

## Taking science to the people

- [Mohit M. Rao](#)



Photo: Bhagya Prakash K.

*T.V. Ramachandra's research and advocacy have weaved their way into public policy*

Science is only useful when it is taken beyond the lab and to the people. This motto has characterised the prolific works of T.V. Ramachandra, Coordinator of Energy and Wetlands Research Group at the Indian Institute of Science, whose research and advocacy have weaved their way into public policy.

If roof-top solar units have become a buzzword in the government, it may be credited to the recommendations of Mr. Ramachandra. Similarly, his research on lakes has made its way into the High Court initiated committee on protection of lakes, while his report on the Bellandur wetland was cited in the case against an upcoming Special Economic Zone there.

Since completing his doctoral research in IISc. in 1996, Mr. Ramachandra has authored over 600 research papers on energy and environment. Many of these papers have become pivots on the debate on the rapid urbanisation and environment degradation of Bengaluru (one study, for instance, shows the city has grown by 925 per cent while water bodies and vegetation have reduced by nearly 79 per cent).

Despite the grave findings, he remains an optimist and engages with government bodies. The wealth of knowledge has seen him nominated as member in State Audit Advisory Committee, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board Technical Committee (Biodiversity) and Centre-appointed committee on bio-fuels.

"I have been working for 14 hours a day for the past 25 years. I have no problem accepting responsibilities...But, when the atmosphere turns hostile, like in the State-level Environment Expert Appraisal Committee, I move out without hesitation," he said.

His tryst with science began in 1996 following fish deaths in Sankey Tank. His report was used by environmentalists to campaign for a cleaner lake while civic authorities too took note.

Since 1998, he has conducted over 120 workshops while his team has been educating school children on environmental science. "Thousands of students are trained to track pollution and use statistics for environment protection. It is heartening that many of these students have formed groups and communities to protect the environs around them," he says.

### His projects

Monitoring the health and status of 80 lakes

Report on wetlands in Karnataka

Mapping bio-diversity of Western Ghats

Using algae ponds in polluted lakes to generate bio-fuels

**Suggestions for government**

Discuss and implement scientific research

Ensure lakes are developed with wetlands and algae ponds, instead of just engineering solutions

Implement court recommendations for lakes in full spirit

**Suggestions for citizens**

Have a sense of belonging and responsibility for the city

Engage with regulatory bodies

Become custodians of the city

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Printable version | Mar 12, 2016 11:52:09 AM | <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/taking-science-to-the-people/article7799501.ece>

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