

INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVES ON WATER MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

'Water' has been on top of the development and well-being agenda both nationally and internationally. However, it has traditionally been considered a subject of interest only for engineers. Primarily, engineers have been involved with the design of water infrastructure. In South Asia, many people still lack access to adequate drinking water and sanitation. The local governance structures are unable to supply the required quantity of water due to insufficient availability of water and inadequate infrastructure. Adding to these are other socio-economic constraints that further limit access.

Rapid urbanisation coupled with the impacts of climate change has resulted in irreversible damage to water resources; in South Asia, this further aggravates the inequities in access to water. The poor have to succumb to the local elite. This manifests in various forms such as the existence of a real-estate mafia, prevalence of rampant sand mining and overexploitation of groundwater. Such a situation calls for awareness among all sections of people for protecting their water resources from further degradation. Our decision-making processes do not allow enough space for incorporating people's opinion in the policy-making process. Nevertheless, the rise of civil society as an important actor in governance has brought important issues into the public domain; in particular, the need for educating and bringing awareness about protection and conservation of natural resources. Since 'water' is an interdisciplinary subject, it is very important for policy makers to integrate this interdisciplinary understanding into the policy agenda for better governance and management of the resource.

In this series of SAWAS, we discuss the importance of incorporating interdisciplinarity in water research and education. Priya Sangameswaran, Vishal Narain and K.J. Joy sensitize on the need to appreciate the value of interdisciplinarity in water management through research, education and advocacy in the paper "Interdisciplinarity in Water Research, Education and Activism in south Asia: Some Reflections and the Way Forward". The paper draws on ideas from the "International Conference on Interdisciplinarity in Water Education: Challenges, Perspective and Policy Implications" held in Kathmandu, Nepal in October 2010.

The paper by Edwin Rap, Anjal Prakash and Margreet Zwarteveen - "Organizing Water Education Regionally: The Innovations, Experiences and Challenges of Three Southern Water Networks" brings to light experiences and challenges of WaterNet (Southern and Eastern Asia), Crossing Boundaries (South Asia) and Concertación (Andes, Latin

America), focussing on the networks' approaches to interdisciplinarity & gender and capacity building, research & policy advocacy. Mainstreaming gender concerns with water governance and management is yet to achieve the target milestone. Seema Kulkarni presents her insights on the “Situational Analysis of Women Water Professionals in South Asia”. This paper draws upon research conducted as part of the crossing boundaries project. Fauzia Mannan further explores the subject through her paper “The Times of Hope and Despair: Gender at the Crossroads of Water and Sanitation in Bangladesh”.

Finally, this issue carries two book reviews. Joe Hill recommends “Land Reform in Developing Countries: Property Rights and Property Wrongs” for all those who are interested in water and land issues. Medhavi Sharma suggests that “Knowledge to Policy: Making most of Development Research Reference” is an ideal book for all engaged in research, hoping to create an impact on policy recommendations.

SAWAS has always been open to new ideas and innovative research in the field of IWRM. It continues to remain a platform for all those who wish to share their research work with a larger audience and see it translated into policy.

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