

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON Water Resources Policy in South Asia

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SaciWATERS

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DAY 2 UPDATE

Contested Water Policy in South Asia

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The opening session of the International Conference on Water Resources Policy in South Asia saw distinguished water professionals bringing out the major concerns plaguing national water policies of the region. Dr. Tushaar Shah, Principal Scientist, International Water Management Institute, Colombo, in his presentation highlighted the absence of key state players in the irrigation policy. He emphasized the need for alternative regulatory mechanisms of groundwater use and a greater investment in groundwater recharge. Mr. Dipak Gyawali, Director, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation, stated that without constructive engagement with the three powers-state, market and civic movement-policies will fail and that "Policy is about plural voices and ensuring that it gets space".

Dr. Rajindra de S Ariyabandu, Former Research Fellow, Agrarian Research and Training Institution and former Director, Policy and Planning, Water Resources Secretariat, Colombo, brought out the practical complications of developing a water policy in a multi-party system of governance. According to Dr. Ariyabandu, there is a lack of clear direction coupled with a lack of political commitment or credible data to convince and underline the need for a change in policy. Mr. Md. Mehmood Ul Hassan, Senior Fellow (Innovation Systems), ZEF, Bonn, feels that Pakistan has failed to generate policy ownership. He observed that there are pressures of international financial institutions that determine the policy and that coercive approach tends to fail because it is not always appropriate.

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Global Water Reform Experiences

"Climate change exposes vulnerability of current regimes... No panaceas but need to develop a "diagnostic approach.... From technical and quantitative risk management approaches to optimize strategies to robust, flexible and systemic policies".

Claudia Pahl-Wost



"WRM will remain to be abstract if it cannot offer a service to the poor.... Subsidiarity in water management should be the anchor and/or precursor for broader development and not an end in itself"

Eiman Karar

"Markets do not necessarily manage demand (especially when water access and use is unregulated)... it is important to focus on suite of neoliberal reforms, not just trading".

Jessica Budds



"Indian irrigation is like a palimpsest with old scripts making room for new ones: individual Farmer is displacing the State and the community as architect, Builder and manager of irrigation"

Tushaar Shah

"Wicked problems need uncomfortable knowledge to find clumsy solutions that allow strategy switching under conditions of uncertainty".

Dipak Gyawali



South Asian Water Bureaucrats in Action



Water bureaucrats are at the forefront of policy making process. The panel discussion of these policy actors from South Asian countries deliberated on why policies end up as good intended documents. Some concerns that were raised through the discussions were pricing and financing, prioritization of investment between water and ecosystem, role of non-state actors, reversing the process of donor influence and how to make policy process more inclusive.

Contested Water Policy in South Asia

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Ms. Begum Shamsun Nahar, National Facilitator and Founder Member, Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) and Social Development Specialist, Char Development and Settlement Project, Bangladesh pointed out that Bangladesh faced a water crisis of a different nature that is the high content of arsenic, iron and salt which made it highly unsafe. Comparing the various national policies including the National Water Policy and its impact on women, she stated that there was a lack of gender linkages and recommended that "A gender perspective needs to be incorporated in all policies to make it effective". The Chairperson for the session, Prof. Jayanta Bandyopadhyay, Centre for Development and Environmental Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata, India and President, **SaciWATERS** concluded by putting forward the pertinent question that why countries in South Asia who were once collectively the leaders in terms of irrigation are unable to provide safe drinking water to even one fourth of its population and insisted that this concern needs to be addressed by all the national water policies.

Errata!

There has been an error in the abstract of Ms. Kamal Melvani's paper "An assessment of the riparian zone of the Paradeke Oya" (ref: Book of Abstracts). The correct version is given below;

"In 2007, areas within the Gampola District of Sri Lanka were affected by the spread of the Hepatitis A virus. Out of 1975 cases reported from the whole of the Kandy district, 825 cases were from the Udapalatha area, and fingers pointed to the contamination of the streams that flow in to the Paradeke Oya."

DAY TWO IN PICTURES



From the First batch of SAWA Fellows



Ms. Sonia Binte Murshed, a graduate from Civil Engineering Department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) with a major in Environmental Engineering, began her career as a Coordination Engineer in a Consultancy firm and then as an Executive Engineer in a construction firm. But she left her job to find her calling in the Water Sector

in usable form, long term affect on future population and urgency to solve these problems” particularly motivated her to pursue career in water sector. She recently completed her research work on “Management of Conflicts between Irrigation and Fisheries” in the South-West region of Bangladesh. Conducting her research carrying out field studies, working out with local people to gather their views on the problems they faced and the possible solutions, Sonia found herself enriched with new perspectives which further fuelled her commitment to pursue a vocation in the water sector. As a woman, she did feel insecure while working alone in a remote area to collect data or spending a night in an unfamiliar place. However, in general, her personal experience has been good. She got a warm reception wherever she went and found the local people she worked with in the rural areas very cooperative and supportive of her endeavour.

by joining the MSc. Program in Water Resource Development as a SAWA fellow (1st batch) in December, 2006. Ms. Murshed feels that water is the most essential resource to sustain life and Bangladesh is facing some critical problems like flood in the wet season and water scarcity in the dry season, and a plethora of other water related problems like water pollution, saline intrusion, river sedimentation, bank erosion etc. “The diverse use of water, its fragile nature, crisis

The fellowship holders of Crossing Boundaries Project are identified as SAWA Fellows (South Asia Water Fellows). The fellowship consists of a Masters and PhD program in the four partner institutes of Crossing Boundaries Project. Apart from the technical subjects the fellows take up courses in IWRM, Gender and field research methodology.

She feels that women play a vital role in the usage of water resources especially in the domestic sector and hence it is easier for women water professionals to gather and relate to local women's view on water related

crisis and the plausible solutions. Ms. Murshed, hence firmly believes that “woman water professionals can ensure better user participation in design and operation of water resource development projects”.

WOMEN WATER PROFESSIONALS OF SOUTH ASIA

In our effort to promote gender equity in the water sector we bring to you, Nazmun Naher, a young water professional from Bangladesh. Ms. Naher is an M.Sc student in Water resources Development at IWFM in BUET and also happens to be part of the First Batch of SAWA Fellows (South Asian Water Fellowship). Ms. Naher has been working as an Assistant Engineer in LGED/HQ, Dhaka, under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives of Bangladesh since April 2006.



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

Being a civil engineer I have learnt from my experience that before taking any development project we need to ensure several important issues. It needs to be socially acceptable, economically viable, environmentally sustainable and technically sound. To ensure all these parameters in the development project, planners need to include the interdisciplinary concept in project policy.

Before becoming a SAWA fellow I didn't know much about the water sector. When I read about the opportunity in the newspaper I decided to pursue my M.Sc in Water Resources Development and hold the prestigious award that is SAWA fellowship, the only programme in South Asia which offers an interdisciplinary training in water resource management. The unique opportunity of scholarship and

exchange program in South Asian countries that the fellowship offers also motivated me.

Now I am at the end of my M.Sc program and I am confident enough to become a Water Professional and further the cause of sustainable water sector development. Now I feel that the decision which I took a year before was right and it was the turning point of my career.

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

Till now I didn't experience any serious constraints. My family and colleagues as well as others in my country have been highly supportive of my work. But I did face some obstacles regarding data access from different organizations. Apart from this, personal safety during the field trips especially when I had to spend the night out alone was always a concern. But I am positive that the

scenario will change soon when people get to interact with more and more women water professionals.

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

Nowadays water is becoming a buzz word. It is also said that the third world war will follow a scramble for the depleting water resources. It is the need of the hour to find a viable way to utilize this limited resource in the upcoming water sector projects. That's why water professionals have huge opportunities and a gargantuan task ahead of them. As a women water professional, perhaps I need to work harder to ensure my position in the water sector and to utilize my knowledge for the people in a gender sensitive way.

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.



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