

Press RELEASE



Campaigner concludes 540-km climate justice march as nations conclude talks

Bangalore: 12th December 2011

On 10 December 2011, as the United Nations negotiations on climate change in Durban entered into a cliff-hanger extended session, CSM's Pushpanath 'Push' Krishnamurthy ended an epic 540-km walk for climate justice amidst keen media interest in Mysore, India.

A veteran climate campaigner, Push was not alone. As he entered the final stretch he was joined by 250 people from all the districts that he had covered, including the H H Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji of the 1000-year old Suttur Mutt monastery that hosted the arrival celebration at journey's end.

Push's walk had begun fifteen days earlier in Bababudangir, Chikamagalur district, the birth place of coffee in the Western Ghats of south-western India. The idea behind the walk was to raise local awareness of the impact of climate change on the Western Ghats – one of India's most vulnerable regions and a biodiversity hotspot.

The Ghats are home to India's largest coffee plantations, where 9 out of 10 coffee growers are small holders. The growers have been the custodians of Western Ghats, but their livelihoods are now under threat. Hundreds joined Push en route – including farmers, religious leaders and school children – with more than 1,500,000 people reached through local radio.

The walk was chosen at a time when policymakers from around the world were meeting 5000 miles away at COP17 in Durban to determine global action on climate change. Of the 30,000 plus farmers he encountered, not a single person was aware of these crucial UN negotiations, their importance to their lives, or the role of the government of India in the talks. Most spoke of changes in the climate with rains being untimely and heavier - sometimes even an unprecedented ten inches in a day.

Organised in partnership with the [Karnataka Growers Federation \(KGF\)](#) and [CSM](#), the Walk was designed to bridge this knowledge gap as well as collect local evidence of climate destabilisation and ideas to counter its effects. The Walk sought to both engage and empower rural growers and local communities on the vital issues of climate impact and adaptation.

In preparation for the Walk, KGF had mobilized its -strong constituency of 55,000 coffee growers and sent a message demanding leadership from India to Jayanthi Natarajan, minister of environment and forests and head of the Indian delegation at COP17. Farmers got behind this with a missed call phone campaign through mobile and SMS, telling India's leaders "don't miss your leadership call".

CSM maintained a daily website with updates and Push's regular blogs containing highlights of the Walk and learnings along the way.

In his reflections on his feat, Push said: "The small and medium farmer may be invisible at the UN climate talks but they are taking their own action. Every day that is delayed in a climate agreement, a day is taken away from the life of a small farmer."

As he concluded his walk and as farmers joined him in hundreds each day, some came back again and again. Push said: "They wanted me to carry their voice to Durban and strengthen the hands of the India team - to stand up and show leadership and be counted".

In his message to world leaders at COP17, Dr. Pradeep N.K., President of KGF, said: "If you continue to batter the ecology of planet Earth, nature can respond so fiercely it could destroy humanity and other living beings. Please be cautious. Let us all work together in saving this planet before it is too late. KGF is committed to saving the Western Ghats, the lungs of south India, by building a sustainable model and we are ready to partner with people across the globe committed to this".

Reflecting on the outcomes of the UN talks, Malini Mehra, founder and chief executive of CSM, said: "The UN has concluded an agreement that provides face for governments, but is far short of what the science demands. Legally-binding commitments from major polluters have been kicked into the long grass. Every passing day increases the risk to vulnerable communities such as those Push has met. If we are to avoid the worst extremes of climate change, we will need more such efforts of partnership and leadership."

The Walk marks the first step of a longer-term partnership between CSM and KGF to help rural communities respond to the impacts of climate change, and show leadership in building a more sustainable coffee industry.

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Note to Editors:

Pushpanath ‘Push’ Krishnamurthy is a veteran global climate campaigner with more than 30 years of distinguished service in international development NGOs such as Oxfam. In 2009, he completed a Walk for Climate Justice from Oxford, UK, to Copenhagen, Denmark, at the landmark UN climate conference, COP15, in the city. Push works as Senior Associate at CSM where he jointly leads an ambitious Sustainable Coffee initiative and work on Social Business.

Full details on the Walk and Push’s daily blog can be found at: www.gopushgo.com

CSM is an independent, non-profit organization promoting entrepreneurship for the triple bottom line – people, planet and profit. Founded in 2000, CSM works in the public interest to create more open, inclusive and sustainable societies. Our focus is on India but we bring an international perspective and network of associates, and a multi-sectoral, inter-disciplinary approach to our work. In 2007, CSM launched the path-breaking ‘Climate Challenge India’ campaign to promote domestic leadership on climate change and has produced ‘In Good Company’, a unique film profiling corporate leadership on climate change in India. CSM is at the forefront of climate advocacy internationally and also hosts the India Climate Portal. www.csmworld.org www.indiaclimateportal.org

About KGF

[Karnataka Growers Federation](#), (referred to as KGF) is state-level producer’s federation of mainly coffee growers. The Federation has 21 associations affiliated with it and a membership of more than 50,000 farmers. The role of the Federation is to work for the welfare of the coffee growers

The **Western Ghats** is the hill range that is the lungs of the Southern India. It consists of pristine forest cover and some of the rarest flora and fauna. Its biodiversity is threatened by a number of issues, including climate change.

Push's journey took him past coffee plantations along the river Hemavathi, the main tributary of the Cauvery- also known as the southern Ganges; then across to Hassan district and Kodagu, as he headed to Talakaveri the birth place of the Cauvery. From there, it was a final push along the plains to Srirangapatina, in Mysore district of Karnataka, where the Walk concluded.

UN CLIMATE TALKS – COP 17

[The Durban Climate Summit , COP 17](#), was held from November 28 to December 8, 2011 in South Africa where more than 194 countries come together to decide a climate abatement plan to combat climate change and reduce global emissions .The key of this COP summit was an agreement for a second five year plan of Kyoto Protocol which has to be signed by all nations. With this 2nd commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and prospects for a global deal hanging in the balance there needs to be will to resolve to work boldly for a another commitment to period of the Kyoto Protocol to resolve the climate issue and turn the tables on global warming.