

Training on Water and Equity for South Asia Water Fellows

Conducted by SOPPECOM in collaboration with SaciWATERS and Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Course outline for Graduate students on Water and Equity

Within the rights framework equity is an important dimension. Broadly speaking equity captures the idea of fair shares and fair opportunities in access to resources and decision making. The correlation between poverty and inequity is well documented. Concerns of equity have been losing prominence over the issues of macro economic concerns of stability, fiscal growth and efficiency. Within the water sector too similar arguments have been gaining strength resulting in conflicts and acute inequities.

At such a juncture it therefore becomes important to bring the focus back on the marginalised and disadvantaged sections of the society and how they can gain from any development intervention.

Technology has distanced itself from the social, political, institutional and economic dimensions in water sector. For several decades water sector has been dominated by a technocratic view and though there is awareness now on its various socio-political dimensions, the dominant paradigm persists.

This course addresses these two issues and the interconnections between them as follows

Goal: Course is expected to provide an

a) Interdisciplinary understanding of water resource problems and their socio-political and economic dimensions. It would sensitise the engineering faculty students to go beyond an understanding of water as a physical resource. It aims to facilitate them to understand the social embeddedness of technology

b) Understanding of equity concerns and its determinants with a focus on the water sector

Methodology: We hope to do the entire course in an interactive manner using a mix of case studies, simulation games, lecture methods and field trips to get the point across.

Since this is the first exposure of these students to the socio-political and economic dimensions of water, we would give only a broad overview with a good set of reading material to carry back home.

The 7 day course would be divided as follows

Course work: 4 days

Self study and assignments: 1 day

Field Trip: 2 days

Day 1

Welcome and Introduction to the course

Session 1: Social construction of technology

This would be the first session of the course and would bring out the key concerns in This session would essentially bring out the following 1) that when contextualized, technical specifications translate into social and economic decisions with social and economic preferences and viewpoints embedded in them 2) definitions of technical terms also have a social, economic and historical element embedded in them and 3) that technical education today is ill equipped to explain these processes and 4) that different fields reflect this to different degrees but in the case of water technical, social and economic processes are very closely linked.

Session 2: The context/background of technological intervention: Understanding class, caste and gender

This session would broadly explain the dynamic interconnection of class, caste and gender in the SA context. The session would focus on the interconnection of these three categories. While doing so it would also look at each of these categories-its historical evolution and its dimensions

Just as we try to understand the characteristics of these three categories and their interconnections we shall also try to look at the movements that have challenged these structures of power. Often these movements have set one or the other categories as the primary categories as decisive or determinant. The session would take an overview of these aspects of movements too and would move beyond that to make the **dynamic interconnection** of the three as an important determinant in political economy.

The important learning expected out of this session is to understand power as a dynamic interconnection of these three categories and therefore look at both structures of domination and the resistances against it as well.

Day 2

Normative Concerns: Understanding equity sustainability, livelihood assurance and democratization

Session 3: Water as an ecosystem and livelihood resource: Understanding Sustainability

Water, its uses, its linkages with ecosystem (scale, embeddedness, environmental flows, components, unidirectionality, substitutability, etc.) and with class, caste and gender (who uses water for what purposes). The first part of this session would largely discuss 'water as an ecosystem resource and the second half would be devoted to water as a livelihood resource and the interconnections between the two.

Session 4: Water as livelihood resource: whose water? Whose livelihoods? What pattern of livelihood needs? Understanding equity and livelihood assurance:

Here we would look at each of these categories and the different concerns of equity. We would draw on the understanding from sessions 2 and 3.

Session 5: Managing water: Understanding Equity, Sustainability and democratisation in water sector

Who decides? Who should decide? How many departments should deal with water? Participation and democratisation? End or means? Or End and means? Democratisation as end and democratisation as means – of equity, sustainability and livelihood assurance.

Day 3

Session 6: Manifestations of Inequity in the Water Sector

This session would flow from the three sessions on normative concerns. Discussion would be done on the key areas of inequities that lead to conflicts. The issues discussed would be- Tail ender deprivation; regional disparities; caste class gender disparities; command area and non command area issues;

Session 7: Water: right or economic good?

We would be moving towards the final sessions on how we want the water sector to look but before doing so, the students would have to be familiar with some of the most contending issues in the water sector today that have an impact on equity. These are the

changing water rights and the question of water pricing. The debates on whether water is a right or an economic good would be discussed in this session.

Day 4

Session 8: Issues in moving towards equitable, sustainable water perspectives that reflects the concerns of the three categories in the South Asian Context

Here we would be discussing the issues in moving towards equity and sustainability through a democratic process. This session would be aimed at arriving at a broad understanding of equity and the minimum considerations to achieve equity in the water sector. The session would be planned in such a way that different issues would be put up before the students- such as debates in large dams vs small dams; irrigation, drinking water as a right, priority of water use etc. The students would reflect on some of these issues which would then help us move towards arriving at a very broad understanding on the session theme.

Day 5: Assignments

Session Analysing the water policies and programmes in your own countries/provinces through the new lens of equity: Assessing the understanding of the students

Students have to draw from their understanding developed over the last 4 days and work on their assignment where they analyse their country water policies or programmes from the equity perspective. This is the final day and the students are expected to prepare for this assignment in groups for half a day and make their presentations in the second half.

Day 6&7 Field trips

We are planning a trip to Hivre Bazar and South Maharashtra

Hivre Bazaar can demonstrate the equity principle being practiced in different innovative ways

South Maharashtra has been leading the water rights movement for more than 2 decades now. Here we hope to organise discussions with the leading activists, visit the Baliraja or the people's dam and a few villages where the campaign for 'equitable distribution of water' has been effective and the process of implementation has been initiated.