

## Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) awarded Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom International Award on Commons.

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) has been conferred with the prestigious Elinor Ostrom International Award on Collective Governance of the Commons for the year 2013, for outstanding contribution to the practice of commons governance. The award was given for the 1st time during the 14th Biennial Global Conference, held at Kita Fuji, Japan from 3rd to 7th June 2013. More than 400 scholars and practitioners from 57 countries from across the world participated in the conference and shared frontier research and experiences on various aspects of Commons. The Conference was also briefly attended by Prince Akishinomiya of the Royal family and several senior members of Government of Japan.

The Award, instituted jointly by fifteen international organisations in memory of the Nobel Laureate Dr. Elinor Ostrom, who passed away in 2012, after decades of invaluable contribution to the analysis of economic governance, especially the Commons, is aimed at acknowledging and promoting the work of practitioners and young and senior scholars, involved in the field of the Commons. Dr. Ostrom is known for her pioneering work on governing commons by analysing several thousand cases of village communities across the world managing commons such as pastures, village forests, ponds, etc. In the Indian context, her research has invaluable significance in reinforcing the belief that village communities can collectively manage natural resources effectively as is aimed under Forests Rights Act, Participatory Irrigation Management and the 73rd Amendment in general. Unlike what is commonly inferred, she adds that such a view also sees an important role for Government authorities by playing a good adjudicatory role while enabling local self governing institutions to work independently.

Sh. Jagdeesh Rao, Executive Director, FES received the award from Ms. Leticia Merino, President of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC). Dr. Elinor Ostrom was one of the founding members of the IASC, a nonprofit Association, set up in 1989 and devoted to understanding and improving institutions for the management of resources that are held or used collectively by communities in developing or developed countries.

FES works with more than 4,200 villages spread across 7 states of India, and is involved in restoring over half a million acres of common land and in advocating for better policy and programmatic action for the restoration and conservation of the Commons in the country. FES has been an active member of the IASC for over a decade and co-hosted the 13th IASC International Conference in Hyderabad, India in 2011 to bring to surface the critical need for safeguarding and restoring the Commons in India. With an estimated 125 million acres of land mistakenly labelled and neglected as "wastelands" across the country and more than half of the expenditure (of about Rs 150 thousand crore in first six years) under MGNREGA being spent on such lands, the FES aims to improve the recognition of such lands as village commons and help village communities gain secure access and benefits from restored lands. The right to employment coupled with rights over (natural) resources could be a powerful strategy in creating durable assets such as community managed village forests, pastures and water bodies, which is the backbone of rural economy.



Mr. Jagdeesh Rao (second from left), Executive Director, Foundation for Ecological Security on receiving the Elinor Ostrom Award on Collective Governance of the Commons for the year 2013 under the Practitioner Category in Kitafuji, Japan.