

Promoting Dialogue

Addressing Existing Dams

The third issue-based workshop on Addressing Existing Dams was convened in Nairobi on 14-15 June 2004, within the context of the DDP work programme component on supporting global dialogues. 41 participants representing a wide range of stakeholder groups involved in the dams and development debate attended the meeting. The overall objectives of the workshop were to:



- Identify the current practices and constraints concerning the systematic assessment of the performance of existing dams, including systematic monitoring and safety aspects;
- Identify principles and criteria concerning structural and non-structural approaches for the optimisation and efficient production of dam benefits under changing contexts (climatic, socio-economic, policy and regulatory);
- Discuss the role of stakeholders, especially government agencies, beneficiaries and affected peoples, in the monitoring of dam performance, including safety issues and;
- Specify approaches for closing the gap between aspiration and reality.

The output of the workshop was a set of recommendations and issues to be discussed in the context of national and regional multi-stakeholder dialogues and workshops, with a view to influence policies and procedures aiming to improve decision-making on dams and their alternatives.

Some of the **issues and recommendations** identified by the participants dealing with a wide range of aspects concerning the assessment and management of existing dams are presented below.

I) Assessment and Implementation of Dam Safety Programmes

- Governments put in place legislation requiring dam safety programmes where not available.
- Costs of the projects include the costs of dam safety programmes and their payment from project revenues.
- The addressing of risks of small and medium dams, which are more likely to fail than large dams.

Emergency Preparedness and Evacuation

- Emergency preparedness and evacuation plans at appropriate levels of government are put in place by the lowest, feasible level of government for every dam involving risks to downstream populations.
- Local people, especially those who would be affected by a dam failure, are involved in drafting disaster management and evacuation plans and strategies for communicating risk and recommended actions to communities.
- The provision of relevant information to potentially affected communities, as well as receiving demographic and other information from such communities, in planning emergency warning and evacuation procedures.

Climate Change

- The elaboration of an international study to predict the effects of climate change on dam safety, including the use of storage for mitigating those effects.
- The consideration of dam safety programmes in the context of climate change adaptation funding, where applicable.
- The consideration of the impacts of climate change in dam safety assessments and programmes.

Trans-boundary Rivers and Multiple Dams

- The use of scenario-based models by river basin commissions to address trans-boundary safety issues.
- The design of emergency preparedness and evacuation plans at river basin level considering the interaction of multiple dams.

II) Addressing Environmental Issues

- Environment funds to address outstanding environmental issues associated to existing dams are established through seed money provided by multilateral banks and that governments will eventually sustain.
- Communities have a leading role in training programmes and establishing environmental restoration programmes.
- The classification of rivers and river basins according to “river health” in order to prioritise actions on existing dams, including risk maps.
- Re-licencing is used as an opportunity to address outstanding environmental issues.

Environmental Flows

- A legislative mandate is created for environmental flows – quantity and quality – as well as for addressing other environmental issues associated with dams.
- Financial mechanisms are established to fund environmental releases in trans-boundary river basins.

III) Overcoming Barriers to Regular Performance Assessments (technical, environmental, social)

- The benefits of evaluations to owners, in terms of improving dam performance, are publicised.
- Laws mandating post-project evaluations are established and countries develop consistent standards for assessments.

Methods for Performance Assessments

- Multi-stakeholder groups, giving every constituency an opportunity to articulate their own issues and interests, conduct evaluations.
- Pre-project baseline studies are carried out so that evaluations can measure post-project changes.

Content of Performance Assessments

- Evaluations assess overall impact of water resources strategies (e.g. on poverty alleviation), development effectiveness, cumulative impacts and outstanding social issues.
- The development of a framework for comprehensive review and assessment of existing dams, their use and the distribution of benefit streams, environmental and social impacts and outstanding social concerns.

IV) Addressing Outstanding Social Issues

Governance Issues

- The implementation by governments and funders of clear, consistent policies to deal with unresolved social impacts and, in this context, the establishment of multi-stakeholder committees that include the participation of dam-affected people.
- The inclusion in evaluations of cumulative impacts of projects on collective community rights.
- The establishment of legal venues and mechanisms for addressing outstanding social issues.

Funding Reparations

- A percentage of revenues from services provided by the dam is allocated for reparations. The establishment of “special funds” with community representation.
- The investigation of need for both financial and non-financial reparations. The coverage of psychological and physical suffering and indemnification for loss of lives.

V) Optimising Performance of Dams

Governance Issues

- Public participation is given importance in deciding what is to be optimised, issues of resource management and how various benefits and services serve different needs.
- Giving priority in planning processes to optimising the performance of existing systems.
- Evaluating the optimisation of dam performance at least at the river basin level.

Specific Performance Issues

- Both water quality and water quantity issues are considered including the provision of downstream flows for ecosystems.
- Taking measures for sediment evacuation and sedimentation prevention and water losses/wastage reduction to optimise the system performance and prolong the safe life of a dam.



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