

Urgent Press Release

From *Water Initiatives Odisha (WIO)*

A latest flood in Mahanadi is not only man made, but also an indicator of our poor river basin planning and management.

- *Water in the reservoir was continuously kept at a higher level without any justification.*
- *Predictions by Met were not seriously taken and serious communication gap remained with Chhatisgarh.*
- *We urgently need a ‘water management and basin planning treaty’ with Chhatisgarh.*

Sambalpur, 9th September 2011 - The flood situation in river Mahanadi, especially due to mismanagement of the Hirakud dam, has once again called for urgent attention of the policy planners. While we write this release, television channels are broadcasting that 59 out of the 64 gates of the dam have been opened to release 9,74,373 cusecs of water. 10, 37,000 cusec of water is entering into the reservoir. Almost all the districts downstream have been hugely impacted by this. In districts like Sambalpur, areas which had not seen floods even in 2008, have been inundated with flood waters. ***“The dam management authority kept watching for this situation to come even as the water in the reservoir kept increasing steadily from July 20”, alleges Water Initiatives Odisha.***

Analysing the reservoir level, one would find out that it was maintained at about 595 feet for the month of July but started steadily increasing from July 20 when it touched 596.85. While on July 24 it touched 601.75, by August 1, it reached 607.27. Then it continued to increase and from August 9 it went above 620 level and as reported currently it’s about 628.5.

Analysing water storage on various dates would show how the dam management is responsible for the current situation which has virtually forced it to release huge amount of flood water within the last two days. As per the ‘rule curve’ while on August 1st the recommended water level should have been 590 feet but was s high

as 607.27. Similarly, while on August 13, the recommended water level should have been 606 feet, the dam authorities kept it at 613.58. And this was the same for all the days. With the objective of keeping the flood cushioning space in the reservoir so that it does not reach the Full Reservoir Level (FRL) of 630 by end of monsoon, i.e. 1st week of October, the rule curve suggests the level to be maintained between 611 to 624 during the period 1st to 11th September. However, the reservoir was holding a water reserve level more than 624 on all dates from 1st to 5th September; which then increased to 625.65 on 6th, 626.12 on 7th, and 626.89 on 8th.

Now the government puts the responsibility of the flood on the heavy rain at the upper catchment and release of water from Chhatisgarh. However, daily and weekly predictions by the IMD were continuously warning of heavy spells. It proves that the dam management authority has not been following a co-ordinated approach with Chhatisgarh and IMD. ***WIO demands that “it’s time the govt. of Odisha establishes proper communication and clearly defined co-ordinated action with Chhatisgarh on management and planning of Mahanadi river”. We at WIO also demand that “the govt. must, without any further delay, enter into a legally binding ‘water management and basin planning treaty’ that will help in management of Mahanadi water throughout the year.”***

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Water Initiatives Odisha (WIO) is a state level coalition of civil society organisations, farmers, academia, media and other concerned, which has been working on water, environment and climate change issues in the state for more than two decades now.