

## **Discussion Notes**

### **Orientation Program for the Hon' Women members of Constituent Assembly on Policies of Water Resources Sector**

**Organised by:** Jalsrot Vikas Sanstha (JVS) Nepal/ Nepal Water Partnership (NWP)

**Venue:** Hotel Royal Singe, Kamaladi, Kathmandu

**Date:** 21 september 2008

**Presentation by :** Mr. Surya Nath Upadhyay, Secretary General, JVS  
Dr. Vijaya Shrestha, JVS  
Mr. Arjun Narshingh Rayamajhi, Managing Director, Fund Board

**Topic:** Orientation Program for the Hon' women members of the Constituent Assembly  
on the Policies of Water Resources Sector

*The summary of the discussion issues and consensus arrived at; following the presentation are summarized below. Detailed discussion notes are presented thereafter:*

#### **Summary of Discussion Issues:**

The main issues that came up during the discussion are summarized as follows:

Water resource can become one of the main vehicles of development for a prosperous Nepal.

More rumours than facts prevail in the water resources sector. Because of this, the right of the local users is going to end before it comes into use.

For effective discussions in the CA, the parliamentarians should be equipped with the most recent information and policies of the water resources sector.

A general knowhow of national and international policies; socio-economical, technical and environmental issues in the water resources sector is essential among the Hon' women members during discussions in the CA.

To materialize this, a network of the Hon' Women Parliamentarians is essential where the issues can be discussed prior to the CA discussions.

Experts from the water resources sector should be included in this network to provide feedback to the Hon' members.

A comprehensive network of Water Resources, Forest Resources and Land Resources is necessary.

## **General consensus reached**

The general consensuses reached during the discussions are as follows:

1. A network would be created among women Constituent Assembly members to discuss the issues and challenges of water resources sector. Additionally, the network would consist of experts from the different field of water resources. The total size of the network is expected to be about 40 to 45 members.
2. A working committee would be formed from among the members of the network.
3. Moreover, three different subcommittees on the sectors of Water supply, Hydropower and Irrigation would be created.
4. The JVS would act as a focal point of this network.

## **Details of Discussion**

**Dr. Vijaya Shrestha (JVS):** Water resource has already been an issue of international concern. The use of water in the recent days has increased by hundred folds and the population is also increasing at an alarming rate. The population of Nepal is expected to be double in the coming 30 years. Hence, this issue of water resources would be more challenging in the coming days.

In January, 1992 an International Conference on Water and Environment was held in Dublin, Ireland. In the same year on June 1992, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro was held which unveiled a sobering picture of global water resources. The conference concluded with a call for action: political commitment was needed urgently at the highest levels of government as indeed was change at the local level. These two conferences are considered milestones in the sustainable management of global water resources.

The Rio conference called for mechanisms that would coordinate and promote the practices of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) which is defined as a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vial ecosystems.

The Dublin Principles provided the academic blueprint for sustainable water resources management. The principles call for more careful management of the world's water resources, to reflect its fragility and to safeguard its future. This requires a new, integrated, 'holistic' approach to its management. This also requires users of water to be involved and consulted, which means introducing special measures to bring women to the table.

The Dublin statement has added, with some force, the controversial notion that since the delivery of water requires investment and upkeep, and since water can also offer economic benefits, water must be treated as an economic resource. Since water is

essential to life, water is also a social resource; many consider it a right. With this new facet, the Dublin principles thus reinforced the need for integration-both within and across sectors-taking social equity concerns and environmental needs into account, with added stress on the economic value of water.

The Dublin Principles are as follows:

1. Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential for sustaining life, development and the environment
2. Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels
3. Women play a central part in the provision management and safeguarding of water.
4. Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.

Keeping these points in view Government of Nepal has formulated Water Resources Strategy-2002 and National Water Plan-2005 for the comprehensive development of water resources of the country. The Water Resources Strategy, and Plan have followed the principles of IWRM while formulating the short term(5years), medium tem(15yerss) and long term (25 years) objectives in the development of water resources sector.

**Surya Nath Upadhyaya ( General Secretary, JVS):**

Nepalese rivers can be categorised into the following five categories according to the tributaries of the River Ganges:

Mahakali, Karnali, Babai and Rapti that confluences into the Ghagara River of India  
Narayani or the Sapta Gandaki becomes Gandak River of India

Small rivers of Bara and Parsa River confluence in the Burhi Gandak in India

Bagmati, Kamala and Koshi confluence into Kosi/Saptakoshi in India

Bakraha, Kankai and Mechi River confluences into Mahananda River in India

The catchment of these rivers covers three countries; Nepal, India and China. Total population in these river basins is 124.2 million out of which 24 million people live in Nepal, 100 million in India and 0.2 million in China. The total catchment area of these basins is 29.76 million ha, out of which 3.74 million hectares lies in China, 14.72 million ha in Nepal and the rest 11.32 million ha in India. The total irrigable land in these basins is 10.30 million ha out of which 0.1 million ha lies in China, 2.2 million ha in Nepal and 8 million ha in India.

The Ganges in Farakka has a total annual average flow of 484 billion cubic meter out of this 13 billion cubic meters of water comes from China, 185 billion cubic meters from Nepal and 286 billion cubic meters from India. Total flow from the five river basins mentioned above is 270 billion cubic meters. Of this total flow 13 billion cubic meters of water comes from the China, 185 billion cubic meters from Nepal and only 72 billion cubic meters from India.

A number of benefits are available from this water resource viz. domestic and industrial , irrigation, hydropower, navigation, flood control, recreation and other uses can be

achieved. A number of effects also arise from the use of this water resources viz. water pollution, silting, effect in the ecology etc.

Nepal has entered into several agreements with India in the water resources sector. The important one are: Kosi Agreement, Gandak Agreement, and the Integrated Mahakali River Agreement. The total irrigated land from the Kosi canal is 80,300 ha in Nepal and 16,50,000 ha in India. The canal capacity of Nepal is 78 cumecs and that of India is 710 cumecs. (Note: 1 cumecs = 1cubic meter per second). Similarly the irrigated land from the Gandak canal is 48,000 ha and 18,50,000 ha in Nepal and India respectively.

Similarly, in the Mahakali Treaty, the maximum and minimum flow in the Nepali canal is mentioned. Accordingly the maximum flow in the Nepali canals from Sarda barrage, Tanakpur barrage and for Dodhara Chadani area will be 28.3 cumecs, 28.3 cumecs and 10 cumecs and the minimum flow will be 4.2 cumecs, 8.4 cumecs and 10 cumecs respectively. A minimum flow of 110 cumecs will be maintained into India. Maximum flow of 396 cumec and 160 cumec is mentioned for Sarda Main and Lower Sarda of India respectively.

From the experience of past agreements the situation of Nepali water resources is not so encouraging. The benefits to Nepal are very small which could have been increased considerably. Before entering into any agreement in the future in the water resources sector, attention should be given, so as our requirements are met first. Due attention should be given during any agreement, so as in every benefit of water resources, Nepal should get its proper share. Other international treaties and agreements like Nile River Treaty, Columbia River Treaty, Mahakali River Treaty etc. should be studied before entering into any other agreements.

What should be the future course of action? We should go for the projects that are as per the requirements of Nepal. Excess power should be exported to India. Judicial share of dividend should be obtained in the regular water. Inundation area in the Nepali territory should be minimized. Both the country should work together for the mutual benefit.

The reality of Nepalese water resources is different from that what we observe from outside. Politics and sentiments have emerged as new dimensions in the Nepalese water resources. Everybody defines their right in water resources on their own way. Hence, the extent of the right needs to be defined. Personal petty interests are surfacing in recent days in all water resources project. This attitude is very disgusting. An attitude which keeps the national interest at the top is necessary among the users of water resources. In the changed context, the uses of water resources need a detailed elaboration in the new constitution.

Hence, a network of the Hon' woman members of the CA and water resources experts from different disciplines is necessary, so that, the issues and problems of water resources in the changed context could be addressed in an effective way.

JVS would act a focal point for this network and provide necessary information in this field regarding the technical, socio-economical, environmental and legal sectors.

**Arjun Narshing Rayamajhi (Managing Director, Rural Water supply and Sanitation Board)**

The Government of Nepal formed the Rural Water supply and Sanitation Board on 1<sup>st</sup> Chaitra 2052 (14<sup>th</sup> March 1996) under the Development Board Act 2013. The formation of this board was inspired by the success of the JAKPAS pilot project conducted by the UNDP/World Bank in between 1993 to 1996. A total of 113 projects were completed and about 7 million people were benefited from the projects.

The board is an independent body. The Ministry of Physical Planning and Works is the contact ministry. The projects conducted by this board are financed by World Bank/IDA, Government of Nepal and the local community. Under the First Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (1996-2003), this board has so far completed 887 projects around 49 districts of the country, thereby benefiting 5,79,675 rural populace. Currently this board is conducting the Second Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (2004-2009). The span of this project has been extended up to 2010.

Drinking water projects in the past suffered from a supply driven approach. Many projects could not run in the absent of users participation. Because of this the Fund Board has switched from the traditional supply driven to the demand driven approach in all the drinking water projects. In the demand driven projects, the demand of the project is made by the local people and a portion of the total capital cost is borne by them. The projects are handed over to the local users group after completion. The local users group is then responsible for the maintenance of the project.

To demonstrate their interest and ownership towards the project, the local users should deposit an upfront cash equivalent to 3 percent of the total project cost in a joint account

Some grievances were there in the people that the project authorities do not give enough information about the project. The Fund Board has now started to put hoarding boards mentioning the required information of the projects like the total cost of the project, government's share, local peoples' participation etc.

This has increased the efficiency and sustainability of the projects.

**Hon. Mahalaxmi(Dina) Upadhyaya (CA member, Nepali Congress):** Though the potential of water resources of Nepal is huge, its use is not satisfactory. This has affected in the economic policy of the government. There is a dilemma in the use of water resources of our country, in the one hand it is said that water resources is the boon for the development of Nepal and in the other hand large number of local issues arise in its use. A situation has aroused that the right of the local people that we are talking is going to end without its use. There is no question that the local communities should get their rights, but the rights can only be exercised once the project come into existence.

To make this very point understand to the local community, a network of CA members in general and the women CA members in particular is necessary. The case of community forestry can be taken as an example of successful participation of local users.

To give support to the CA members, experts from the water resources sector should give necessary inputs. Hence, some experts should be included in the network. JVS should act as a focal point to this network. A network of 40-45 CA member is good at the start with a working committee of about 11 member and subcommittees on Drinking Water Supply, Irrigation and Hydropower.

**Hon' Uma Adhikary (CA member, NC):** This is a good start. Participation of women in the matters of water, forest and land is necessary. The irony is that so far only 7% women have ownership in land. The situation in other sectors is not the different.

It has been experienced by most of us that there is more rumour in the water resources sector than in any other sectors. Hence, we should be able to provide right information to the people in the right time. The network of CA members and the experts in this sector would become an effective tool in this issue. Inputs from the experts would be necessary to discuss the issues of water resources in the CA.

**Hon' Shanta Shrestha (CA member, UML):** There are a lot of networks working in different sectors and the CA members are very busy to attend the meetings in one or the other. Sometimes the subject matter is not very clear to the CA members and they could not take part effectively in such meetings. Hence, expert ideas are necessary for an effective participation within the CA and outside. A network consisting of women CA members from all the political parties representing in the CA is necessary. Experts from the water resources sector should provide information in the technical, legal and other areas to the CA members.

**Hon' Kalpana Shob (CA member, NC) :** Involvement of the women member in the water sector is more than the man in the rural part of the country. Hence, they should be equipped with all the information of this sector. The Far Western Region is the most poverty affected region of the country, so more attention is needed in this area. A network of CA members would be effective to address such issues.

To sum up:

- A network of Hon' women members of CA from all the political parties is necessary for an effective use of water resources
- Some water experts should be included in the network to provide technical, legal and other inputs to the CA members.
- A working committee of about 11 members will be formed.
- Sub committees on hydropower, irrigation, and drinking water supply are necessary.
- JVS will act as focal point to this network

***Discussion Notes prepared by D. P. Jaishy, Member JVS  
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