

Report on Lessons Learned on NARBO Training Workshop

River Basin Management and Organization

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The objectives of this workshop was to:

- (a) share the experience and information among the South Asian River Basin Management Organizations
- (b) provide an environment for discussions on issues, constraints and objectives of RBM.

As I am a civil engineer attached to Water Management Secretariat in River Basin Planning and Management Division of Mahaweli Authority of Sri Lanka and engaged in bulk water allocation among the reservoir network connected to Mahaweli River diversions for irrigation, hydropower, water supply, etc., it is very important to share the experience, issues, constraints, etc., in similar projects in other similar countries.

By reviewing the experience and knowledge gained by this workshop following ideas could be highlighted.

- (i) Nobody can specify a “correct” way of organizing river basin management
- (ii) Resistance to change is common
- (iii) River basin management cannot normally be created swiftly by single legislation act or administrative re-organization
- (iv) Data collected should be clarified and verified before confirm
- (v) Better to manage the demands for water
- (vi) Facilitate socio-economic and demographic changes the society wants through river basin management

As far as Mahaweli Authority is concerned, it has already gone up to some extent of river basin management. For example, process of seasonal cultivation plan can be taken. Prior to the commencement of cultivations of a season, data including dates of water issue, extents, etc., from irrigation schemes, power generation from hydropower reservoirs and requirement of drinking water, etc., are collected from grass-root level and forwarded to Water Management Secretariat of MASL. Data are fed to computer simulation model including reservoir maintenance periods and checked by simulating with 50 or 60 years rainfall data. If simulation fails, adjust cultivation areas to match with the existing water and expected water in the season from rainfall results the model runs. These results are again discussed with all stakeholders at “Water Panel Meeting”. Stakeholders are explained the water situation of water availability and convince them. Stakeholders consent is obtained at the meeting for seasonal water allocation. When the season starts, weekly meeting are held with representative of Mahaweli schemes, Irrigation Department schemes, hydropower reservoir and water supply schemes to review performance of water allocation of previous week and decide issues of next week. This procedure was practiced for about 20 years but due to increasing demand for water, we have to face problems in allocations at present in connection with priority.

Therefore we feel that complete transformation of river basin management has become an immediate requirement using the knowledge and new ideas gathered from the workshop could be utilized in future improvements in river basin management process.

Further, the interaction with participants from the other countries and sharing experience was very useful to understand and identify issues, constraints and problems faced in various stages of river basin management.

I wish to thank organizers and Mahaweli Authority for giving the opportunity to participate this workshop.