

Cheap doors for dams. Is the govt listening?



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NID alumnus Satish Gokhale says he faced resistance from the govt

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Satish Gokhale, NID alumnus and founder of Design Directions, at the three-day international 'Design for a Billion' conference at Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar said, "However good your design is, you will always have to get through the system (government) to make it a success."

An internationally-acclaimed product designer, Gokhale has created unique plastic doors for micro-irrigation dams as an alternative to conventional iron gates. As compared to the iron gates, these plastic doors are more economical and four times more durable. If installed in the existing dams, these doors would help more than 80% of the non-functional micro-dams provide water to farmers.

However Gokhale faces resistance to bringing the product to market and has had difficulty getting required clearances from the government. "There are various lobbies by the metal manufacturers, the contractors and government that resist this product

because of its durability. Since this product will eliminate frequent buying and maintenance, the various stake-holders stand a less chance to make illicit profits," he said.

The plastic doors last for 10-15 years as compared to two years, life-span of metal doors because of the corrosion. "However, majority of them are stolen and resold for their metal value" the product designer said.

He further added, "A doorless micro-irrigation dam is useless because it will not collect any ground water and the government will not fix it for at least 10 more years as per the norms." According to Gokhale, the burden of repairing these dams and installing doors fall upon the poor farmers who fix these dams by taking loans.

However, with a more proactive government in-charge, Gokhale is hopeful that his project will get a green signal. "Farmers will have hope for better agricultural future with functioning micro-irrigation dams" said Gokhale.

More than 200 designers, researchers, educators, practitioners, and entrepreneurs from across the world took part at the 'Design for a Billion' conference to discuss the implications and future of design for mass impact.