

WATER AND EQUITY COURSE
Staff training for South Asian Engineering Colleges
SOPPECOM in collaboration with SaciWATERS

SOPPECOM along with SaciWATERS undertook a week long training programme on water and Equity from 3rd-9th October 2007. The backdrop of this training is the Crossing Boundaries (CB) Project launched by SaciWATERS in four South Asian countries of India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. In each of these countries identified universities have launched the Integrated water resources management (IWRM) course at the post- graduate level which is geared towards technologists, mainly engineering students. This course was expected to equip water technologists with a broader socio-technical understanding of the water sector.

Staff Training Course

The course is part of the capability building of the staff, teaching the IWRM course at the postgraduate level. This was therefore a training of trainers. The course was more geared towards developing a sensitivity of the faculty on the social dimensions of water. The staff of these three universities would basically be involved in taking this content to their students through innovative methods of teaching.

Main objectives

It was aimed at helping engineering students appreciate and place the importance of issues of equity within the water sector. It is based on the larger premise of the training programme that engineering education is mostly biased towards techno-economic solutions to water management. The course will equip the participants to develop an analytical framework to understand the developments within the water sector and place issues of equity central in it. It would clarify concepts like Development and Sustainable Development and place equity issues within the analytical frame of sustainable development. Through the different sessions that are planned in the 7 day course the following learning outcomes were anticipated in terms of the content



1. Technology is not neutral and there are different social factors that determine the use and the abuse of technology
2. To locate the developments in Water Sector and clarify the concept of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) in the context of the larger development paradigms
3. Conceptual clarity to the equity dimension within the larger debates on development and sustainable development and to sensitise the participants to the issue of equity as a desirable outcome both in the wider context of development and the more specific context of equitable access to water in the existing context of class, caste and gender inequities and differentiations
4. to highlight the parallels of this understanding to the water sector, especially the contested concept of Integrated Water Resource Management.

5. Understanding inequality in society by understanding the socio-eco-political factors that create class, caste, gender subordination and disparities.
6. They would also begin to understand the value of organising and mobilising as an important strategy to resist oppression and exploitation and the demand for affirmative action as legitimate to create these facilitating conditions.
7. A broader understanding of the concept and practice of participation and democratisation and come to certain minimum common understanding about them
8. Understanding the fit between bio-physical characteristics of water and the institutional forms and arrangements
9. Understanding the strengths and limits of institutional approach to water sector reforms
10. To understand the concepts of 'rights' and to understand the conceptualization of 'right to water' in the international discourse on human rights and in Indian legislation.

Importantly this course hopes to help the participants to develop methods of teaching to take this content and understanding to their post graduate students of IWRM. The sessions are therefore planned in a manner that would allow for adequate time to think and discuss on the pedagogy. In each of the sessions the trainers would along with the participants develop methods such a) simulation games b) Group exercises c) case study analysis d) assignments which would help in facilitating the learning and retention process of the students.



Readings

For the purpose of this week long course a compendium of readings was developed. This is available in a CD with SOPPECOM. The readings in this compendium are organized into very broad categories for the convenience of the reader. These categories are overlapping but would help the reader appreciate the importance of each of the categories as well. These readings could be ordered at a price by writing to Pratima at soppecom@vsnl.com

The categorization is as follows:

1. Society- technology Interface
2. Development Paradigm and Water Sector
3. Social Differentiation
4. Conceptual Issues
5. Participatory processes
6. Participatory Irrigation Management
7. Gender and water
8. Urban Water

Resource Team

Our resource persons included the following

1. Ajit Menon, MIDS, Chennai
2. Girish Sant, Prayas, Pune
3. K J Joy, SOPPECOM, Pune
4. Lakshmi Lingam, TISS, Mumbai
5. N C Naryanan, SaciWATERs, Hyderabad
6. Nagmani Rao, Karve Institute of Social Sciences, Pune
7. Priya Sangameshwaran, CISED, Bangalore
8. Seema Kulkarni, SOPPECOM, Pune
9. Simantini Dhuru, Mumbai
10. Suhas Paranjape, SOPPECOM, Pune
11. Vijay Paranjape, Gomukh, Pune

The seven day course was very well received by the participants from the South Asian countries. On the concluding day, Mr Madhu Pillai of WISE, Pune chaired the valedictory function.