

India's National River Linking Project

Sumit Mallick

College of Fisheries Science, AAU, Raha, Nagaon, Assam, India

ARTICLE ID: 013

Abstract:

NRLP is formally known as National Perspective Plan. Transfer of water from water “surplus” basin where there is drought/scarcity through inter-basin water transplant project. What it means in simple terms is that if a river has surplus water left after meeting its own human agricultural and industrial requirements it can be transferred to another river which has deficient. Many drivers, either exogenous or endogenous to the water system influence India's water futures (IWMI, 2005).

Keywords: Climate Change, EIAs, Ken-Betwa project, NCIWRD.

Introduction:

There is a long-term debate going on whether is project is a disaster or a blessing. This project could create many water conflicts both at the international and state level. India is already at a crossroads with Pakistan over the sharing of the Indus' water. And with China over the Brahmaputra's water, with Nepal over the Mahakali's water. In such conditions, should India take up a few or more water conflicts?

When asked about the NRLP, SANDRP's Himanshu Thakkar and Shripad Dharma dhikary both reply "disaster." He also said, "There is no scientific basis to conclude that any river basin is surplus or deficit since we have not any full assessment or implementation of options in any river basin or even a sub-basin". Ashish Kothari from a non-profit organization that works on environmental and social issues, Kalpavriksh says, "The proposal based on the serious ecological myth that river water which drains into the sea are going to 'waste'. When rivers wind through forested, cultivated, and settled lands, they carry with them a large amount of silt. This silt is deposited along the way, enhancing the productivity of the surrounding lands, and finally of the coastal waters. The vast agriculture of India's plains, as well as the abundant fisheries off our coasts, is built on this foundation. The river also pushes out the sea, which would otherwise invade deep into the land, and erode the coast." The interlinking project will also adversely affect land, forest, the biodiversity of



ivers, and the livelihood of millions of people. The number of individuals who will be affected by the river connection project is unknown, according to Kothari, but it is expected to be in the hundreds of thousands.

Review of Literature:

The deltas are also the most climate-vulnerable regions. The Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta and other deltas also already reduce inflows due to natural and manmade processes has led to shoreline losses in Ganga, Brahmaputra, Krishna, Godavari, and Mahanadi rivers. According to The Hindu, "rare ecosystems and vital agricultural areas would become more vulnerable to storm surges, river flooding, and heightened salinity." The system will push the deltas further in the wrong direction." EIAs [Environmental Impact Assessments] for dam-building activities don't consider impacts like sinking and shrinking of deltas. Downstream impacts on water discharge and suspended sediment transport to deltas', NRLP will result in a 39-75 percent reduction in sediment flow in the Ganga and 9-25 percent in the Brahmaputra. Overall, sediment deposition in the delta is expected to drop from 3.6 to 2.5 mm per year, a significant reduction that will hasten the delta's sea-level rise. "Given the Farakka barrage already traps a lot of sediments, the plan for river linking will mean a very high level of degradation of the delta," says Jagdish Krishnaswamy, a senior fellow at the Suri Sehgal Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation, Ashoka Trust for Research in ecology and environment and a lead author of the special IPCC report on climate change, in terrestrial ecosystems, degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes are all factors to consider. He also mentioned, "Since the new study shows that the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna delta is sinking at a much higher rate than what we had previously thought, we need to keep sediment is going into the delta to prevent its submergence and the resulting displacement of inhabitants."

Justification of River Linking Project:

Union Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat speaks in front of reporters, "River linking projects are important for the country. The Ken-Betwa project will aid MP and UP's parched Bundelkhand region. The program will irrigate thousands of hectares while also providing drinking water to 62 lakh people. "The country has 31 river interlinking projects planned," he said, adding that Ken-Betwa is the first to reach the advanced planning stage. Also, Prime Minister Narendra Modi comments on the long-pending interlinking project as



“The Ken-Betwa project has huge potential to change the fate of this region. We have been working in this direction and have been in constant touch with both the state governments. I am confident that the lives will be completely changed here once Bundelkhand gets adequate water.” Former president Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam mentioned the interlinking project at his Independence Dayspeech in 2002. "Good water management is needed to contain floodwater and divert it for use during non-monsoon periods and in drought-prone areas," he stated later in December 2010.

Water is scarce, it must be used sustainably. Nothing could go right without water unless the country's citizens learn how to use it judiciously. "We recall SAVE WATER warnings on outside posters, radio, and television, but no one heeded them," Dr. Kalam continued. We assumed that water would remain indefinitely. All of the rivers, lakes, dams and underground water sources are now either dry or polluted”.

Conclusion:

The majority of Indian towns and cities rely on groundwater for their water supply systems. Around the world, it has been observed that as a village develops into a town, and then into a city, its land area expands at a considerably slower rate than its population. The National Commission on Integrated Water Resources and Development (NCIWRD) projected future water demand based on the nutritional security of all people, the livelihood security of the rural population, and India's food self-sufficiency (GOI, 1999). And, regardless of water harvesting and recharge, when a settlement's population density rises, its groundwater cannot keep up with demand. Beyond a certain point, a city will have to rely on a distant reservoir for its water. This is becoming more apparent in India, but particularly in China, whose urban water supply trends serve as a leading signal for India. While artificial groundwater recharge, rainfall harvesting, and inter-basin water transfers can help meet immediate water demands, they can also help increase the amount of water that can be used in many water-scarce river basins. They will indeed have major benefits when the full influence of climate change starts to impact the utilizable supply in many water-scarce river basins. "New generations take a plentiful supply of water for granted and environmental lobbies have gained political influence, making water providers the scapegoats rather than heroes." (Hornby, 1993).

References:

- GOI., 1999. Integrated water resources development. An action plan. Report of the Commission for Integrated Water Resource Development Volume I. New Delhi, India: Ministry of Water Resources.
- Hornby, B., 1993. Water Policy Has Changed — Attitudes will Follow. *Denver Post*, July 11, 1993, Colorado, USA.
- IWMI., 2005. India's Water Futures Analyses Scenarios and Issues. Unpublished Proceedings of the Inception Workshop on the Project 'Strategic Analyses of India's Water Futures'.

