

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON Water Resources Policy In South Asia DECEMBER 17-20, 2008 COLOMBO, SRILANKA



SaciWATERS

December 18, 2008

For private circulation only.



DAY 1 UPDATE

Water Professionals Engage in a Policy Dialogue towards Integrated Approach to Water Management in South Asia

The inaugural session of the International Conference on Water Resources Policy in South Asia took place at Taj Sumudra in Colombo on December 17, 2008

CONTENTS

Water Professionals Engage in a Policy Dialogue

Page 1

Book Launch

Page 2

Inauguration of SAWAS "South Asia's very own space for free thinking on water"

Page 2

Day One In Pictures

Page 3

Women Water Professionals of South Asia

Page 4

The conference brings together regional and international water professionals, academics, policy makers, activists, politicians and others involved and interested in South Asian water resources issues. As part of the ongoing water resources policy dialogue, the conference aims to enhance the understanding of water resources governance and water management and use in the region by critically assessing the ongoing policy reform processes.

The Chairperson of the Inaugural Session, Dr. Peter P Mollinga, Convener **SaciWATERS**, and Task Manager, Crossing Boundaries Project, inaugurated the session with a brief introduction to the conference, followed by the welcome speech given by Prof. Jayanta Bandhopadhyaya, President, **SaciWATERS**. Dr. Amita Baviskar,

Associate Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi University, India and Dr. Madar Samad, Regional Director - South Asia International Water Management Institute enlightened the audience with their respective keynote speeches. Prof. Mohan Munasinghe, Chairman, Munasinghe Institute for Development (MIND) and Vice Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) sent wishes via a pre-recorded message. The event also featured a vibrant cultural event of Sinhalese and English music programme by the St Mary's Youth Choir accompanied by two soloists from the Moratuwa Youth Choir.

The next three days of the conference will see water professionals come together to investigate and understand the varied dynamics of existing water resources management in South Asia.

Edited by Dr. Jasveen Jairath and Prof. Vishwa Ballabh, the second book in the Water and South Asia Reader Series of the Crossing Boundaries Project was unfolded by Dr. Madar Samad at the inaugural ceremony. The book highlights the fact that while available water supplies can be quantified, it is not so with droughts. Droughts are variously experienced, politically inspired, socially constituted and arise essentially from the monopoly of available water. Countering technocratic and naturalistic treatments of droughts by mainstream professionals, the contributors argue that the focus of redressal has to be on the political struggle for equitable sharing rather than the creation of large reservoirs that may again be monopolized by vested interests to generate continuous 'droughts'. The volume attempts to understand the concept of drought; map the diversity in drought situations across South Asia; identify responses to drought; outline viable options for more



integrated approaches to drought policies and mitigation strategies; and initiate a process of dialogue on emerging drought issues. This book aims to sensitize policy makers and practitioners to the need for initiating institutional changes for drought management in their respective countries.

Inauguration of SAWAS "South Asia's very own space for free thinking on water"

The day also witnessed the launch of the website of South Asian Water Studies (SAWAS), an interdisciplinary e-journal discussing multiple dimensions of water resources development, technology, management and use, and their relations with society and the environment. Prof. Vishwa Ballabh, the Chief Editor of SAWAS, introduced the audience to the purpose behind the concept of SAWAS (www.sawasjournal.org), which was to provide a space for creative and free thinking on water, fostering debate, eliciting innovative alternatives, promoting original analyses and constructive critiques with an aim to broaden the South Asian water resources knowledge base ; undertake comparative research on water resources issues in different parts of the sub-continent and study the localized water resources management process. He emphasized that SAWAS will provide an independent forum to share knowledge of successful resolutions of water related problems and constructive analyses of deadlocks and failures as well as create an intellectual debate on South Asian water. Dr. Amita Baviskar launched the website and expressed her feeling that the free to use journal is a novel initiative that everyone is looking forward to be a part of.



www.sawasjournal.org

DAY ONE IN PICTURES



"Questions of nature, knowledge and power that have so far been addressed through the lens of political ecology, would benefit from being studied through the lens of cultural politics.... What we need is a mode of analysis that focuses on the full range of material and symbolic values in how water comes to be imagined, appropriated, and contested."

Dr. Amita Baviskar

"Increasing ground water usage is a water time bomb", said Dr. Madar Samad. He focused on the need of thinking differently about water and emphasized that the era of large scale investments in irrigation is over and sectoral reforms need crafted solutions suited to local needs.



One of the imminent gender issues in South Asia is the lack of women professionals working or facilitated to work in the water sector. 'Lack of women professionals hinder gender sensitive investment in the water sector', says Dr. Aditi Mukherji, Researcher at the International Water Management Institute, Colombo. **SaciWATERs** caught up with this budding scientist working on the issues of groundwater in the South Asia region.



What motivated you to pursue a vocation in the water sector?

As a human geographer, interdisciplinary approach came by virtue of my training. Working in the water sector, as I do now, interdisciplinary understanding is a valuable asset. Having said that, I am not implying that I always knew I would make water research my career. I did not!

In 2001, right after finishing my M.Phil from IIT Mumbai, I applied and got selected for a position at the IWMI-Tata Water Policy Program (ITP) that initiated my fruitful engagement in water sector research. I started working on groundwater issues in India with Prof. Tushaar Shah and the sheer novelty of issues fired my imagination. For one, when I started working in 2001,

the general understanding was that canals are the life line of India's irrigation, while the reality was quite the reverse. Our work at ITP later helped unpack some of the nuances of groundwater irrigation in India and South Asia. From ITP, I moved on to Cambridge University for my PhD, where again I worked on groundwater markets in West Bengal and on agrarian politics of groundwater. After my PhD, I joined IWMI as a post doctoral fellow and now I am a researcher at IWMI. In a way, serendipity brought me into the field of water policy research, of which I am very glad.

What constraints do you feel as a women working in the water sector?

As a woman social scientist working in the field of water, I do not think I face any particular constraints. I face the

same constraints as most other researchers' face, such as difficulty in getting access to government data, difficulties in getting my research funded etc.

What are the opportunities that you see in this sector for aspiring women water professionals?

I see water sector as offering great opportunities to women scientist. On the technical/engineering side, there is a paucity of women scientists. Donors these days, and rightly so, insist that the money they give should be used in a gender sensitive manner. And the lack of women professional in the water sector, in my opinion, does hinder gender sensitive investments.

PARTNERS - CROSSING BOUNDARIES PROJECT

Crossing Boundaries Project, a joint effort of **SaciWATERs** and Water Engineering Group at Wageningen University, is being implemented in collaboration with five South Asian partner institutions. The main focus is on capacity building on gender and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in South Asia of water professionals through higher education, innovation and social learning-focused research. The project also works towards knowledge base development, and networking.



ANNA UNIVERSITY



TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA



NEPAL ENGINEERING COLLEGE



BANGLADESH CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES



BANGLADESH UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

SaciWATERs



WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES