



# Water Feeder

A Monthly Dose of Odia Water News

An Initiative of **Odisha State Center, FPWCI, Baitarani Initiative, Shristi & Odisha Water Forum**

*Water Feeder is a compilation and analysis of water-related news published in Odia and local English dailies with an objective to help water professionals and enthusiasts to capture and comprehend issues and conflicts around water (through eyes of media). It also provides geographical, seasonal and media perspectives of water issues and conflicts with respect to Odisha.*

*This monthly feed of Water news is an attempt to stimulate interest, thoughts and actions on water issues in the state apart from feeding research and academic pursuits. We have had very encouraging response to the humble 1<sup>st</sup> Feeder we circulated among selected individuals and e-groups.*

## Past Issues of Water Feeder

1. [May 2009](#)
2. [June 2009](#)
3. [July 2009](#)

*This Fourth issue presents water 'News Analysis' from 5 major Odia Dailies and one English daily for the month of August 2009. Each of these news items have been tagged and put in a searchable database, which will be shortly uploaded in the net along with scanned copy of each news item. We look forward your comments and Feedbacks (Pl send your response to [baitarani@gmail.com](mailto:baitarani@gmail.com))*

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## **1 How must we respond to continuing Water Crisis?**

Month of August dawned with a breather from the first wave of floods that devastated many parts of the state. However the state's affair with calamities was not to allow that respite last long, with drought flexing its muscles in Western Odisha and a second wave of flood adding to worries in Northern & Western Odisha. As if that was not enough, Cholera hit back again with a hybrid strain at the most vulnerable tribal pockets in south-western Odisha. While all these high peak events adding to decibel of the news and thickness of headlines, concerns and conflicts around access to drinking water and irrigation as well as threats to survival and livelihoods continued around water from different parts of the state. So also moved unabated the mainstream response to tackle flood, irrigation and drinking water problems with more and more structures, reservoirs and renovations.

While all these events and trends get quite regularly reenacted year after year in almost same geographies of the state, the response of Govt., attention of media and debates in civil societies also seem to follow the same trend with same approach with a focus on fire-fighting and reactive mode. The response, attention and debate also shift the gear from event to event and seem to fail in gathering adequate momentum to effect a change. The moot question remains however – why cannot we be proactive?

## **2 Water Issues & Conflicts**

### **2.1 *Drinking water: Conflicts continues over access***

In spite of the heavy rain and severe flood like situation in most part of the Orissa in the month of July, the incidence of conflicts and scarcity of drinking water continue to affect many parts of the state in the month of August. Kanas of Puri District, which was in news through out the summer season for water shortage, reported conflict among people for getting pipe water supply in *The Khabar* this month. Furthermore, in areas like Cuttack Sadar, Sompur of Jagatsinghpur dist etc, the public outrage for drinking water and demonstration like situation (in Sompur) have been noticed in the month of August. *The Samaj*-25/08/09 also carried a headline on lack of access to safe drinking water to 87% of Indians.

## **1.1 Water Pollution –Concerns Leading to Actions**

Water pollution has long been an issue in Orissa affecting many other public interests. The pollution of common water sources like different rivers and canals has led to many public outcries. Particularly the pollution of Taladanda canal has been highlighted as a major issue in almost all news dailies in Orissa as well as at national level. There seemed to have some impact now, as in response to direction of honourable High Court of Orissa, the Govt of Orissa has declared to spend Rs 4.68 Crores to make Taladanda pollution free. This news has been reported in *The Samaj* (24/08/09). In another issue published in the same news daily on 08/08/09, the grave situation of drinking water scarcity in Jajpur along with water pollution leading to severe health hazards in the district.

Different rivers through out the country are increasingly getting polluted and day by day the number of such rivers is increasing. So towards the development and preservation of these rivers, a River Development Tribunal has been proposed by the Central Govt to the state which will plan and work towards this goal. *The Sambad* and *The Samaj* on 24/08/09 have reported it. As per the news in *The Sambad* on 21/08/09 five rivers in Orissa like Brahamani, Baitarani, Subarnarekha, Nagabali and Rusikulya have been identified for this project.

## **1.2 Inter-state water conflict: Polavoram on news**

The Pollavoram Project continues to draw media attention with news of Hon'ble High Court of Andhra Pradesh dismissing a plea filed by an NGO to stall the project being reported in August, 09. On other hand, an article the legality of Pollavoram Project was also discussed in *The Khabar* on 30/08/09.

## **1.3 Dams & Projects: More Projects on Anvil –More worries on way!**

The state govt has now decided to complete the Lower Suktel Irrigation Project in next 4 years. As per the news in *The Sambad*, except irrigation and drought combating mechanism, this project will help supply drinking water to Bolangir Town. While the struggle of the people to be affected by Lower Suktel likely to intensify with this news, *The Khabar*

reported Salandi Project affected farmers meeting the Hon'ble member of Human Rights Commission with their grievances.

The sanction for four irrigation projects by centre has been reported in *The Sambad* and *the Pragatibadi*-19/08/09. 'Multi-crore projects to boost irrigation in two districts' on Subarnarekha Project and Deo medium Project was also reported in *The New Indian Express*-19/08/09.

The continuously changing climate and inconsistent weather conditions have added to flood problem in many ways. On the other hand, all these fall outs have prompted the state govt to take protective measures. So as per the latest news by *The Indian Express*, 'Govt plans to set up 17 more reservoirs', this plan will help as a flood control mechanism.

#### **1.4 Culture & Livelihoods: Fishers' worries**

In recent days, climate change and its effect on water has put many serious impacts on human culture and livelihood. Particularly the traditional fisherman communities are facing burnt with their breads at stake. As per news in *The Dharitri*, in Puri District, 'Fishes are missing from rivers and canals, fishermen at fix'. The rivers like Kathajodi, Prachi. Alaka, Devi etc have lost their fish fauna pushing the fishermen and public life into a hard time. Similarly Hilsa, the migratory fish relished by Odias, previously abundantly available in Orissa, has almost disappeared, with dams and barrages affecting its movement. An article titled, '*Hilsa has become scarce affair*' in *The Dharitri* provides an elaborate overview of the situation.

#### **1.5 Man-Animal conflict around Water: Crocs on man haunt**

Like in July, the sequence of crocodile attack on human and livestock continued in the same areas viz. Aul-Rajkanika of Kendrapara district in rivers like Baitarani, Brahamani, Kani, Kharasrota etc in this month also. Around 6 to 7 numbers of crocodiles were entering human habitats everyday and creating nuisance along with attack on human. As per the report in *The Pragatibadi*, '*Man eater croc moving in Village Avenue*', 17 to 18 feet long crocs are entering into villages and nearby areas in search of food which has become a worry for the

local people. It has been earlier informed that in last 20 years around 35 people have been killed by croc attack living about 128 injured.

## **1.6 Renovation of Water bodies: Relying back on Tanks**

In an attempt to augment development of irrigational facilities, 6945 numbers of ponds and tanks have been identified to be renovated and restored through out the state. It has been said that this program, once completed, will provide irrigational facility to 35% of Agricultural lands reported *The Khabar*, *the Sambad* and *the New Indian Express*. It is noteworthy that this program is going to be implemented in 21 districts.

*The Sambad* on the other hand carried a news on ‘Jalanidhi Yojana; Well digging programme in halfway, lack of subsidy frustrates farmers in salinity areas’. As per the news, although it was planed to dig 10,000 tube wells under this program, even 100 numbers of tube wells have not been dug yet.

## **1.7 Irrigation & Agriculture: Farmers’ frustrations lead to protests**

Excess rain and flood played foul with agriculture and irrigation in the month of July. All the farming activities went on sine die. But the month of August is no less frustrating for the farmers. Due to excess flood hundreds of hectares agriculture land became sand casted.

Major conflicts and concerns of this month were around canal irrigation. As per the news in *The Pragatibadi*, ‘Canal system in Binjharpur in hazardous state’, there are more than 26 thousands hectares of field yet to get water for agriculture activities. In another news, farmers gheraoed irrigation office demanding water to agriculture in Khandapada, as published in *The Khabar*. Other news like ‘Lack of coordination of electricity dept, 800 acres of farm land wait for irrigation’ and ‘Irregularity in canal management, farmers gheraoed irrigation office at Jaipur’ in *The Khabar* and *The Pragatibadi* were other facets of water conflicts in the month of August.

*The Khabar* has also reported that due to incomplete Budha-Baitarini barrage, water for irrigation has been disrupted.

The conflict between head and tail end areas around canal commands was reported around Taladanda and Machhagaon canal in The Dharitri-3/08/09.

## **1.8 Climate Change: Reservoirs going dry**

In an editorial, *The Pragatibadi* on 28/08/09 writes with title, ‘Dried reservoirs’ in which the water levels of the reservoirs through out the country and the effect of climate change, less rain on these water bodies has been discussed.

## **1.9 Flood**

Towards the first week of August, the devastating 1<sup>st</sup> flood of the year had almost come to an end. But the effect was still continuing and was playing its hazardous game in different parts of Orissa. The disconnection of telephone lines, damage to river embankments, water logging, siltation and sand casting, disruption of communication, power cut etc like problems have overburdened the affected population who seem to struggling alone with attention of media and politicians shifting to other hotspots.

The breaches in the embankments of different rivers are carrying dangerous threats. Thousands of hectares of agricultural lands have been sand casted. Complains of loss was pouring in from different parts of Orissa with demand for compensation and relief. In many places, public gherao, demonstration, road blockage have also been witnessed.

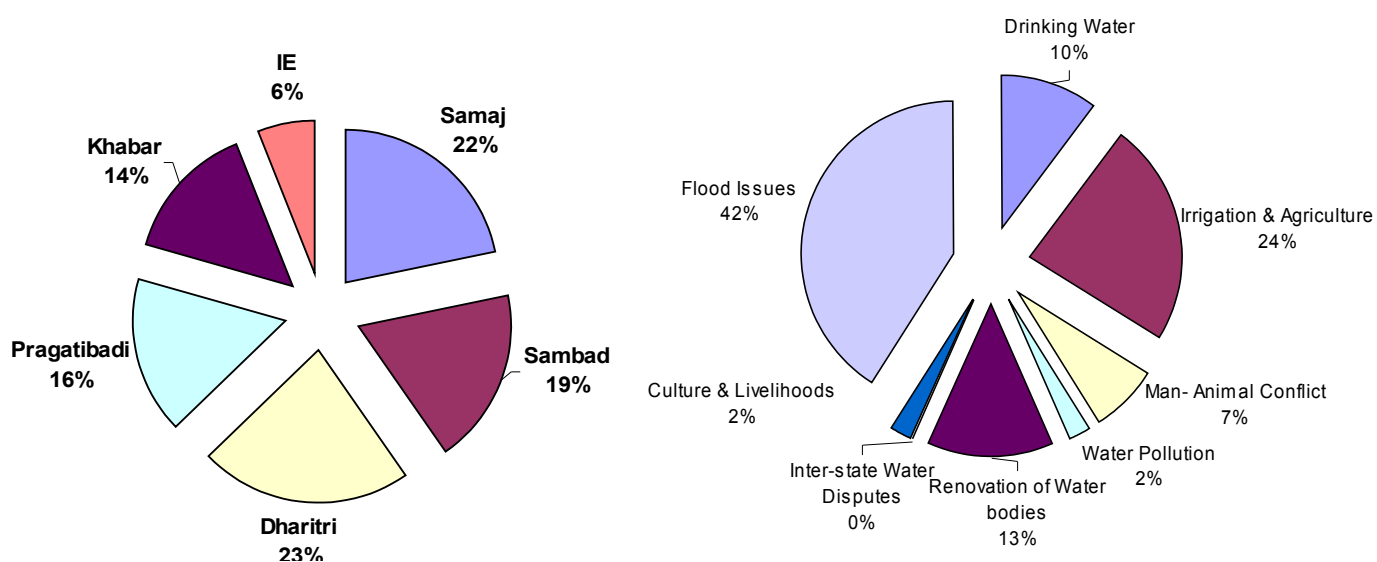
On govt part, steps like flood control mechanism, preparing flood shelter, planning for speedy relief and health services were being devised as usually it is done every time after the flood took its toll. As *The Khabar* reports, ‘A loss of 90 crores in Badanadi flood, state RD & Law minister reviewed the status’ explains summary report of the flood in Ganjam District.

With the beginning of August, the lowering magnitude of first flood brought a hope for Odia people for a new beginning. But towards the end of the month, another low pressure has taken place bringing severe rain to the western part of Orissa. As an effect of this heavy

rain, the districts like Kalahandi, Rayagada, Koaput along with certain other places have again been pushed into the shadows of fear and deep sorrows. The second flood in River Hati in Kalahandi district has left many villages cut off from outer world with excess loss to the areas. Similarly due to heavy rain and flood, Koraput-Rayagada communication has been cut off. River Subarnarekha is also at spat and on the way of creating another flood as an effect of continuous rain.

It is also being complained that though this second flood has brought heavy losses, but due to its effect in limited districts, the state govt is yet to take steps for relief and rescue operation.

### 3 Coverage by News Papers & of Issues



News	<i>Khabar</i>	<i>Dharitri</i>	<i>Pragatibadi</i>	<i>Sambad</i>	<i>Samaj</i>	<i>IE</i>	<i>Total</i>
Drinking Water	2	2	2	2	2		10
Irrigation & Agriculture	6	5	6	3	2	1	23
Man- Animal Conflict	1	1	2	1	1	1	7
Water Pollution					2		2
Renovation of Water bodies	3	1	2	4	2	1	13
Inter-state Water Disputes							
Culture & Livelihoods		2					2
Flood Issues	9	7	10	6	5	3	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>97</b>

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