

**NARBO 2ND TRAINING WORKSHOP ON RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT
AND ORGANIZATIONS**

Negombo, Sri Lanka

24 to 29 April 2005

A SHORT REPORT ON PARTICIPANTS' COMMENTS

1. The training workshop on River Basin Management was intended to middle and senior professionals from government and non-government organizations in Asia and was to (i) focus on the concepts and principles of river basin management, (ii) evaluate the principles of establishing effective river basin organizations, and (iii) investigate strategies that are applicable to the situation in their present organization and country. The training materials and tools drew heavily on the findings of ADB RETA papers completed by IWMI and various case studies as well. The workshop commenced as scheduled and time table was maintained through the course of the workshop. It was conducted in a participatory manner, in which all participants from the member countries took keen and varied interest. The venue of the workshop and logistic support provided by the organizers were satisfactory. I have participated in the workshop as one of the water technologists with a keen interest in understanding more about the IWRM and water governance.

2. The workshop presentation was in the form of interactive modules, in all four, on key topics and these were followed by work group meets and discussions, which generated a lot of interest among the participants. The workshop goal was to stimulate such an interest, which was achieved although partially. Various tools, papers of topical interest provided to the participants were informative and substantial to create a learning environment. The modules were (i) general overview of reasons for RBM, (ii) new insights from recent studies; (iii) problems and constraints, at local and national levels; and (iv) designing an appropriate institutional system. This was further reinforced by papers from outstanding authors from NGOs, University professors and National Policy Planning and National Water Resources Authority.

Venue and Logistic Support

3. The venue at the Beach Hotel, Negombo, Sri Lanka provided the necessary ambience and conducive environment for the workshop and the logistic facilities such the computers, internet, printers, Xeros etc provided by the NARBO secretariat were also suited to workshop of such nature.

Training Tools

4. The training tools including the papers of topical interest and the field visit have provided substantial basis for the workshop discussion. These had adequate material contents and an in depth analysis of problems encountered in given situation and therefore provided good referral documents. The introductory brief given by the Resource persons were extremely adequate and relevant to the topic chosen for the workshop. These were not only comprehensive but also provided clues as how the workshop is going to take course in the remaining days.

5. The module One: River Basin Management and Organization by Charles Abernethy brought out clearly the difference between the organizations and management and focused well on the workshop theme. Based on this theme module, the participants presented the status of river management in their respective countries. That gave an opportunity to the participants to get familiar with the situation in other countries. Two follow on presentations by Japan and Indonesia were appropriate. The Japanese model was very interesting although capital intensive, but it drove home the point if the resources are managed well, cost recovery should be a constraint. The Sri Lankan experience was well-captured in the paper on Historical perspective on water resources management in Sri Lanka by Dr Tennakoon.

6. The module Two: New Insights from Recent Studies by Madar Samad covering five countries in Asia was very useful and informative paper, which set the tone for the participants to work on Group Work 2 exercise. This was further strengthened by the presentation by Lanka Jalani with special reference to Maha Oya basin.

7. The module Three: Field visit to Maha Oya river basin has given an excellent opportunity of learning from the field various issues involved in river basin management in particular need for coordination, database management and building, involving grassroots organizations and stakeholders in development, need for understanding the people's aspirations and expectations and thereby adopting the bottom up approach in planning and development, need for a viable institutional mechanism for talking various technical, social, financial and environmental issues, and finally the strong need for protecting the water resources of the basin and management. The participants learnt a number of lessons as a result of this field visit and subsequent interactions among themselves and also with the resource persons.

8. The module Four: Designing and Appropriate Institutional System. Perhaps the most innovative way the workshop has been designed is to let the participants learning the instructional modules, papers presented and field visit to develop and design an appropriate institutional system. It was a model exercise. I am confident that the participants were able to realize the importance of this exercise given various constraints that they have been confronting in their respective countries in managing and running river basin organizations and their management.

9. Participants Groups. For free and effective interactions, the participants were divided into three groups, which improved the quality and coverage of the workshop as the participants were not only discussing and debating the workshop materials but also have had the opportunity of understanding each other problem. The group made significant contributions during their presentation of their reports, which was open for discussion.

Resource Persons

10. The resource persons were extremely competent, well-experienced with diverse country situations who have provided appropriate guidance and orientation to the participants during the course of the training workshop. The way they handled the topics and persons were extremely appreciable and appropriate as well. They had a sound grinding in field experience and vast knowledge of the countries covered under

the workshop theme. Their contributions were further strengthened by the other speakers.

Innovative Attributes of the Workshop

11. The workshop training attempted at bringing about a new orientation in river basin management to the participants by re-emphasizing on the role of community and grassroots organizations and wherever possible, the initiatives to be taken by them, and the Government playing a supportive and catalytic role rather than as a top-down decision-maker. In the transformation process, the RBM to use a number of innovative approaches, these include (i) programme activities, especially the investments should be PRA-led and beneficiary-owned; (ii) involving civil societies, CBOs and NGOs in facilitating targeting, group mobilization and awareness creation, etc. (iii) placing emphasis on the user associations and need for gaining political consensus on broad basin management issues.

Summing Up

12. I am pleased to note the continued commitment of the NARBO in providing purposeful direction to RBM through such workshop. It is worth noting that the initial efforts of NARBO and that of IWMI are bearing results in a number of countries, notwithstanding inherent weaknesses of many an organizations. The idea, however, has been that the stakeholders should be exposed to threats of haphazard planning and development and the benefits of collective actions in RBM.

13. I feel that I would be able to use the methodology adopted in this workshop in my capacity as the CEO of an organization, which has direct and indirect contact with both government agencies in India in motivating the persons connected to the water sector. The workshop has thus provided me an opportunity to device ways and means of disseminating key and critical information to the people concerned. I will also use the process in imparting training to my colleagues through a number of inhouse training on water sector as my organization has been closely associated with a number of evaluation studies of river valley projects in India. Thus the structure and format of THIS workshop would be extremely valuable as a guide.

14. I feel that the workshop has certainly has generated a lot of awareness among the participants and I do hope that they would carry with them the message for effective dissemination at their respective country. Just attending one workshop alone will do any good. This should be followed with further training and workshop. We need to hold workshop jointly with the user groups and policy makers and implementers in order to fully understand the complexity of the RBM. Priority should be given for all training activities that are focused on establishing and strengthening the skill-set and capacity of the staff officers and beneficiaries.

15. Although the format of the workshop is well-appreciated in terms of its content and material wealth, I feel that no sessions should have been held after 1730 hrs so that the participants could have a chance of knowing the country to which they come. Continuing the workshop beyond 1730 hrs reduces the uptake efficiency. Secondly such workshop involving international participants should be organized near capital cities so that participants could be able to see the cultural side of the country.