

Training Workshop

Understanding and resolving water conflicts in India

18-22 July 2011, Satapada, Chilika Lake, Odisha

Forum for Policy Dialogue on Water Conflicts in India (Forum to be brief), in collaboration with Shristi and Odisha State Resource Centre of the Forum, SaciWARERs-CapNet Network (SCaN) and Cap-Net, is organizing a Training Programme on **Understanding and Resolving Water Conflicts** at Satapada, Chilika Lake, Odisha during 18th to 22nd July, 2011.

The Forum is an effort to bring together people who have an interest to work on water and water conflict related issues. The Forum began its work towards the end of 2004 as a collaborative effort of eight organizations and a few independent researchers and was supported by World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). In the first phase of Forum's work the emphasis was on understanding conflicts and hence the Forum took up extensive documentation of different types of conflicts in the country. The documented case studies have been published as a book – *Water Conflicts in India: A Million Revolts in the Making* – by Routledge. The present phase of Forum's work, primarily supported by Arghyam, Bangalore, covers four broad areas of:

- Conflict Documentation
- Conflict Resolution
- Conflict Prevention
- Network and Outreach

The secretariat of the Forum is housed in the office of Society for Promoting Participative Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM), Pune. The Forum has also set up two state resource centers – one in Kerala (housed and managed by the Chalakudi Puzha Samrakshan Samiti) and the other one in Odisha (housed and managed by Shrishti on behalf of the Odisha Water Forum). The Forum has recently started documentation of different types of water conflicts in collaboration with Aaranyak. The Forum, in collaboration with Megh Pyne Abhiyan, is also planning document flood induced conflicts in the country. For further details on the forum, log on to <http://conflicts.indiawaterportal.org>

Rationale

Understanding conflicts and developing approaches and practical strategies to deal with conflicts is an important aspect of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). One of the critical issues in IWRM is contending and competing water uses and users and many of the conflicts are also embedded in this. Of course there are also other types of conflicts like conflicts due to dams,

submergence and displacement, pollution induced conflicts, conflicts due to privatization and so on. If IWRM has to move forward then we also need to develop capacities of various stakeholders in the water and allied sectors: 1) to understand water in an integrated manner (from an IWRM perspective in terms of crossing disciplinary boundaries of bio-physical sciences as well as various social science boundaries as well as sectoral and institutional boundaries, 2) understand the present institutional and legal set up and see the type of reforms to be initiated at this level, and 3) to bring together various, especially conflicting stakeholders, into a process of knowledge driven dialogue process within the deliberative democratic framework.

Though water conflicts are not necessarily bad or negative, with every conflict the society (and the ecosystems) pays a price. If water conflicts are unresolved there is a strong possibility that all our development efforts might get hampered and further the food security in the country could be seriously compromised. Also, the ecological issues related to the water conflicts are a major concern that needs immediate attention.

One of the pre-conditions for conflict resolution is the ability of the stakeholders to analyse the conflicts in all their complexities and come to a scientific understanding of the issues underpinning the conflicts. It also requires a good understanding of water as a resource and its legal, policy and institutional context. The different stakeholders also should have the necessary skills for a negotiated settlement. It is in this context the present training programme is being organized.

Objectives, modules, methods and team of resource persons

This training programme is aimed at introducing participants to the basic concepts, debates, theoretical and analytical approaches and emerging issues related to water, water conflicts and their resolution in India.

The training programme will have modules on the following components:

- Understanding water
- Normative concerns around water
- Legal and institutional issues related to water
- Understanding water conflicts in India
- Conflict resolution: approaches, methods with special emphasis on negotiations and stakeholder dialogue

The training programme will involve lectures, group discussions, assignments, case studies and interactive sessions with resource persons. A good set of reading material would be made available to the participants prior to the training programme.

The programme will be coordinated by a team of resource persons having considerable experience on theoretical and practical aspects of dealing with water conflicts in different geographies of India. Key members of the team are Prof. S. Janakarajan, Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai; K J Joy & Suhas Paranjape, SOPPECOM, Pune; Phillip Cullet, IELRC, New Delhi; A Latha, CPSS, Kerala and Pranab Choudhury, Baitarani Initiative, Odisha. We would also get a few more resource persons.

The programme is designed for middle level / senior level functionaries of NGO / civil society groups and movements, government officials in water resource departments, researchers/teachers from academia, lawyers, media professionals and activists working on water related issues.