

## Talk on Water and the Future of Bengaluru

Date: March 3, 2016

Venue: Bengaluru

Shri S.V. Ranganath (IAS Retd.), Board Member – CSTEP, delivered a talk at CSTEP on ‘Water and Future of Bengaluru’, as the first part of a series of lectures that he will be delivering on a range of governance-related issues. Policy making in India faces the challenge elaborated by Herbert A. Simon, Nobel Laureate, of Bounded Rationality – limited options. It is important to define the problem at hand clearly, so that the solutions can be determined by the problem.

Shri Ranganath introduced the subject of talk by highlighting the grossly inadequate supply of water in the city in comparison to its demand. Urbanisation in Bengaluru will continue in the coming years, and the demand for water will only increase. Meeting this increasing demand for water is the core problem that policy makers are trying to solve. He described the various sources that supply water to the city, including lakes, rivers and underground water; and how the water supply network has been established over the years. Next, he enlisted the major problems plaguing water supply, namely pollution, scarcity and Unaccounted For Water (UFW).

Estimates by experts show that approximately INR 40,000 crore will be required to solve Bengaluru’s water woes! From a governance perspective, his advice to policy makers is – break down the various components of this cost and address the low hanging fruits first. He mentioned two options – finding new sources of water and improving the efficiency of water use – that are available to water administrators. The first option is not viable because the water sources (rivers) have been exhausted, there are jurisdiction and legal problems with drawing more water and it is a capital-intensive endeavour. The second option not only provides reasonable solutions for solving the problem, but also financial co-benefits.

According to Shri Ranganath, the key factors that can help improve water governance in Bengaluru are:

- Strong leadership and effective administration
- Public education and their inclusion in decision making and cooperation
- Use of technology to increase accountability, transparency and better service provision
- Provisions for incentives to be given to citizens who perform well and efficiently in managing water
- Reduction in the number of government agencies in-charge of water management
- Development of engineering solutions to counter encroachment and sewage treatment problems
- Multi-dimensional analyses and close monitoring conducted by think tanks to help form robust policies and improve the quality of life of the lesser privileged people.

*Reported by Arushi Sen, Senior Communication Officer, CPE*