

Gram Bharati Samiti (GBS), India: Inputs to specified questions on the ministerial declaration of UNEA-5

Q.1

Uncultivable wastelands should be brought under forestation

Millions of hectares of uncultivable land are lying unused in developing countries. For example in India alone there is **63.85 million ha** such land is available. Bringing these lands under forestation in collaboration with local communities, civil society and youth should be made mandatory. We have practically implemented it over a small piece of 100 hectare waste (uncultivable degraded sandy) land in district Jaipur, India. It gave tremendous results.

The project implemented as 'Gandhivan', (the forest of Gandhi), in the name of the father of the nation of India is today a forest consisting of over one hundred thousand trees of various species of fuel, fodder, timber, fruits, shade etc. Activities implemented at Gandhivan includes stabilizing sand dunes to seize the process of desertification, plugging gullies to check soil erosion, conserving rain water and regenerating endangered indigenous plant species etc.

It was recognized widely and received several national/international awards and appreciations including 'Indira Priyadarshini Vriksha Mitra Puraskar' and the 'Ford conservation and environment award'. It solved the problem of green fodder and water for the cattle of 5,000 villagers of the area, reduced co2 and strengthened biodiversity.

Our empirical experience says, if 'Gandhivans' are attempted at wide scale over the wastelands, it would be strengthening actions for the nature to achieve sustainable development goals.

Q.2

Proactive coalition of CSO, women, youth and community people of the area should be formed at regional, national, state and district level in developing countries. Wastelands in a model size of 50 to 100 hectare should be allotted to them for forestation and ancillary purposes instead of allotting to Industries for commercial purposes. They should be provided with minimum essential resources together with time bound measurable indicators of achievements for a period of 3-5 years. Providing onsite training and exposure visit of a model project (Gandhivan will always welcome) before starting implementation would be useful. We may realize great results.