Regional Consultation on

The Drylands of Rajasthan

Organised by

WOTR-Centre for Resilience Studies, WOTR, Pune

in collaboration with

Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur

Venue: Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur

Date: November 23, 2026

Background

The dryland landscapes of Rajasthan are characterised by variable rainfall, recurrent drought risk, high evaporative demand and, in many locations, significant dependence on groundwater and other locally available water resources. These landscapes encompass diverse agro-climatic conditions, soil types, farming systems, ecosystems and livelihood strategies. While parts of the region experience pronounced water stress, others include irrigated agricultural systems, wetter uplands, forested landscapes and areas influenced by coastal and riverine processes.

Over the past three decades, these landscapes have experienced changes in land use, agricultural production, water availability, livestock systems, rural livelihoods and patterns of resource use. Potential drivers include rainfall variability and drought, rising temperatures and heat stress, changes in groundwater availability, shifts in cropping patterns, irrigation expansion, urbanisation, industrial development, mining, renewable energy infrastructure, changes in livestock and grazing practices, invasive species, market dynamics, migration, livelihood diversification, and various programmes and policies.

Understanding these changes requires looking beyond conventional classifications based on rainfall, aridity or cropping patterns. It calls for an integrated assessment of the interactions among climate, land, water, ecosystems, livelihoods, markets and institutions, with attention to differences within Rajasthan.

Purpose

The consultation will use 1991–2025 as a broad reference period to examine how the dryland landscapes of Rajasthan have changed over time. It aims to develop a grounded understanding of their current condition, major transitions, and possible future trajectories, and to identify the principal drivers, pressures, vulnerabilities and responses shaping different landscapes and livelihood systems.

The consultation will bring together government officials, researchers, practitioners, civil-society organisations and other relevant stakeholders to review existing evidence, compare experiences across the state, identify convergence among policies and programmes, and highlight gaps and opportunities for collaboration.

Key Areas of Discussion

The consultation will focus on:

- **Current landscape and trends:** Changes in land use, rainfed and irrigated agriculture, livestock and pastoralism, tanks and groundwater, scrublands and commons, ecosystems, and livelihoods over the past 2–3 decades.
- **Triggers of change:** Rainfall variability, drought, warming and heat stress; groundwater extraction and changing water availability; irrigation expansion; crop and land-use transitions; urbanisation and industrial development; invasive species; policies and public investments; markets, migration and other socioeconomic changes.
- **Agro, Socio-ecological differences:** How aridity, resource availability, vulnerabilities and responses vary across agro-climatic zones, agricultural systems, rangelands, and settlement types, and within Rajasthan.
- **Policy and programme landscape:** Major national and state policies, programmes and institutional interventions related to land, water, agriculture, livestock, ecosystems, livelihoods, and climate resilience.
- **Stakeholder responses:** Community initiatives, government interventions, research and practitioner-led approaches addressing emerging challenges.

Expected Outputs

The consultation will seek to generate:

1. An overview of the current status and major changes across the drylands of Rajasthan since 1991, drawing on available data, research, and stakeholder experience.
2. A matrix of drivers and triggers for principal environmental, socioeconomic, technological, and institutional factors shaping change across the state.
3. A policy and programme landscape of relevant policies, schemes, programmes, and institutional interventions, highlighting convergence, complementarity, implementation gaps and opportunities for collaboration.
4. Identification of hotspots, highlighting locations experiencing significant environmental or livelihood pressures, alongside locations demonstrating promising practices, effective resource management or resilience.
5. Identification of Major Implementation in Practice, including their locations, objectives, implementing organisations, target groups, implementation status, observed outcomes, key challenges and relevant institutional contacts.
6. A stakeholder network of government agencies, research institutions, practitioners, civil-society organisations and community institutions working on dryland-related issues in Rajasthan.

Participants

The consultation will bring together state- and district-level government officials, researchers, practitioners, civil-society organisations, and relevant community representatives from Rajasthan. Participants will be drawn from sectors including agriculture, water resources, groundwater management, livestock, land and ecosystem management, rural livelihoods, climate adaptation, spatial planning, and rural development.

Significance

The consultation will contribute to a more grounded understanding of the changing dryland landscapes of Rajasthan. By bringing together evidence, institutional perspectives, and local experience, it will help identify priority challenges, emerging pressures, ongoing responses, implementation gaps and promising practices. The findings will contribute to the broader assessment of India's drylands and support the identification of priority locations, organisations and themes for subsequent case-study documentation and collaborative research.

Please feel free to contact us for more details,

1. Dr. Saurabh Kelkar: saurabh.kelkar@wotr.org.in, +91-8888467476
2. Dr. Sharanya Chattopadhyay: sharanya.chattopadhyay@wotr.org.in, +91-8981775067
3. Workshop Organising Team: workshops@wotr.org