

**SUMMARY RECORD OF DISCUSSIONS IN THE CONSULTATION
MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF NON GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS ON REVIEW OF NATIONAL WATER POLICY HELD ON
11-12 JANUARY, 2011 IN NEW DELHI**

The Consultation Meeting with the representatives of Non Governmental Organizations on review of the National Water Policy was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal in the presence of Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Water Resources Shri Vincent H. Pala and Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission on 11th January, 2011 in New Delhi. Representatives of Non Governmental Organizations, senior officers from Ministry of Water Resources, Central Water Commission, Central Ground Water Board, Central Soil and Material Research Stations, National Institute of Hydrology, National Water development Agency, etc., participated in the consultation meeting. List of participants is at **Annexure-I**.

Welcoming the Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Water Resources Shri Vincent H. Pala, Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission and other participants, Shri G. Mohan Kumar, Additional Secretary (Water Resources) stated that National Water Policy is for the people and we have to take everybody on board before this policy, which was last revised in 2002, is reviewed. Therefore, the Ministry of Water Resources has started a comprehensive consultative process. He further stated that initially consultation meeting with the honourable members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Resources, honourable members of the consultative committee for Ministry of Water Resources, and honourable members of the Parliamentary Forum on Water Resources Conservation and Management were held during July 2007. A brainstorming session with the academia, experts and professionals was also organized. After the present consultation with the non-governmental organizations, further consultation would be held with the representatives of the Panchayati Raj institutions. He further stated that the non-governmental sector, which is always engaged in working at the grassroots level, is closer to the people and their feedback would be very valuable in reviewing the National Water Policy.

Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission highlighted that a major crisis in the water sector was the over exploitation of ground water resources. He stated that there is a need for comprehensive mapping of our aquifers so that we can make aquifer management plans with the help of local communities. He called for greater coordination across the different departments so that same water resource is utilized in an integrated manner respecting the unity and integrity of the hydrologic cycle. Regarding water quality, he stressed on the need for much closer coordination between sanitation and solid / liquid waste management and the provision of drinking water. Emphasizing the need for the river basin planning approach, he suggested to examine the need of a National Water Commission which would monitor compliance with the new water policy and new water strategy.

Shri Vincent H Pala, Minister of State for Water Resources stated that there is an urgent need to take up necessary measures for optimal utilization of the available water resources with due consideration to the sustainability apart from taking up necessary measures for comprehensive and integrated development of available resources. Water management strategies are required to be carefully designed so that they lead to overall development of the country benefiting each and every member of the society.

Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, Union Minister of Water Resources drew the attention of the participants that we have always taken water for granted; little realizing that it is becoming increasingly scarce. He stressed on the need to review the water policy, from a zero base. He stated that there is no denying the fact that a policy of that importance cannot really be worthwhile unless different cross sections of the society participate. We have got to have opinion from across the spectrum, whether it is political, social, or economic. He called upon the representatives of Non Governmental Organizations to give their valuable feedback, so that the policy directives can be oriented to address the issues of water in terms of both quantity and quality and ultimately to achieve food security for the nation.

The consultation meeting was held in three sessions over a period of two days. The first session was chaired by Dr. S.R. Hashim, former Member, Planning Commission. In his keynote address, he stated that in the present National Water Policy, all the elements on sharing, allocation, water efficiency or even management are, directly or indirectly, related to having a national perspective. But, the national perspective has been perhaps the weakest element in our water management so far. As a result, there is an overuse of water in one region to the extent that water is wasted, creating salinity, water logging, etc., while some other regions suffer from it. This happens within a State and over the States. The Chairman's address was followed by presentations from Shri Rajender Singh, Tarun Bharat

Sangh; Dr. R.S. Shanthakumar Hopper, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation; Shri Sukhanta Kar, Sulabh International Academy of Environmental Sanitation and Public Health; Shri Bharat Kakade, Vice President, BAIF, followed by discussions.

The second session was chaired by Dr. Kirit S. Parikh, former Member, Planning Commission. Dr. Parikh stated that water availability in India has variability in time and space. We have problem with ground water over exploitation because it is an open access resource. There are issues on water quality, interstates and interregional water disputes, inter-sectoral water allocation and equitably distribution. Shri Sureshababu, ARGHYAM; Shri Sriram Gomarkar, VANARAI; Shri Vijay Shankar, Samaj Pragati Sahayog; Sh. S.C. Jain, AFPRO; Mr. Salahuddin Saiphy; Sehgal Foundation; Mr. Peter Thettayil, Andhyodya; Mr. George Quadros, Don Bosco Famers Rehabilitation Society; Mr. Sachin Ojha, Development Support Centre; Prof. Sinha, Society of Resource Management School, Jharkhand; Mr. Sandeep Adhyapak, Waterfield Technologies Mumbai; Mr. Arun Tiwari, Jal Biradari; Ms. Pragya Thakur, Ecosan Service Foundation; Mr. Vasimalai, Dhan foundation; Mr. Abhijit Joshi, Jain Irrigation Systems, Dr. Veena Khanduri, India Water Partnership; Sh. S.L. Sathiya Nesan, Leaf Society, Tamilnadu, etc., presented their view points. Summarizing the discussions, Dr. Parikh stated that water resources are to be treated as really the resource and not just a tradable asset as such. High priority should be given to ecological concern and drinking water needs for all living beings. Agriculture and food crops should get a higher priority for irrigation. He further stated that on the constitutional and legal aspects, a legal framework through water security act and decentralized water management practice should be implemented to really address last mile problems. There is a need to reduce the gap between irrigation potential created and irrigation potential utilized and for increase in efficiency of irrigation system. Water Policy should have a provision for a heavy penalty punishment against individual activities that pollute water. Recycling and re-use of water should be encouraged. Sustainability of water resources is critical. Regarding ground water, he stated that it is at present an open access resource that every one pumps out freely and it can only be managed satisfactorily, if groundwater users together, in a cooperative manner, decide how best they are going to use or manage. The water policy should have broad based sustainability not only in physical and financial terms but also in social, technical, environmental and governmental terms.

On the second day, the third session was held in the presence of Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal. During this session, Shri Vinay Kumar, Sr. Jt. Com (PP) made a presentation on the proposed National Water Mission, which was followed by presentations by Sh. K. Nagarajan, Centre of Excellence for Change; Sh. S.C. Jain, AFPRO; Shri Rajendra, Watershed Organization Trust; Sh. Bharat Kakade,

BAIF; Shri R. Sreedhar, Environics Trust; Sh. Shripad Dharmadhikary, Manthan Adhyayan Kendra; Mr. Lalit Mohan Sharma, Institute of Rural Research and Development; Dr. Hopper, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation; Shri Darilyn Syiem, Peoples Learning Center, Meghalaya, Shillong.

Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal again emphasized that we have to involve people at every stage, at the planning stage, at the monitoring stage, the designing stage, as also the motivational stage, and the motivational stage is of greater importance because NGOs, who are working amongst the people, can motivate them in no small measure. The governmental office cannot perform the role, which NGOs can perform. He agreed that there is greater need of convergence amongst the different Ministries work relating to water, which we can consider overlapping or spread over and this is being implemented.

Following recommendations emerged out of discussions in respect of various aspects of water resources development and management;

A. Process of Review of National Water Policy

1. The national water policy should be such that people feel that it is their policy. The policy should reach the Panchayat and community levels and for this purpose the people who have worked for water resources management should also be involved in the policy.
2. There is a need for a consortium type of approach which could now look at convergence, collective action, capacity building, and a consortium for technical backstopping.
3. The National Water Policy should address the climate change, mitigation and adaptation strategies.
4. Only a few priority areas should be identified and included in the National Water Policy. Everything should not be included in the national water policy.
5. The policy document should have clarity on issues like challenges, critical issues, emerging tracks and the gaps.
6. It is important to take a unified holistic kind of view rather than a segmented or a departmental view. Water policy can make a big contribution by recommending a change to this kind of scenario.

B. Prioritization

7. The drinking water for human beings, animals, birds and trees should be together considered as the first priority to respect geo-cultural diversity and nature.
8. As agriculture is the biggest consumer of water and it should be duly respected and it should be divided into two categories for assigning priority. The agriculture catering to

food production should be given second priority, whereas the commercial agriculture should be assigned the fifth priority.

9. While fixing priorities there is a need to go beyond drinking water, although it is the basic need. Ecology is the legitimate use, river has a right to flow, because irrigation or agriculture or hydropower are possible only if the ecology is intact.

C. Constitutional and Legal Aspects

10. Water should be explicitly recognized as a fundamental right in the Constitution.
11. Centre and States can have a concurrent responsibility about water resources or the Inter-States Disputes Act of 1956 can be strengthened to enforce the national perspective in the management, in the sharing, and in the conservation and preservation of water resources.
12. The National Water Policy should include intent of Water Security Act to ensure water for all citizens.
13. As an effective way of conserving rain water, policy should spell out some sort of legislation to enforce water conservation through rainwater harvesting in urban areas particularly so that it can help in solving the problem of surrounding rural areas from where these cities are getting water.
14. Small scale water bodies are getting encroached. To prevent these encroachments many States are coming out with legal provisions. Like a forest protection act, there has to be a ban on allocating small scale water resources for any other purposes.
15. In India, ground water is free and anyone can exploit any amount of groundwater for his personal or commercial purpose. There should be some legislation on usage of water.

D. Inter State Issues

16. There should be institutional mechanisms to resolve conflicts between different users and usage, in a participatory and open manner, the people living in every river basin. Without this regulatory framework, without the reconciliation of the conflicts, it is difficult to resolve the question of sustainability, the question of livelihood, and the question of the environmental flows which we have neglected for so long.

E. Planning Process

17. The river basin planning approach would be the framework within which the reforms in water sector have to take place.
18. The present top-down engineer-centric approach should recognize that water management requires a whole host of other skills including the mobilization of farmers who are vital stakeholders in this whole process. There is a need to empower and given autonomy to our Water Users Associations and other Panchayati Raj institutions.

19. Water should be treated as National resource rather than asset, because when we term water resource as national resource, and then we concentrate on enhancing the resource rather than exploiting these resources.
20. The large scale projects on watershed basis are not feasible for canal-based irrigation as it has been observed in most of the tribal areas, particularly in the plateau areas. No project in conventional manner can supply the water to the poorest of poor. Therefore, there is a need to go for watershed-based planning and implementation of the projects and most importantly it has to be community-centric, eco-system-centric holistic water land and livestock-based planning.
21. There is a need for aquifer-based planning and use to ensure sustainability of drinking water resources and rainwater harvesting and recharge measures for the replenishment of the depleted water resources.
22. The policy should explicitly declare that water should be in the public domain and there should be no privatization or trading in water.
23. The river basin planning should be the corner stone of planning of water resources in this country and all kinds of clearances and permissions and everything should be screened through the process of river basin planning.
24. It is important to take a unified holistic kind of view rather than a segmented or a departmental view. Water policy can make a big contribution by recommending a change to this kind of scenario.

F. Monitoring Process

25. There is a need of a National Water Commission which would monitor compliance with the new water policy and new water strategy that is being formulated.
26. There is a need for conservation and enhancement of natural resources like land, water, and bio-diversity with the community so that the watershed community will own and monitor this whole programme, with the Panchayati Raj as well as with NREGA.
27. The monitoring of the government's initiatives must be strong. The common guidelines for watershed development have come out and many states are not yet implementing these guidelines as there is no strong mechanism to make sure that these programs reach the final stage.

G. Important Programmes

28. There is a need to merge the command area development programme in the AIBP.
29. A comprehensive mapping of our aquifers is required so that we can make aquifer management plans together with the communities who depend on the ground water found in those aquifers and can be centrally involved in the planning and management of the ground water that is found within those aquifers.
30. Water management should be suitably included in NREGA.
31. Interlinking of rivers is to be taken up very carefully. When excess water is available at some location and it is not required to construct a very big dam, the water can be transferred through a small link, then inter linking of rivers may be taken up. The

interlinking of rivers may be adopted when very large expenditure and resource mobilization is not required.

32. There is a need for establishment of network of community managed rain gauges and other observations related to climate to generate the data from all the river basins at mega watershed level to properly monitor, understand and strategize the adaptation measures for the climate change. Also there is a need for adoption of satellite-based information system to record the changes on ground especially in climatically critical areas such as deserts and hills.

H. Management Strategies

33. There should be focus on community driven decentralized water management.
34. There should be integration of departments and ministries which are related with the water and have influence on the water sectors.
35. There should be convergence of all the key players in the water sector that is the multidisciplinary units involved in the water sector should work together.
36. One should concentrate more on water saving rather than creation of additional water storage structures. We have created many water storage structures like major dams and medium dams but we are not able to harness and utilize their potential. Thus, there is a need to repair the existing water structures that could save a lot of money instead of going for construction of new structures
37. There is a need for a much closer coordination between what is being done on the side of sanitation and solid and liquid waste management and the provision of drinking water.
38. We should involve Indian community in water resources management so that the Indigenous knowledge and wisdom may be utilized for water resources management.
39. There is a need to evolve reservoir operation policies and maintenance strategies, which will improve water availability for the downstream needs. Whenever more and more dam projects come upstream; the downstream drinking, irrigation and other water needs are always affected.
40. There is a need to think of incentive driven approaches for conservation rather than penalty driven approaches.

I. Sustainability of Water Resources

41. There is a need for aquifer-based planning and use to ensure sustainability of drinking water resources and rainwater harvesting and recharge measures for the replenishment of the depleted water resources.
42. The sustainability has to be viewed from social, technical, financial, institutional, legal and environmental perspectives.

J. Augmentation of Utilizable Water Resources

43. The rainwater harvesting should be made mandatory at least for the planning stage for rural areas and urban areas for recharging groundwater.
44. All Class-1 towns and metropolitan cities should make it mandatory that their waste water, the sewerage should be treated and for that Central Government assistance should be made available.
45. There is a need for proper utilization of rain water in Western Ghats. Most of the streams and rivers flowing to Arabian Sea from Western Ghats carry enormous quantity of water with a great force. The area receives rainfall of more than 5000 millimetres. However after the rains are over, the region has to face water scarcity. Measures are needed to be taken up to store this running water in rainy season and then utilize the same during lean season.

K. Other Important Issues

46. There is a need to subsidize agriculture in any other way. Let us provide support to our farmers but if we continue to provide water and electricity the way we are doing, we may make farming itself unsustainable in this country.
47. There is a need to take major steps forward in improving the water use efficiencies of our large dam projects.
48. There is a need to address the problems of arsenic and fluoride and saline water ingress in the coastal areas. Otherwise, these problems could endanger the basic water security in our country and there is a need to make sure that the water policy that is being evolved carefully reflects this new emerging reality.
49. The Ministry of Water Resources should come out with the recommendation of minimum flow of water. Minimum flow of water cannot be universal. Minimum flow of water in water-scarce areas and water-abundant area cannot be same, as it depends on availability of water.
50. There is a need to promote micro-irrigation to increase water use efficiency.
51. Differential tariff for the bore wells in over exploited areas should be enforced by the people themselves; especially in urban areas. There should be differential tariff systems for domestic water use by local bodies.
52. There should be ecological consideration to provide heavy punishment for water polluters, especially for releasing untreated waste water into the rivers or aquifers and to enforce even the present legislative arrangements taking up programmes for restoration of river eco systems.
53. There is a need to re-establish reliable figures of the availability of water resources.
54. There is a need to create a policy which promotes export of less water consuming crops in India and discourage the export of water intensive crops to other countries.
55. The new concepts of measuring the water footprint of all products and services which are emanating from the basins have to be mentioned in the new water policy for climate change scenarios.

56. There should be a specific mention about accountability mechanism in the policy. Responsibility can be fixed at the district or state level which needs to be mentioned in the policy.
57. There should be a comprehensive water auditing and water budgeting exercises to be exercised at the village or district level once in three years.
58. The Gender mainstreaming part of the policy needs to be included because at the grassroots level the women manage the water collection.
59. Partnerships and capacity building and how the rights for the poor, especially the poor women can be promoted, should be included in the policy.
60. The water policy cannot be considered in a stand-alone mode. Water is interlinked with soil conservation. The velocity of runoff of stream water has to be reduced. It is essential to conserve soil through various soil and water conservation treatments.

L. Need for Awareness

61. There is a need for the awareness of the stakeholders. A lot of effort is needed in creating this type of awareness and education. The NGOs will be very useful because thousands of small and big NGOs are working all over the country at the field level and through them the stakeholders could be reached.
62. There is a need for water literacy programmes with communities to emphasize how ground water could be a very major constraint. Also there is a need for constitution of the Village Knowledge Centers for awareness programs.
63. Training and mass awareness programs should be organized for implementation of various water resources conservation and management programs at urban, village and local levels.
64. Panchayat Raj institutions should undertake water budgeting exercise annually. That could help to create awareness among the leaders at the village level regarding the amount of water available and how that can be allocating for domestic use, agriculture and other uses.

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6. Shri S.L. Gupta, CRO
7. Shri Hasan Abdullah, CRO
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