

The Plenary ‘Saar Sangam’ held in New Delhi

TARAGram Yatra 2022, themed ‘Co-creating Green and Inclusive Economies’, concluded at the Plenary ‘Saar Sangam - Seeking Policy Solutions through Practice’ in New Delhi on 24 November, 2022 at India Habitat Center, New Delhi. At this event, Yatris from the three geographies, i.e., Agra, Bundelkhand, and Mirzapur came together and shared their learnings during the Yatra.

They brought with them learnings that helped form a launching pad for the discussions in the plenary. Present at the plenary were leading global experts, who steered the breakout sessions with the Yatris geography-wise to understand their learnings and visualise them in the national and global contexts. The three breakout sessions then merged into a panel discussion, which addressed the main issue by factoring in the learnings from each Yatra. These discussions held in the plenary have been transformed into a proceedings report, which will be shared with policymakers for adaptation at scale.



Mr Shombi Sharp, The United Nations Resident Coordinator in India speaking at Saar Sangam in New Delhi

The event began with a welcome by Mr Shrashtant Patara, CEO, Development Alternatives (DA) Group followed by a Video Screening of the TARAGram Yatra 2022. Dr Ashok Khosla, Chairman, DA Group spoke on ‘Development Alternatives’ 40-year Yatra’ where he provided a glimpse of DA’s 40 years journey! The Keynote address was given by the Chief Guest Mr Shombi Sharp, The United Nations Resident Coordinator in India. He highlighted that, “The world is going through a polycrisis. We really need effective solutions to mitigate the problem of [climate change](#). There is much coming out of India right now that gives us hope in the fight against climate change. DA has been very much in this fight.”

Proceeding further, Ms. Zeenat Niazi, Senior Vice President, DA Group, moderated a discussion titled "Lessons from Yatra." This discussion's goal was to disseminate the lessons learned by Yatris from the three geographical regions of Agra, Mirzapur, and Bundelkhand during the TARAGram Yatra. The three thematic areas of DA's intervention are represented by each geography. Agra stands for Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency, Mirzapur for Inclusive Entrepreneurship and Livelihood Security, and Bundelkhand for Climate Resilience and Ecosystem Restoration.



The panel discussion on ‘Lessons from Yatra’ underway

After the session on Lessons from the TARAGram Yatra, there was a panel discussion on Co-creating Green and Inclusive Economies. The panellists were as follows, Dr. Ashok Kumar Ghosh, Chairperson, Bihar State Pollution Control Board; Dr. Suman Sahai, Chairperson, Gene Campaign; Mr. Stuart Worsley, Director, Green Economy Coalition; Mr. Navanit Samaiyar, Head Future Skills, NASSCOM; and Dr Vibha Gupta, Chairperson, Magan Sangrahalaya Wardha. The three major questions that were addressed by the panellists were as follows:

- Who are the players involved in the shift to greener economies?
- What tradeoffs might there be throughout the transition?
- What are the takeaways from grassroots innovations and experiments that need to be mainstreamed into policy?

In the beginning of the discussion, Dr Ashok Kumar Ghosh emphasised on the traditional wisdom originating from rural background and that it should not be abandoned. While adding to the discussion, Dr Suman Sahai highlighted the need of understanding indigenous knowledge and technology. Furthermore, Mr Stuart Worsley emphasised upon the importance of people on the margins. He exclaimed, *"Invest in the margins of society; they are the ones suffering."* A different perspective was shared by Mr Navanit Samaiyar, emphasising on the traditional uses of technology and how those uses have changed through time. He highlighted the value of technology and stated that it can democratise any tool but added that it is crucial to learn how to use it responsibly. In addition, he stated that regardless of the field of study that one chooses, everyone should study cybersecurity and the usage of AI. He suggested that design and innovation should be added in our curriculum.

Towards the closing of the panel discussion, a summary remark was made by each of the panelists starting from Dr Ashok Kumar Ghosh. He pointed out that whenever a new technology is introduced, it disturbs the equilibrium. So, it should be our responsibility to minimise this disturbance. Dr Suman talked about the need for a policy on use and ownership of Indigenous knowledge. Mr Stuart emphasised that there is a need to enable participation as a policy objective. *"We live in knowledge silos, so all of this knowledge needs to meet to create an equitable and sustainable ecosystem,"* Mr Navanit said when discussing the value of traditional knowledge.



The audience at the Plenary 'Saar Sangam' in New Delhi