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# EVERYTHING ABOUT WATER



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## 13<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

ISSUE

# NEW AGE OF WATER COOPERATION



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**Water Cooperation: Win-Win Situation for All**





# Forward Thinking and Inclination to Cooperate

The world's deteriorating water situation deserves more attention than ever before. WWF in a study has submitted that global warming, diminishing wetlands, and inadequate resource management are the main causes of water shortages worldwide. Another study by International Water Management Institute (IWMI) concludes that one-third of the human population - mostly in the developing world is now short of water. Looking at the sensitivity of the situation, United Nations General Assembly declared 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation, a much needed declaration as water, unlike other vital resource has no borders. This declaration will help in cooperation between countries in water management which will have great benefits. It will serve as a platform to highlight burning issues of scarcity, successful examples of effective water management, water cooperation and explore key issues, including water diplomacy, trans-border water management and financial cooperation among the involved parties.

The combination of rainfall, surface and ground water resources if managed properly is sufficient in providing adequate water to the Indian population. However, rise in demand and developmental pressure is changing the characteristics of water. Access to safe drinking water continues to be a problem; availability of water in different regions is imbalanced and has the potential of causing social unrest. The sharing of waters of the Kaveri River has been a serious dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Delhi is looking towards Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for its water supplies. There are several such instances of disputes over water issues within the country and at global level. [www.spml.co.in](http://www.spml.co.in)

Groundwater though part of hydrological cycle, still perceived as an individual property and exploited inequitably without any consideration to its sustainability. In the last one decade, the world has become more than half urban, a drastic shift. Over 90 percent of urban growth is now occurring in the developing world; adding an estimated 70 million new residents to urban areas each year. Much of this urban growth is occurring in medium and small-sized cities, with about 53 percent of the world's urban population residing in cities with population of 5 lacs or less. This demographic change raises important issues about the water availability.

## **Favorite book/author...**

"The End of Abundance: Economic Solutions to Water Scarcity" by David Zetland. It offers an insight on tools and economic ideas that can help us putting water to its highest and best use. Good thoughts to anyone interested in the management of our most precious resource.

## **Favorite film...**

"Kiss the Water", by Eric Steel who profiles the Scotswoman Megan Boyd, a legend in the art of fly-making in this film.

## **Favorite holiday destination...**

In India, Kerala has the finest water surroundings, Alapuzha and Kappadu has the mesmerizing charm of the tropical beaches. Outside India, Maldives is good with white sands and crystal clear waters to see even passing fish while you relax.

## **Advice for EverythingAboutWater...**

I am impressed with this publication going online and making the whole issue digital, a milestone for a water publication from India. My best wishes for many more such milestones to be achieved in future.



## Historical Connect

At the international level water appears to provide reasons for trans-border cooperation. A look back at history suggests that nearly 450 agreements on international waters were signed between 1820 and 2007. More than 90 international water agreements were drawn up to help manage shared water basins on the African continent only. Even today, countries are more likely to cooperate when the benefits of cooperating are perceived to be greater than those of non-cooperation.

India is a successful example of water cooperation way back in 1960 when it signed Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan and this treaty is still in force and through cooperation the countries were able to safeguard their long-term water supply. The Ganges Treaty with Bangladesh signed in 1996 establishes a 30-year water-sharing arrangement and recognizes the neighboring country's water rights as a lower-level riparian. Contrary to common belief, good examples of water cooperation greatly outshine water-related conflicts. The potential for water cooperation is great and its benefits in economic, social and environmental terms are significant. All water systems are complex; the management at the municipalities' level, state level or national level, internationally shared river basins is all part of the natural hydrological cycle and need efficient management.

## Why Water Cooperation

Surface and groundwater that cross international boundaries present increased challenges to effective water management, because hydrologic needs can often be overwhelmed by political considerations. In the current and emerging scenario of water scarcity, water cooperation is crucial to ensure the sustainable and equitable distribution of water and also to foster and maintain peaceful relations within and among communities. In India, at the central government level, four different ministries are dealing with water issues; they can cooperate and mainstream awareness on water management in the light of India's development goals. All stakeholders, including those in government, international organizations, private sectors, civil society and public at large should be engaged to work together to promote the sustainable management of water. Water management must also be consistent with other government policies and political and economic decisions must be made in a way to balance and fairly distribute the allocation of natural resources. At state and municipal level, greater cooperation is required to streamline the operations and management of water distribution, at the community level - users can cooperate through conserving water, at the trans-border level joint management institutions can help to distribute and protect shared resources; and at the international level the various international agencies can help in resolving the crucial issues between the two countries.

Water is becoming a hot issue between India and China after the Chinese approval to the construction of three more dams on Brahmaputra River in Tibet, in addition to the one being built without informing us. India is pressing

China to have a bilateral mechanism either a water commission or an inter-governmental dialogue or a treaty to deal with water issues between the two countries. A greater cooperation from both sides is needed. In a significant move, India has set up a high-level inter-ministerial committee to take stock of the situation and bring it up with China to deal with this issue.

## Approach for Water Cooperation

Politics play a central role in creating and resolving issues of national and international significance. A strong political will and commitment to address water issues remains crucial. Equally important are forward thinking and inclination to cooperate at local, regional and international levels. Greater public participation in discussion on the issues of sustainable water resources and transparency in decision making can stimulate cooperative action and political commitment. Promoting a culture of consultation and increasing participative capacities will help to deliver benefits in all areas, including collaborative water management.

## Benefits of Water Cooperation

Water is a powerful source for cooperation and dialogue between the stake holders that help bridging the differences, more often uniting the societies. A good resource for cooperation between developed and under developed countries; reducing inequality, promoting dialogues, creating job opportunities, reducing scarcities and enhancing resource efficiency. It supports the sharing of knowledge including data and information exchange, management strategies and best practices in preserving and managing the aspects of water. At the international level, it crafts effective and mutually beneficial solution of water related issues that inspires peace, security and stability of our countries.

Water cooperation is vital to the realization of many of these benefits and promotes cooperation. Benefit-sharing agreements exist for centuries, historical evidences shows that the kings despite having serious disputes about the lands have always approved the water sharing agreements. The advantages of cooperation and collective action are easier to see when the benefits are visible to each party. Some of the common benefits of water cooperation are:

- ▶▶ Fostering peace, security and gender equality
- ▶▶ Sustainable development and environmental sustainability
- ▶▶ Universal access of water resources between the countries
- ▶▶ Poverty alleviation due to economic development
- ▶▶ Opportunities for growth and socio-economic benefits
- ▶▶ Cooperation for the provision of basic water supply and sanitation services
- ▶▶ Crucial to preserve water resources and protect the environment
- ▶▶ It creates resource without borders
- ▶▶ It reduces the impact of climate change with better cooperation
- ▶▶ Solution to water conflicts between the countries among others..

A number of aspects on which the water cooperation can create economic benefits:

- ▶ Water cooperation between sectors (drinking water, industry, agriculture, environment)
- ▶ Cooperation in the water chain (source, distribution, use, drainage, treatment, re-use, disposal)
- ▶ Cooperation between stakeholders (government, private sector, regulatory and research organizations, civil society etc.)
- ▶ Water cooperation through spatial arrangements (upstream, downstream)
- ▶ Trans-boundary water cooperation (sharing the water deficit, sharing the water benefits)
- ▶ Preventive diplomacy and institutional capacity building etc.

Planet earth has sufficient water resources to provide water for all. But this can become a reality only if we change our approach towards water management. Sharing the benefits of resources and development of guidelines to handle disputes peacefully will be the key issue in water sustainability. The entire value chain from a social, economic and environmental perspective needs to be managed within a sound, integrated socio-economic and environmental framework. We all have a shared responsibility for protecting the environments, rivers and their associated water bodies for our future. Many solutions to water problems lie in better governance, with sharing water as one of the key challenges to be addressed at appropriate levels. The water cooperation can also address the approaching threat of global water crisis to human being as millions of people lack access to sufficient quantities of water at sufficient quality for their well-being. More conflict of interest is likely to arise in the future but effective water management properly supported by sensible understanding offers a window of opportunity for a broader cooperation. It is clear that once the water cooperation are better practiced, mutually beneficial integration and cooperation on water could be used more effectively to resolve conflicts and to support sustainable peace and harmony among countries, states and groups within societies.

SPML has been promoting sustainable water management – a task that is increasingly becoming essential and complex as the natural supplies deplete and demand rises. We have been building SPML since 1978 and have a deep understanding of water business in India. Our extensive experience and knowledge of the water sector has led us to be among the top most water management companies in the country. SPML makes an important contribution towards conserving the precious resources across the nation by reducing wastage, losses and pilferage of the drinking water and treatment of used water. SPML is committed to sustainable water management through effectively managing capital, life cycle costs and regulatory requirements.

At present, SPML is executing a number of water distribution and management projects across the country including the Water Supply Project



at Aurangabad (Maharashtra), one of the largest and most sophisticated PPP projects in the Indian water sector. The projects for the improvement in water distribution networks in Delhi is an ambitious project for us to improve the efficiency of water supply in selected areas of Delhi and SPML will work as long term operators of water distribution systems. In the process to have contributed in building a self-sustained and truly developed India especially in the water sector, SPML will built large platform with requisite strength and capacity to take larger roles in sustaining India as one of the most admired country in the world.

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