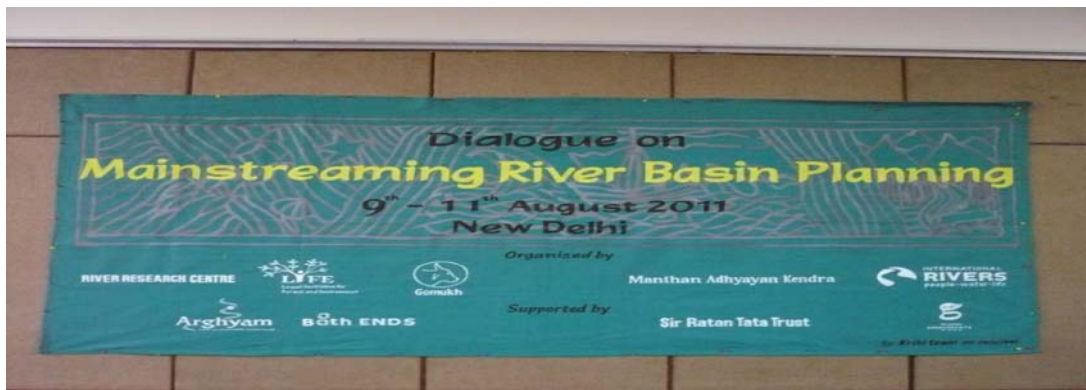


REPORT



DIALOGUE ON MAINSTREAMING RIVER BASIN PLANNING



WWF- India Conference Hall
Lodhi Road, New Delhi
9th - 11th August 2011

Organisers

River Research Centre ≈ GOMUKH ≈ Manthan ≈ LIFE ≈ International Rivers

ORGANISERS DISCUSSION NOTE

DIALOGUE ON MAINSTREAMING RIVER BASIN PLANNING



It is indeed difficult and beyond the capacity of this report to amass the rich experience based knowledge and ideas shared at the three day Dialogue on River Basin Planning. However it was felt imperative to pick and share atleast some of the most significant from the volumes spoken during the three days for further discussion and carry forward. The key discussion points alone are presented session wise.

≈ **Setting the Background**

The opening and welcome remarks by Vijay Paranjpye, '*Are we Blind Men looking at Rivers differently*' were aimed at setting the need for a common platform for river basin planning. With regard to rivers there seems to be an over emphasis on development part with very little of planning, management, research and conservation focus.

Ravi Singh, CEO, WWF inaugurated the workshop demanding a new Water Policy which includes '*water for wild life*' with the civil society lobbying for it as well. WWF extended its support for any future water related action plans and urged youth involvement in social audits and gaining field experience.

Prof Ramaswamy Iyer in his keynote advocated for a '*River Basin Harmonizing Council*' in place of River Basin Authority. He expressed reservations against the use of the term 'planning' for river basins which hold the potential danger of falling into the trap of top down, bureaucratic, techno – centric and project centric approach. A truly integrated holistic planning for basin, harmonizing diverse water uses, integrated rain water harvesting at the same time fully internalizing social, ecological, environmental concerns – hasn't happened in India. A broad basin wide overview might provide pointers in this direction. The approach has to be decentralized starting with local governance institutional mechanisms, crisscrossing hydrological and social divisions and coming up with an optimum planning of river basins, building institutions from micro watershed upwards. This may not be easy to work out but effort needs to be put in. At the Transboundary level, there are common concerns for nations in South Asia, and co-operation should not be left for Inter-governmental Commissions, but using the Subsidiarity Principle – people, NGOs should come together, and co-operate.

Sri A D Mohile focused on the challenges and shifts required in adopting IWRM and RBP in India. Basin authorities need to cover entire basins, involve all stakeholders and not just

governments, need to oversee planning and operations and need legislative support towards devolution of state powers. Stressing the need for internalizing climate change concerns in existing institutions, the setting up of inter ministerial and inter departmental committees at state and central level to review adjustment processes in water sector towards climate change was recommended. Change in strategies should include coastal and estuarine management and flood management, dam break analysis, conflict management, strategies for erosion control etc. Setting up of independent dam safety authorities, monitoring management of waters in inter state basin, setting up of basin authorities, alternate conflict resolution etc. would require legislative changes. Institutional adjustments like setting up single use stakeholder committees for different sectors like irrigation, industries etc, eventual financial self sufficiency and autonomy to RBAs, turn over of tertiary management to stakeholders and system management to upper tiers of stakeholders, setting up of largely autonomous water regulators among many others were also suggested . Most of the participants opposed Mohile's views that according to the Government, River Policy is an integral part of National Water Policy.



≈ River Basin Planning - View Points

The different view points on river basin planning were discussed in this session chaired by Himanshu Thakkar.

Since river/ water are a state subject, The MoEF has been assigned the task of evolving a Ganga River Basin Environment Management Plan in the place of MoWR. Dr Vinod Tare, the Professional Coordinator of the GRBMP presented the main four challenges in protecting river systems; maintaining continuous flows, unpolluted flows, longitudinal, lateral and vertical connectivity, adequate space for various river functions and ecological entity. The main objective behind this ambitious program of the MoEF in collaboration with seven IITs is to maintain and restore the wholeness of Ganga basin. An eight pronged approach has been identified by the group to achieve their objectives. A comment was raised by some participants that the realm of Ganga restoration should be taken beyond the religious to a science and society based one and also to a transboundary level. The idea of a Ganga Panchayath, where communities have roles and responsibilities towards the protection of the Ganga was also put forward.

Sri D M More tried to bring out the realities of river basin planning taking place in the context of Maharashtra. While each one thinks that they own the waters, there is a total lack of co-ordination between the plethora of agencies working in water sector. Lack of proper data base for planning, poor upkeep and maintenance of assets, lack of equity in distribution of water, improper implementation of Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM), lack of proper monitoring of good plans and the hegemony of the term command area are some of the most significant anomalies in water resources management, the speaker argued.

Himanshu Thakkar opened the discussion with the poser; do we have good examples of

River Basin Planning in India, even at the local, sub-basin level? The reason why RBP does not take off in India is not because there is a lack of understanding, science or technology, but the issues rest in poor governance. Vijay Paranjpe said that there are no multi-purpose projects designed and executed with proper RBP or even as real multi-piurpose, but some good watershed management programs of around 30,000 ha planned and executed holistically can be used as a starting point for RBP.

Discussion points on presentations

- Environmental aspects of river basin planning is a very recent entry
- There is a need to define 'river basin' especially in the context of Transboundary Rivers like Ganga. The use of the word National River and 'common terminus' questioned in the case of Ganga that originate in different countries.
- The legal standing of National Ganga Basin Management plan is questionable. However the Indian laws and constitutions apply only to rivers flowing through Indian land. Hence within India, Ganga can be a National river.
- It's important to look into Himalayan ecosystems while talking about RBP for Ganga.
- The Government of Bangladesh is in the process of forming River Commissions. However, we need to question the wrong philosophy behind the death of rivers
- Water governance is in fact the biggest problem and until then River Basin Planning is impossible
- It is time we go beyond the polluter pays principle, if there is no treatment – there should be no water supply
- Bring in legislation that respects traditional management of water and rivers before we lose everything
- Need to delink river cleaning from river restoration. Yamuna plan has overemphasis on cleaning
- Rivers provide some services that we don't often account for in the cost – benefit analysis. The future of our rivers requires great deal of struggle from our side.
- Participation is essentially about decision-making.



≈ Nuts and Bolts of River Basin Planning Approach

The session 1- 9 focused only on the post presentation key discussion points since the power point presentations have already been made available to the participants

≈ Session 1

Broad Principles / Criteria

Presenter – Shripad Dharmadhikary

The broad guidelines and framework of values that drive the RBP process and the basic

norms to assess the processes and outcomes that drive the RBP exercise are discussed in this presentation. Rather than an expert driven process, the principles and criteria setting should be a participatory process. In RBP, the process is as important as the product (the “Plan”).

Discussion points on presentations

- We need to unpack the issue of participation more
- Need to talk about upstream-downstream conflict
- High cultural and religious significance of rivers and water
- Land use in the basin needs to be integrated into RBP
- Need for an integrative negotiated process, scenarios, not one plan
- Planning should be within hydrological limits
- People generating their own data is an important part of the RBP process

≈ Session 2

From Micro watershed to Basin – Issues and Prospects of Upscaling

Presenter – K J Joy,

Broad critiques of the watershed development scenario in India based on field level experiences are discussed in detail to take home lessons while attempting to upscale to river basin planning. The presenter tries to emphasise that it is very important to look at the different contours of a river basin planning including bio – physical, socio- cultural, issues of nesting and tiling, productivity oriented hydrological planning, basin level allocations, issue of boundaries, availability of scientific data, etc. while entering into a planning process.

Discussion points on presentations

- Planning vision for RBP should go beyond 25 years
- All policy making must ensure that river basin is at the epicenter of it.
- RB approach should also take into account land use, ground water issues
- While prioritizing the needs in planning, we also need to look at ecosystem services
- Fundamental right of the lower riparian (people and biodiversity) must be brought into the RBP
- Public participation in RBP should be spelt out clearly in terms of who will participate, what kind of participation given the dismal experience in India
- We should now talk about hydrological limits of extraction levels and not potential.
- In a successful RBP we need to think about dynamic institutional arrangements. How inclusive are the existing river basin authorities? Have responsibilities of different stakeholders been defined?
- Who generates data is even more important than data, because there is a lot of institutional filtering of data. Data may not be made public because it simply doesn't exist or perhaps it may be bad data.
- Data democratization is needed, where alternative data is generated by the people
- Water is also a catalyst for other activities. So planning for river basin should also be seen as drivers for other issues such as health, agriculture etc. New demands should not end up perpetuating the inequities
- Sociologists, Economists, Engineers, need to be multidisciplinary and develop strong understanding about hydrology and other sciences.
- India cannot ignore that Bangladesh is on its downstream, and it must integrate

- the needs of Bangladesh in its plans – aim for transboundary RBPs
- There is a need to sit across the table and tradeoff: nobody can say that all diversions are bad. For eg. In Bangladesh, lot of embankments has been built and 20 % Bangladesh would have been in water if they are to be removed.
- Since we are talking about international rivers and not only domestic rivers, the scenario is more complex. If we follow the river basin plans keeping river as National River then all the countries might come up with different river basin plans. So how to tackle issues when it comes to inter-country rivers needs to be addressed.
- There need to be criteria and guidelines that all can agree upon. Every country has its own laws, so the problem is how to harmonize these domestic criteria with the overall planning.
- Inter-country participation is not one-off agreement but an iterative process. Sharing of data and having a common understanding of the data is essential.
- How to locate a city within the watershed is a big issue. A city causes huge disruption drawing large amounts of water and discharging large quantities of sewage.
- Referendum is possible only upto a scale, after that it becomes difficult. When scale goes beyond a certain level, often many people start losing a grasp and understanding.

≈ Session 3:

Case Studies: From Government led to community led initiatives

Presenter – DM More, Vijay Paranjpye

Master plan of integrated development & management of Godavari basin

For the first time development of an integrated master plan for the Godavari basin has been attempted under the MWRRA Act (2005) in Maharashtra. The plan focuses on maximizing the benefits (wealth & employment) by optimizing the use of water resources without bypassing the aspects of environment and ecology. It treats sub basin as a unit of development. 30 sub basins are being covered in this exercise.

The role of GOMUKH in this basin planning exercise was described by Vijay Paranjpye. GOMUKH has been involved in the Vainganga sub basin. People have been involved right from the preplanning stage. Contextually appropriate planning is being attempted in the sub basin integrating traditional knowledge and wisdom of the indigenous communities into the planning process.

Discussion points on presentation

- Since separate plans are being prepared for sub basins, how is the integration being envisaged into a basin plan?
- What is the main premise of this model – is it still development oriented or takes into consideration restoration as well since vast areas in Maharashtra have been lost to mining, dams, urbanisation and industries etc.? How are the conflicts surrounding coal mines and thermal plants going to be resolved?
- How does one tackle the different priorities of different communities in each sub basin while preparing different sub basin plans?
- What could be the institutional mechanism to co-ordinate the 30 sub basin plan implementation while the fact remains that just summing up of the 30 plans does not lead to a basin plan.
- We should be careful not to outsource river basin planning which can end up like the EIA agencies in India that prepare tailor made reports.

- Purpose of RBP should not be wealth creation but also about balancing environment and development and restoring ecology for the future generations.
- Options assessment is not only about this project or that, but also about options for the nature of development itself.

≈ Session 4

Cumulative Impact Assessments in River Basin Planning

Presenter – Neeraj Vagholikar

Using the examples from the shoddy status of the Cumulative Impact Assessment Studies in the North East, the presenter argues that there is a dire need to redefine what CIA is and how it should be carried out. Further, he also quoted from different official documents and court orders on the different and contradictory stances with respect to conduct of CIAs.

Discussions Points on presentation

- Just like RBP holds different meanings for different people, CIA also means different things to different people
- Under law there is no mandate which implies that Cumulative Impact Assessment is a necessity. Hence it has become a bargain for project clearance
- The only place where CIA had been made mandatory was SC order in Feb 2009 for Ganga river basin. But in the same month IMG report on North East Hydro Projects asked MoEF not to hold up individual clearances for want of completion of basin studies
- Subsequent to SC order 2009, agency was selected for CIA of Alaknanda River (150 km) comprised of engineers specialized in mine designs, power projects, hydrology etc. At the end of the study, there were 42 recommendations and 17 impacts – 3 positive being tourism, economy and irrigation. 5 among the impacts were considered not to create significant changes – seismology and glaciers, sedimentation, effects on fish and spring water!
- Large storages of water do have some seismic impact on the local and extended geography. Later on in their recommendation they have said that the dams higher than 20 m height should be avoided as that can have impact on seismology. At any point of the CIA there's no mention of geo time scale of the impact.
- CIA is another way of articulating holistic view of RBP ; not a separate activity but should be in the very nature of the RBP. CIA of interventions on the river is not cumulative impact assessment of the river basin altogether. Impacts of other activities such as mining, power projects etc are not considered in present CIAs.
- The idea of the possibility of a good plan seems too ambitious to achieve. Opportunities available to discuss the plan are more important than what actually goes into the plan which is completely a political exercise and not technical exercise.
- The independence of the CIA/ EIA experts needs to be questioned. Without the involvement of local people, these exercises are futile.
- EIA or RBP is a framework for a process and an opportunity for engagement in political process
- We speak about Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) at every meeting. However it is not practiced anywhere



≈ Session 5

Across boundaries

Transboundary and Interstate water sharing and management

Presenters: Deepak Gyawali, Gopal Shiwakoti, Dr. Abdul Matin, Hemantha Withanage and Rizwana Hassan

Deepak Gyawali - Nepal

Commented and critiqued the present relations between Nepal and India with respect to hydrocracy and also provoked the participants to relook at RBP

While dealing with Nepal, India (Delhi Hydrocracy!) does not accept non – power benefits. Hence the idea of sharing of benefits does not arise. But the Government of Nepal made power generation cheaper for India – with sacrifice of Nepali livelihoods, and Indian Government levied extra charge reasoning that it will be unfair to the Indian developers. By making basin plans are we domesticating planning so that it becomes institutionalised and dead – based on experiences from the Mekong and Rhine, we cannot replicate it, but learn from it - the actual work of cleaning of the Rhine was done at lowest levels by the businesses, by activists, etc. Hence plural local solutions maybe a better option compared to a master plan

Rizwana Hassan – Bangladesh

Defining a river in the context of transboundary river basin is very important. If we want to make it a transboundary issue, river management has to be taken as regional issue and not bi-lateral issue. There is a need to integrate Climate Change and Climatic uncertainties in regional transboundary issues. In terms of documentation, linking, creating pressure, civil societies of both countries can come together and help democratize the whole process and gain support from common people to raise the voice. As a starting point, can we document the pathetic situation of Teesta and show it to the larger audience in India and gain their support?

Gopal Shiwakoti Chintan – Nepal

There is no collective desire of our governments to come up with their/our own multi-lateral and regional norms, principles, standards and framework as they exist in other regions/basins such as Mekong. Dwelling upon the inadequacies of laws and treaties binding South Asian countries with respect to sharing of water and waterways and human rights, the presenter argued that this is the time to go for a mutually negotiated multi-lateral and regional framework of river basin management, planning, conservation, cooperation for conservation and benefits.

Dr Abdul Matin - Bangladesh

Outlining the case of Farakka Barrage, the Teesta River which is dying due to the upstream dams being built by India and the dams being planned in the tributaries of Brahmaputra by India, Dr Matin remarked that downstream Bangladesh is always the loser. The speaker

invoked the participants that river is not a commercial commodity and we have to learn to live without any new Dams.

Hemantha Withanage - Srilanka

There was a lack of any live civil society network concerning any problems in Sri Lanka. SAARC may be a dead horse, but it's still a platform, that can be used to bring such issues like RBP to a common discussion forum to find solutions, instead of thinking about new bodies, structures and mechanisms.

Discussion points on presentations

- If we for the moment forget the Nationality and talk science then we would be talking of linkages and problems irrespective of admin boundaries.
- Common Interest perception like scarcity issues maybe a viable starting point for discussion and cooperation process between countries. However once the threat perception disappears, there is a tendency that the cooperation may stop.
- Is it feasible to have new contours, new maps around river basins!! The Rhine cannot be repeated in South Asia, but cultural connections can give a solution.

≈ Session 6

Accounting for pollution in Basin Planning

Presenter: Vishwanath S.

Urban landscapes are increasingly drawing from common resources like rivers from faraway places. Citing the instance of Bangalore city which depends on its drinking water on Cauvery river located 95 km away by lifting it to 500 m the speaker explained how the city's footprint on the river can be reduced creatively. Sterile, uninteresting and heat sinks, city's roofs and city spaces can be converted into areas that grow, that harvest rain, that use the sun efficiently for power generation, that manage waste and provide niches for biodiversity. Can we convert our city roofs into designed ecological spaces?

Discussion points on presentations

- 'Roof- scape water harvesting' where the city becomes the watershed, dependence of cities on rivers is reduced, thereby allowing e-flows, no dams, etc.
- Main issue is how to get people aware of water conservation, at community level in urban areas.
- Ideal system for sludge management would be to manage it separately from grey water, which is not happening.
- Fresh water can be used only for drinking and direct human consumption and rest can be recycled water and many domestic and industrial needs can be met by this
- How can small experiments like these get reflected in the policies to which the speaker replied that it took 20 yrs for Bangalore to translate an experiment into a policy, however showing that it is not impossible!
- No city takes any interest in what happens to the waste released by downstream cities
- Pollution disposal standards are age-old and need to be reviewed today.
- Can we learn from such experiments and integrate them into the larger river basin framework ?

≈ Session 7

The Performance and Future Perspectives on Large Dams

Presenter: Himanshu Thakkar:

The large and complex canvas of the dirty hydro power business scenario in the country was drawn by the speaker in this session using hard data, maps and analysis. The ground breaking reality that inspite of 89% of the projects generating at below the design capacity and 50% of the under-performing projects generating at below the 50% of design energy no questions are asked, no accountability fixed highlights the need for a review of the supposed gains of the hydropower sector in this country. The speaker throughout the presentation tried to break the myth that hydropower is cheap, green, cost effective, does not emit greenhouse gases , controls floods etc with data and analysis. On the other hand inspite of the repeated bad performance, violations and destructions to environment, life and property , the push for more dams continues. This in turn is related to little accountability, weak regulation (MEF, CERC, SERCs, CAG, CVC, Courts), externalisation (paid by others) of key costs, no post facto assessments or evaluations, corruption, easy padding of costs, state ready to take up the risks, etc. In an RBP context sharing the WCD core values would be significant.

Discussion points on presentation

- Concerns at local level include Small hydro Hydropower projects that are designed generally in tributaries in the name of 'Clean Development Projects'. These tributaries function as main livelihoods for the people, for drinking, fishing, irrigation etc. However, this water is being sold to the companies creating local community conflicts. Generally mini-micro model of hydro projects, owned by local people are preferable.
- The issue is not about large dam or small dam the issue should be about small risk or big risk involved with the dam. Calling small projects environment friendly is completely misleading, as the impacts are different, and dimensions are different.
- Tax from developers should be used for environment protection fund.
- Srilanka does not have much space for very big dams but there more than 350 small dams coming up under renewable energy mechanisms.
- Massive mining in Uttarakhand leading to a lot of debris are coming to the river and the impact reaching till Bangladesh. Most trans-boundary roads are also being constructed to facilitate dam construction, also allowing massive open mining.
- For under performing dams and dams that have high siltation rates, is not decommissioning a viable proposal?
- Major problem with run of the river project is that it destroys river in a stretch.
- In the govt scheme of thing there is no value for rivers. When the Ministry of Water Resource Secretary was asked whether they conduct a survey of the value of the services that the river provides and whether projects would destroy them, there was no response
- Due to the destruction of rivers GW recharge of that stretch is lost. At least if these things are recognized in the decision making/planning of projects it will make much more difference
- Couple of projects to be targeted – for decommissioning – and beginning such processes
- Make a case for saving a river – such as it's happened for tigers and advocate or it vigourously
- Informed consent of all affected gram sabhas should be a must and renew the consent every few years.
- We are not saying that all the dams haven't delivered any benefits, but we need to see what benefits have been delivered. E.g. – food production projected due to Bhakhara

- in reality only 10-12% food production is due to irrigation by large dam – one of the WCD report reveals that.
- How to optimize the performance of projects to get best benefits is what we should see

≈ Session 8

Are rivers flowing to the sea a 'waste'?

Presenter: Latha Anantha

A case for allowing rivers to flow to the sea for sustaining the ecology of the river and its dependent livelihoods was presented. Dams being the direct modifiers of flows, we have reached a stage that we cannot afford to ignore downstream impacts on rivers created by dams. The example of Chalakudy river was used which is already dammed at 6 places and a 7th dam was proposed to be constructed which would have created 1: 17 flow fluctuations. The different interpretations of water for ecosystem needs or e flows including the 'right of the river' concept were discussed. Dam re-operations and dam decommissioning can also improve flows in the rivers. Catchment Area Treatment Program also does improve flows.

Nitin Kaushal: E-Flow Assessment in the Ganga Basin

Presentation spoke about the methodologies adopted by WWF to determine E-flows for the Ganga River which integrates hydrological calculations with human (livelihoods, basic needs, spiritual needs) and wildlife needs (habitat, etc.) in order to estimate the flows, duration, fluxes, etc.

Discussion points based on presentations

- Most reports on E-flows have been largely theoretical and uni- directional, however the WWF work seems a quite comprehensive attempt
- The idea of E-Flows first emerged in the Yamuna Case, when the judge asked “how much water is necessary to flow in Yamuna” where the CWC declared in court that it should be around 10 cumecs.
- We don't have even basic reference data, site wise biodiversity listing etc. How are we to implement this methodology?
- Effects of not allowing e flows go beyond the river. Our sea does notice that the river is not flowing.
- The idea of water flowing waste and even optimality needs to be challenged philosophically. Value systems should go beyond economics... it should challenge the idea of 'Waste'
- Rivers are actually circulating systems of the earth. Putting blockages are going to affect these systems in the later stage
- Total Flows, or Surplus Flows - which is to be the basis for deciding flows needs to be addressed.
- In dry season, the river must flow, so the river flowing to the sea is not a “waste”. But in monsoon, do we say that all of the flood water also should flow to the sea? Or can that be considered a “waste” and “put to use”?
- We should be insisting on ecosystem approach and not the engineering approach to river basin planning.

≈ Session 9

Legal and institutional framework including conflict resolution, equity, access, benefit and cost sharing aspects

Presenters : Adv. Ritwick Dutta, Adv. Raj Panjwani, Manoj Mishra

The main presenter stressed upon the need for evidence building and data generation for building up good cases in the courts. The present dismal scenario of clearance process where not even a single project is rejected by the Expert Appraisal Committees was also mentioned. The National Green Tribunal has to be properly utilized to the full potential by movements and groups.

Discussion points based on presentations

- It is very important to present convincing, indisputable set of facts to the judge as evidence
- National Green Tribunal has the power to avoid damages and restore the damage based on polluter pay principle. Because of NGT, we can come forward and file cases for specific projects. The powers of the tribunal are immense, but the question is of the will.
- Learning and sharing of data and information is important especially for cross border issues
- Humanity, ecology, sovereignty – basic factors surrounding the legal experts in environment which are also interdependent
- If we look at our constitution, at its different schedules, water is considered as a state subject. Power lies with state govt. that makes it tricky to deal with multiple state governmental issues
- We don't have basic framework laws. So we are limited in actions that can be taken and the laws that we have are on water pollution, etc. but not on the rivers
- There is no 'Set Law' for Basin Planning. A series of water dispute tribunals have been there. While working with this principle, the environmental and ecological costs were not at all considered by many of these tribunals.
- Can one foresee the role for alternate dispute resolution mechanism as a solution to court?
- Do we as civil society when approaching courts, fail to see the negative precedence set by courts through the judgments?
- While Environmental legislation doesn't have river basin planning, Central Electricity Act 2003 does have something for this. It did away with requirement of licensing for thermal power plant. But any HEP above 500cr outlay has to get concurrence from Central Electricity Authority, and CEA has to ensure, that HEP does ensure optimal utilization of the basin keeping other activities such as drinking water, irrigation etc. Hence, interpretation can be that HEP has to be located within well developed RBP.
- Are there any legal norms to exercise extra territorial damages?
- In the given history of the country, how much and how long the affected population should wait if the matter is brought to court. By and large courts have not been able to solve the problems.
- The legal framework should create space for tradeoffs, inter-sectoral integration of different sectors, and for minimising the unwritten/upcoming!!
- ADR (Alternative Disputes Resolution) is cheapest, form of sorting out issues. Public hearing is not the substitute of ADR
- Going to court should not be the first step - One must attempt all the other forums and platforms that are available. Going to the court should also not be necessarily 'mean'. It may be a platform for the campaign. But it's a risky chance also as one may lose the case. .

- If we as civil society can challenge atleast one project and raise the larger question, leading to policy response, it works in a better way. Hence planning becomes very critical. Entry point to this ideally should be through civil society movements.



≈ **Summing Up and Way Forward to Mainstreaming River Basin Planning**

Facilitators: Vijay Paranjpye and Latha Anantha

This session tried to summarise the three days outputs and put forward ideas for future

- A regional river basin plan and/or an interstate plan, based on which a civil society RBP can be prepared, inclusive of criteria, principles that we believe in. If it's submitted to the concerned govt. the political or democratic process can decide what to do with it.
- Media Mainstreaming in the current sense would mean the situation where the press feels that its worth writing about, where elected members feel the needs and are convinced by the arguments.
- How to build towards thought process of mainstreaming RBP – what all aspects are to be included is the larger question
- A setup at the regional level, needs to be broad based, with NGOs and academics etc., avoiding dominance of engineers – all the other perspectives have to be brought together that make combination of ecology and social justice.
- Concepts of ethics should play a role in water management.
- Fundamental change in the water education needed.
- Collaboration needed not about projects or deadlines that we need to meet, but about common commitments – in transboundary issues- urgent need of attention for civil societies of various countries.
- A cost benefit analysis to be done over a longer period
- Future follow ups are needed on this dialogue. Discomfort for Bangladesh as it is the lower riparian receiving 54 rivers from India and 3 from Myanmar and it receives all polluted water from the distributaries and tributaries.
- Even when you talk about ecology, it's unfortunate that you have to sell ecology in terms of economic values. Economics should not be the hegemonic perspective.
- Can this group as a civil society take forward a charter for South Asian Rivers, that identifies principles and criteria and takes them forward. One of the issues such a platform can take up – 15 committees between India and Nepal – what all these committees are doing is unknown to people outside the Govt. Such a platform can demand these work in public domain immediately.
- A simple document which can be used for our advocacy and this can act as a baseline for further action.
- How this discussion on RBP can be used as way to stop the large number of dams coming up in Himalayas.
- Many of us are involved either through activism or academic, in collecting lot of data. How to share it? Simple protocol for sharing can be developed

- Water rights should be de-linked from land rights. Any World Bank document argues with the same terms.
- RBP – as a holistic integrated exercise that puts people at the center of decision making process, and keeps river alive and at central part. Clearer formulation of what we should do for RBP, key ideas – such as participation – define them .Crystallize key ideas and bring out a small note form.
- Be aware and put an economic value to everything. People in villages are turning over for financial reasons



CONCEPT NOTE & PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The National Water Policy (Sec.3.3) mentions that ‘water resources development and management will have to be planned for a hydrological unit such as drainage basin as a whole or for a sub-basin, multi- sectorally, taking into account surface and ground water for sustainable use incorporating quantity and quality aspects as well as environmental considerations’. Despite acknowledging the significance of planning for the drainage basin as a whole, planning processes at the state as well as national level have ignored the same.

It is a fact that most rivers are facing human induced crisis: rivers have reduced outflows in summer, high fluctuations in the daily hydrograph as sediments, nutrients and sand get trapped behind dams, biodiversity and forest ecosystems degrading beyond repair, water extraction is more than recharge, to name a few. Livelihoods of river dependent communities, inland fisher folk, downstream water users and ecosystem dependent communities has been put at risk as a consequence of river degradation. Added to this is Climate change which is emerging as a major threat to water resources development and management in the context of altering hydrological cycles all over the world. Study reports as early as 2007 indicate that along with the dramatic changes in natural flows of rivers and the ability to adjust to and absorb disturbances, unexpected changes in global climate could lead to serious problems for ecosystems and people.

The current market driven agenda of the governments at centre and state and increasing private investments in all sectors has its impacts on rivers and water resources planning. The entry of private companies into hydro – power projects, water allocation for irrigation and drinking water to villages getting diverted to feed industries and cities, water privatization taking control over rural water resources, mining and thermal power companies abstracting and polluting rivers and water bodies are some of the major sectors where impacts are already felt. In most of these cases, tribal, farming and fishing communities who are the most directly dependent on rivers and water bodies for their day to day existence are the directly impacted, displaced and marginalized. Striking examples are visible in the tiny state of Goa where mining is eating up the fertile lands and polluting the rivers for export of iron ore, the recent decision on the Jaitapur Nuclear Plant in Maharashtra, the hundreds of dams planned in the North East converting rivers into tunnels and leading to social and ethnic tensions amongst indigenous communities. Such trajectories of development driven by external interests rather than the country’s real basic developmental needs are also linked to the lack of a proper natural resources planning with futuristic perspective. Can river basin approach to water resources and natural resources planning address some of these larger issues?

Over years, some critical questions have been raised with respect to the decision making process with respect to rivers and river basins. Some of them are:

- The need for *cumulative impact assessments* in river valley projects, including proper emphasis on *Carrying Capacity studies* for river systems;
- Consideration of downstream impacts and environmental / ecological flows while planning new dam projects to name a few. A move from minimum flows to ensuring optimal ecological flows of rivers.
- The problems due to large scale inter state or intra state diversions of rivers are creating problems of no-flows being allowed below dams that are raising major issues related to violations of treaties and their prolonged redressal.
- The National River Conservation Directorate has been supporting River Action Plans for 38 rivers. However, river conservation has been narrowed down to pollution control and related measures. The recently constituted National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) is silent on the nature of involvement of river basin communities in planning of resources and development projects.
- Placing large development projects like dams, thermal and nuclear and mining projects within hydrological and ecological limitations of river basins and irreversible socio – economic impacts

The Need for a Dialogue

While it is evident that River Basin Planning, if designed in a decentralized scaling up manner with critical roles envisioned for the River Basin Authorities / Organisations, can solve many of the present problems mentioned above, there is a need for an effective dialogue on the issue. The need arises in view of the following:

- There have been limited discussion on this at the national level either at the Governmental level or by civil Society Groups on the issue of River Basin Planning;
- The dialogue could initiate a process of mainstreaming river basin planning into other national and sectoral plans;
- Provide a platform to express various views on the issue including likely problems so that a realistic approach could be adopted.
- Discuss on issue of importance especially on Cumulative Impacts, carrying capacity and ecological flows, protection of catchments and issues related to river basin planning.
- Ways and means to incorporate River Basin Planning into Local, Regional, State and National Level plans.

Intended Outcomes

- To have a comprehensive understanding of River basin planning and its critical importance.
- Evolving or initiating a process to draft blueprint for mainstreaming River basin Planning at the national level.
- Developing an advocacy strategy to mainstream River Basin Planning issues.
- Sharing experiences, ideas and concerns with respect to River Basin issues.
- Build a platform of individuals, civil society groups and concerned government agencies to deliberate on the issue.
- Involving multiple stakeholders in the process of developing a blue print on River basin planning.

The Organisers

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We are thankful to the following organizations for supporting us:

Global Green Grants Funds
Arghyam
International Rivers

DAY 1 (9th August 2011)

9.00 am – 9.30 am – **Registration**

9.30 am – 11.00 am

CHAIR: Sri Ravi Singh - Secretary General and CEO, WWF India

Setting the background to Mainstreaming River Basin Planning
Prof Vijay Paranjpye

Keynote Speakers

Prof Ramaswamy Iyer (Former Secretary, MoWR)
Sri Anil Mohile (Ex-Chairman, Central Water Commission)

Brief Introduction to the workshop, its flow and expected outcomes
Dr.Latha Anantha

River Basin Planning –Viewpoints

11.30 am – 1.30 pm

Presenters from the government will be invited for giving their views / perspectives / challenges / raising questions on the framework of river basin planning. They are Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Power and Godavari Marathwada Irrigation Development Corporation. This session is for opening the different viewpoints before the participants in order to focus on the discussion points and identify the missing links in river basin planning which will be brainstormed in the following sessions for the three days.

Nuts and Bolts of Bottom up River Basin Planning Approach

Brainstorming sessions 1-9

The brainstorming sessions will consist of placing a few questions on the specific aspect on river basin planning to be discussed before the participants and evolving strategies for the same towards the end of the session. The strategies will later fit into the overall framework for river basin planning. Perspective briefs will be prepared with respect to each session

outlined below and circulated to the invitees before the workshop. Each session will be led by the resource person who has prepared the brief and assisted by a facilitator.

1. Broad Principles / Criteria

Presenter – Shripad Dharmadhikary

4.30 pm – 6.00 pm

2. From Micro watershed to Basin

Levels of Up-scaling, Participation and Decentralisation

Presenter – K J Joy

DAY 2 (10 August 2011)

9.00 am – 10.30 am

3. Case studies

From Government led to community led initiatives

Presenter - Prof Vijay Paranjpye and Dr.D.M.More (Experience in 'Integrated Planning of Water Resources, Godavari Basin')

11.00 am – 12.30 pm

4. Cumulative Impact Assessments in River Basin Planning

Presenter – Neeraj Vagholikar

1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

5. Across boundaries

Transboundary and Interstate water sharing and management

Presenters -

3.30 pm – 5.00 pm

6. Accounting for Pollution in Basin Planning

Industries, agriculture and sewage

Presenter – S. Viswanath

DAY 3 (11 August 2011)

9.00 am – 10.30 am

7. Do large dams hold water?

The future of large Dams (Irrigation and Hydro Power) and Options Assessment

Presenter – Himanshu Thakkar

11.00 am – 12.30 pm

8. Are river flows to the sea 'a waste'?

Accounting for downstream impacts and environmental flows

Presenter – Latha Anantha

1.30 pm – 3.00 pm

9. Legal and Institutional framework including conflict resolution, equity, access, benefit and cost sharing aspects

Presenter – Ritwick Dutta

3.30 pm – 6.00 pm

Summing up, Filling gaps and Consolidation of the Dialogue and Way forward to Mainstreaming River Basin Planning

Facilitators – Vijay Paranjpye and Latha Anant

List of Participants

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