

# Water Mismanagement

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**Abstract:** - The present water crisis has many components of an environmental, economic and social origin; over uses of water, pollution, changes in availability, and water mismanagement are some of the current problems. To cope with these problems and enhance strategies for long term management, the following programmes and approaches are presented: (a) A watershed approach, integrating research, monitoring, database and management; (b) An improved water governance system based on participation of stakeholders and the public and private sectors; (c) Strategic studies considering water and the economy, water and metropolitan region, water and energy; (d) A framework for international cooperation on shared watersheds; (e) An economic evaluation of water resources services (surface and underground lakes, rivers and reservoirs); (f) A capacity building program for managers, with an integrated, predictive and hydrographic basin approach.

**Keywords:** Water resources, planning, management, sustainability, future action.

## I. INTRODUCTION

India's water management has been on an unsustainable path for centuries. Fatehpur Sikri now a UNESCO world Heritage site, is an excellent monument to poor water management. More than four centuries later, water planning and management in India are still on an unsustainable path.

In order to ensure that economic growth and industrial development continue, that enough food and energy are available for an increasing population demanding steadily improved standards of living and quality of life, one resource is absolutely essential; water. Demands for water are steadily increasing. However, its management practices are decades behind time.

The shortage of water in the country is due to lack of application of mind and proper management is lacking with only 16-18 per cent of rainwater being conserved. Progressive States are realizing the importance of water conservation and launching special missions for it.

It would cost the notion Rs. 40,000 crore to provide drinking water to all habitations. This task was possible only if water conservation schemes like "Neeru-Meeru" (Water and You) in Andhra Pradesh and 'Pani Rokho Abhiyan' in Madhya Pradesh were replicated in other States.

Both the authorities and the communities are to blame for the mismanagement, over-exploitation and wastage of water resources. In extreme conditions of drought, we talk

eloquently about the virtues of rain harvesting, but once it starts pouring on the onset of monsoon, all our eloquence on rain harvesting is washed away. But the very few daring farmers who have taken to rainwater harvesting have shown that availability of water for domestic use and irrigation is no longer a problem all through the 12 months of a year. So, we need to know that the harvesting of rainwater is a must even for recharging the fast depleting groundwater resources.

Today most parts of urban India are threatened by depleting groundwater resources. In 286 districts across 18 States, water levels have fallen by 4 meters in the last two decades. Many States like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat are facing the threat of salination due to indiscriminate extraction of groundwater. In most States, withdrawal of groundwater- for the needs of both agricultural and industry- has been more than what can be recharged. And almost everywhere, callously- handled water management has resulted in polluting not just reverse but aquifers as well.

Kerala which has as many as 42 rivers, several lakes, logons and backwaters, the highest number of wells per square kilometer in the world and one of the regions receiving a high rainfall saw in 2004 the worst drought of the last 50 years. What did not surprise many is that this drought was man-made. For the first time this year many rivers, fed by the monsoon went dry. So too were many wells. This disaster was in the making for years together. Sand mafias have been systematically mining the rivers for the sand required by the booming construction industry while on the side forests were being denuded systematically. Gone are the days when the state had vast stretches of paddy fields. Fragmentation of land holdings in the name of land reforms and the hurdles faced by traditional farmers, obliged to pay excessively high wages for the militant labor, who would work like government babus from 10 am to 5 pm with lunch and tea breaks, killed paddy cultivation in Kerala. Water-logged paddy fields, once receptacles for rainwater, disappeared in course of time under a wave of dirty politics that blocked all development. The fallow lands across the State soon became sites for building construction. No wonder with the disappearance of the paddy fields that once collected enough rain water and helped recharge the groundwater, the level of groundwater is depleting at a fast rate. Nature rebels when man seeks to destroy the very ecosystem that sustains him.

Some of the State Governments have already made it mandatory to provide for rain harvesting facilities while

undertaking building construction. One State has drawn up a scheme to dig two-crore rain pits in different parts of the State in June when the monsoon sets in. The scheme will be implemented with the cooperation of voluntary agencies and organizations like NCC, NSS and Scouts and Guides. The idea is to dig at least 1,600 rain pits in each ward of the local bodies. The broad idea is to dig rain pits or 2x2x2 feet in size. But the size can vary depending upon the terrain of each area. The objective of the idea is to popularize the principles of household-based watershed management. The idea is to check the run off rain water into the sea. The scheme will ensure percolation of large quantities of water into the soil by blocking the flow. This would, in turn, increase the water level in the wells and other reserves.

The problem of water scarcity affects the whole country, with the intensity varying from region to region. Take the case of Karnataka where out of 56,682 habitations, 20,929 are not getting safe drinking water. A study by the Rural Development and Engineering Department (RDED) between 1999 and 2001 revealed that 37% of the habitations in the State lacked safe drinking water.

A major water management project that the country is now planning is the river-linking project. The project is still in the blue print stage and the apex court has called for a report on the latest position in regard to the implementation of the project. We have a national water policy and there are state policies too. But there is more mismanagement than management of our precious water resources. What is needed is action. The time for workshops and seminars on water management is over.

The permanent solution to end the water shortage in India is to link the Northern rivers with Southern rivers. The topography and mountain ranges in India offer a viable opportunity. It will promote trade and tourism and control floods.

## II. CONCLUSION

If current water management practices continue, such a free or highly subsidized domestic water supply and excessive ground water pumping, the country will only get progressively worse. Herein lies one of the chronic and fundamental problems of India water management. The focus always has been on increasing supply. No effort has been made to manage demand and increase efficiencies. There is not a single water utility in India that has a financially viable model.

Water is set to become the most contested resource in Asia, if the continent's biggest players continue to mismanage its use, water resources in the future problems and solution.

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