



Press release

Announcement of the winner of the Kyoto World Water Grand Prize

Mexico City, March 22nd, 2006. – Joe Madiath, Executive Director of Gram Vikas, an NGO from Orissa, India, was today announced as the winner of the inaugural edition of the Kyoto World Water Grand Prize, during the closing ceremony of the 4th World Water Forum. The Prize, organized every three years during the World Water Forum, was being awarded for the first time, to Madiath, for his excellent contribution to building dignity through community-managed rural water and sanitation, thus improving the livelihoods of the poor and marginalized in Orissa, one of the poorest states of India.

Madiath greatly impressed participants at the Forum and a 12-strong International Panel of Judges with his active stance that the poor should not be treated as sub-standard citizens. Also impressive were the innovative institutional mechanisms and means of equitable social participation which had achieved an 85% reduction in incidence of water-borne diseases, 100% immunization of children and enrollment of children in school, in which attendance of girl children is over 80%, in Orissa, directly affecting 140,000 people.

“The Forum Secretariat was greatly encouraged by the high level of participation in the Prize, which received over 400 valid applications, and this made our task in evaluating them extremely difficult”, commented Cesar Herrera, Secretary General of the Forum and a member of the Kyoto Prize Committee. “However”, he added, “when we saw the presentations of the 30 shortlisted candidates, we were reassured that we had truly succeeded in identifying some excellent local solutions to water-related problems. The winner truly represented the type of initiative that we were aiming to bring to the Forum”

Presentations of the 30 shortlisted candidates took place throughout the week of the Forum, with open involvement from Forum participants. This gave an unprecedented networking opportunity between these local actors from all over the world, and allowed the many lessons learnt from their experiences to be shared at the global scale. These initiatives thus contributed to the fulfillment of the overarching theme of the Forum, “Local Actions for a Global Challenge”.

“We were very pleased to see that we had truly reached the grassroots level”, said Hideaki Oda, Secretary General of the Japan Water Forum, one of the organizers of the Prize. “The candidates’ activities were excellent examples of what truly can be done to solve local water issues as a booster for development, using innovation and stakeholder participation. All of the local actions presented can and hopefully will be scaled up and replicated in other contexts to help the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”, he added.

The World Water Forum is an initiative of the World Water Council (WWC), an international organization based in Marseilles, France, and is organized every three years in collaboration between the WWC and the host country, which, in the case of the 4th Forum, is Mexico. It was also announced during the Forum that the 5th World Water Forum would be held in Turkey, in March 2009. The Kyoto World Water Grand Prize is awarded every three years in conjunction with the World Water Forum.

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