

Today's Paper » NATIONAL » TAMIL NADU

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UN award for water conservation group

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It began as a modest experiment by a group of water professionals back in 2004. Their aim then, was to improve water service delivery and achieve sustainable and equitable water supply.

Today, this has blossomed into a movement of building sound water management practices and more collaborative social relationships among all stakeholders in the water sector.

The Centre of Excellence for Change (CEC), whose genesis is traced to the group, has been given the United Nations Water for Life Best Practices Award 2013.

It was ranked second in the category – ‘best participatory, communication, awareness-raising and education practices’ for the award.

Instituted two years ago by UN Water, the United Nations’ coordination mechanism for all water-related issues, the award is given as a mark of recognition of best practices adopted to ensure sustainable management of water resources.

The CEC, which has been striving for water and food security in villages, was chosen from nearly 50 applicants from various countries. It will receive the award during World Water Day celebrations next year.

Members of the CEC, a broad umbrella for professionals from various departments related to water and food sectors, said are able to reach out to the community, thanks to attitudinal and behavioural changes, initially, among themselves, towards adopting water management practices.

Given their objective, the members spend a great deal of their time and energy in rural parts of the State. But they do not overlook Chennai and its needs. On World Water Day (March 22), these officials of eight different government departments, volunteered to create awareness about water conservation in the city.

The CEC’s founder mentor Vibhu Nayar said that from just five persons in the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board, the volunteers have grown to over 2,500 persons.

The focus is now on creating awareness and a participatory approach among village residents to conserve resources, adopt crop diversification and in turn increase agricultural income. The Centre has covered 20 districts so far in the State. It also assists other states, including Rajasthan, Karnataka and Jharkhand, he said.

Centre for Excellence for Change has been striving for food and water security since 2004

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