common household items coming under its expansionist drive. This then sets standards and manipulates Government policies and consumer preferences, leading to a virtual control over the purchasing power of the people. Products get out of the reach of the meagre incomes that poor people earn, and their expenditure basket is skewed towards goods that are not needed in the first place. At the same time, market expansion is driven by vertical rather than horizontal growth. Thus money is being sucked out of the rural areas leading to increasing disparities and attendant poverty.



Solar drying of crops by women farmers in Nyalkal Mandal of Medak District



Meeting with women farmers in Nyalkal Mandal of Medak District

Negotiating Markets

- ❖ CEC has, with the assistance of OXFAM Trust, made effort to look at how food markets can be used effectively in addressing the issues of Food Security.
- ❖ This is a new but very worthwhile and exciting area of CEC work wherein the existing distorted monopoly favoring a stunted market development can be altered for a more dynamic people-centered process that can enhance exchanges, local economies, and relations between the factors of production towards enabling the excluded millions to join the economy rather than merely serve it.
- ❖ There are no simple answers, but addressing them is vital as the role of markets is central to the nature of our society, our ecology and the happiness of our people.

f) Services

Towards enhancing its in-house staff capabilities and understanding of other issues, CEC undertakes selective consulting work. They include training, research and evaluation. Along with providing learning opportunities for CEC personnel, it also raises some financial resources for the organisation. These self-generated funds are invested in areas and are subjects of short-term high civil society involvement and interest and are mostly specific current issues of local importance. CEC money is used to support meetings, enable travel, pay small stipends, or just meet a charity need. Such matters need spot investment decisions and no supervision.

Based on its experience and learning, CEC assists other institutions in enabling improved understanding and management. CEC is assisting the Rural Telecom Foundation (RTF), formed by a group of Non-resident Indians to promote low cost and easily accessible rural telephony using the very old 'party line' concept. A pilot has been implemented in Parvathagiri Mandal in

Warangal District and another in Ranga Reddy District, its evaluation is underway with the Ministry of Telecommunications for wider application.

Occasionally, CEC expertise has been provided for specific inputs. It developed the Environmental Management Framework for the World Bank-aided \$500 million Andhra Pradesh Poverty Reduction Projects. 1,200 Nodal Officers from all over the state, involved in the AP Government flagship participatory programme "Jamnabhomi", were trained by CEC using the Large Scale Interactive Process (LSIP) methodology developed by the Satyam Learning Centre, a leading information technology organisation. The Young Feminist Collective holds cultural and literary events that help the coming together of young women to share and learn using non-conventional methods, facilitated by CEC. CEC is assisted holding of stakeholder consultations for the AP Government's "State of the Environment Report 2003-2004".

(II) CHOICES

a) Technology Options & Farming Systems

CEC assisted many agrarian households in A.P following a spate of suicides by cotton farmers in the mid- and late-1990s. The initial focus was on providing immediate cash relief to the affected families, counseling and assisting the families in getting their entitlements as provided by the Government. This was followed by a People's Tribunal, which pointed out, that the suicides were because of farmers falling into a debt trap where the major investments were in buying pesticides.

AP had the highest usage of pesticides, with most of it being used in cotton cultivation. Cotton farmers were using several rounds of very lethal combinations of synthetic pyrethroids. CEC then took upon the task of education of farmers that later led to the need for developing alternatives which can eliminate or as a first step, reduce the use of insecticides. This led to the search for seeking alternate technologies, which were not readily available, to address the varying conditions and soil types in which cotton was being cultivated. There were however, several recommended alternative practices coming from industry, agricultural researchers and farmers. But most of these recommendations were anecdotal in nature and the specific conditions in which they worked effectively were not available.

Farming Systems in Cotton

- ❖ The APCOT field implementation involves five NGOs in four districts intensively covering six hundred farmers directly in sixteen villages cultivating cotton in varying conditions.
- ❖ A strong independent technical team, comprising of entomologists and agronomists along with experts in Participatory Technology Development, work through Farmer Field Schools.
- ❖ A basket of technologies and options for varying situations, and in line with the goals of APCOT, is developed and updated each year at an open Round Table involving experts, scientists, practitioners and researchers.
- ❖ The funding is shared among the partners with CEC's contribution coming from the Centre for Environment Education who manage the Global Environment Facility (GEF) small grants



CEC staff with cotton framers in Kulkacherla Mandal of Ranga Reddy District



Farmers' Field School and field observations conducted by CEC's FAO-trained staff

At the initiative of CEC, four partners, each with specific competence and agreed commitment came together with CEC as the facilitation center. Thus emerged APCOT, a partnership involving Agriculture Man Ecology (AME), a foundation involved in promoting sustainable farming with good results in groundnut, Syngenta Ltd, a multi-national business firm committed to reducing the use of insecticides, ThinkSoft Ltd, a professional consulting firm strong on knowledge management, and the Centre for Environment Concerns which has demonstrated capabilities of promoting partnerships and working with networks. The shared investments in this project is rupees Six million annually.

b) De-Centralized Approaches to Food Security

Every one acknowledges the value of de-centralized village level grain banks that communities can access, use and control. Though CEC has been working in this area and has experienced limited success, it sees the need to invest more resources. A key problem is that many 'success' claims seem to be hype as in reality there are very few examples of the successful implementation of village-level grain banks. The learning process has become difficult and has not generated much value. Towards this end, the Ministry of Food of the Government of India, and the Natural Resources Institute, UK, together took on CEC as the lead agency, and came together to undertake an action research project.

- ❖ Food consumption cannot be postponed is the key to food access and central in the strategies propoted by CEC.
- ❖ Local and traditional grains production and consumption is on the decline even while its nutritional value ir recognized by everyone.
- ❖ CEC community managed food storage and grain banks is a way in getting these foods in the diet of the poor people.
- ❖ The grain banks from local produce collections are supplemented with purchases from the market as in some areas the production of cereal cultivation is not to their compartive advantage.
- ❖ CEC has recognized that storage, processing and shelf life of traditional cereals are bottlenecks and is looking at available new technologies in colloboration with national and international organizations.



Grain Storage Bin constructed in Mirzapur village

This involves looking at different models, building case studies on them, understanding storage needs or methods preferred by the communities. In order to build and offer learning and adaptable “packages” on de-centralized grain management for traditional and coarse cereals, we are also looking at issues of operational scale and mechanisms, evaluating the sources of the grain banks and looking at the institutional aspects and dynamics of successful de-centralized approaches to food security.

(III) VOICES

a) Policy & Economic Reforms : CEC and Multilateral Institutions

Andhra Pradesh is the first state in India to implement comprehensive state-level Structural Reforms with the assistance of the World Bank. Better known as the AP Economic Restructuring Project (APERP), it involves several levels of reforms – fiscal, social and physical infrastructure and specific projects in the areas of health, education, poverty, power, transport, forestry, irrigation, ports etc. In short, it covers the entire management of the state. AP has the distinction of receiving about half of World Bank lending to India. In view of CEC’s research on multi-lateral funding to Andhra Pradesh, CEC has been actively involved in advocacy on the various unfolding reforms and works closely with organizations and activists representing areas such as human rights, gender, farmers, trade unions, professionals and NGOs.

The state became the first in India to undertake reforms and economic re-structuring under the aegis of the World Bank. This compelled CEC to enhance its involvement in terms of research, public consultations and advocacy. This include disaster mitigation mediating medical care, workers in IT and outsourcing sectors, community forestry and sefty nets. CEC works with various institutions and friends on key aspects of these reforms. In the area of agriculture, CEC brought out the issue of land use - especially the trend of land being left fallow which has increased several fold in the last decade, and the widespread use and changes in sharecropping in agriculture.



CEC published the first study in the country titled “Foreign Funding in Andhra Pradesh” which was sold out within a year of its publication. In 1997 the World Bank came up with the Andhra Pradesh Agenda for Economic Reforms. CEC has undertaken several consultations on specific issues and works closely with like- minded researchers. Increasing advocacy activities led CEC to examine the larger scenario, especially the macro-economic framework and the role of nature of the involvement of international development agencies in A.P.

b) Power Sector Reforms in Andhra Pradesh

As a part of the comprehensive economic reforms in AP, far reaching changes are being introduced in the electricity sector also. These changes are being brought out as a part of the World Bank supported and financed AP Power Sector Restructuring Programme which involves

an expenditure of more than Rs. 25,000 crore over a seven year period. The changes include bringing in private players in generation and distribution of power and introducing regulatory process in the sector. The AP Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC) was appointed accordingly to regulate transmission and distribution of power and set tariffs for different consumers.

All these far reaching changes are new to the people in the state. Neither the state government nor the APERC made any meaningful attempts to educate and enlighten the masses about the new systems and people's role in it. CEC took an initiative in this regard and helped in forming the People's Monitoring Group on Electricity Regulation in 1999. PMGER draws its representatives from farmers, domestic consumers, and employees working in the sector, environmental groups and also NGOs. Since its inception it is working as a resource group for individuals and organizations interested and working in the power sector. It is also intervening in the regulatory process through its extensive presentations before APERC during public hearings. It is recognized as an important and influential organization of people in the power sector.

- ❖ The People's Monitoring Group on Power Sector Reforms has been working closely with the Regulatory Authorities.
- ❖ The Health Group has been engaged in holding workshops involving multiple stakeholders on mediating medical care.
- ❖ The AP Participatory Forestry Committee has been engaged in natural resources management especially with reference to forests.
- ❖ The Poverty Think Tank has been looking at the myriad schemes and their validity in alleviating or addressing poverty and advocating safety nets and risk reduction.
- ❖ CEC has also been active on the NGOs Committee on the World Bank and was invited to participate in their discussions with Bank officials including the International Monetary Fund, especially in relation to CEC inputs on Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSP).

c) Global Movements

CEC is also deeply involved in forging a strong global movement for freeing the Global South from Debt and domination. CEC is a member of the Steering Committee of the Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development.

The APMDD is an international coalition, part of the Jubilee South campaign on debt and works closely with social movements, people's organisations, communities, NGOs and political formations. We believe that the debts of the South have been paid many times over in financial terms, and more importantly, in human terms by peoples of the South. To this end, CEC facilitates the exchange of information, materials and experiences. It also conducts education, research and training activities and services apart from facilitating solidarity and political support. CEC was invited to meet the President of the World Bank, Mr. James Wolfensohn and other officials at Delhi, Prague and Washington.

d) River Basin Management

Water is central to life and is a universally shared resource. Water is increasingly becoming a highly contentious issue and a growing profit industry. Control over water bodies has gone away from people's control while government attention has focused only on massive infrastructure projects. Engaging multi-stakeholders is vital for any improvements in the water sector. Citizens

must wrest the initiative from the state and technocrats in the management of water. One specific condition hastened the need for several organizations to come together – the current proposals of the Andhra Pradesh government for the massive development of the Godavari mid-basin water utilization. CEC has been reposed with confidence to be the facilitator for a multi-stakeholder River Basin Management Dialogue on the River Godavari involving over a dozen leading people's organisations and over a hundred activists. This Dialogue is sponsored by multiple institutions and has received funding of Rs. 7.5 Millions from WWF International.



The Godavari Dialogue

- ❖ Titled the Godavari Dialogue, the process covers research, consultations, stakeholders' workshops, alternative proposals, solutions and engaging with the Government in the formulation of policy.
- ❖ CEC moved early in the stage of the preparations of the technical plans by government experts as at this stage, there is greater prospect of acceptance and lobbying for new ways and approaches rather than be seen as obstacles by engineers and bureaucrats after they give the final touches to the technical plans.
- ❖ Over one hundred people are involved in this process directly, and are supported by the Living Waters Programme, WWF International, Gland, Switzerland.





(C) Centre for Environment Concerns, 2003.

Address: 3-4-526/40, Narayanaguda, Hyderabad - 500 027

Telephone: 91-40-2756 4959 . Fax: 91-40-2756 3017

email: hyd2_cenvicon@sancharnet.in; cechyd@eth.net