

South Asia Environmental Capacity Building- **Agricultural and Water Pollution Project**



SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

Funding Agencies	United States Department of State, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) and Caritas Switzerland
Regional Focus	South Asia
Countries	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka
Project Theme	Land Based Water Pollution
Project Duration	Three years (October 2017-September 2020)
Total Project Budget	USD. 1.027.276,00 (USD 478.940, United States Department of State funded and USD 548.335,47 co-financed by Caritas Switzerland)
Consortium Lead	Caritas Switzerland
Implementing Partners	Arthacharya Foundation, Sri Lanka; Caritas Bangladesh; DHAN Foundation, India; LI BIRD, Nepal

Background

The once abundant water resources of South Asia are getting scarce due to growing population and effects of climate change. Hence, water insecurity is rife in the region. Such scarcity combined with two important factors- (i) prevalent water use behavior in agro-practices and (ii) availability of numerous water resources in South Asia which are largely transboundary in nature, has intensified the problem and posed threat to water quality at a regional scale.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2016), among the three-major global water consuming sectors-agriculture (irrigation, livestock watering, aquaculture), municipalities (domestic, municipal) and industry- the agriculture sector consumes the most, with a global average of 70%. The South Asian economy is predominantly agro-based and has the potential to feed one third of the global population. Escalating the situation, agriculture in South Asia withdraws 91% of water-well over the global average and much higher compared to other sectors (ibid). In addition, agriculture contributes to water quality degradation through various pollutants, namely nutrients such as nitrate, ammonia or phosphate; pesticides; salts; sediments; organic matter; pathogens; metals; drug residue; hormones and feed additives

(FAO, 2017). Toxic pesticides, chemical fertilizers and other matter saturate farmlands, leach into ground waters, rivers, lakes and oceans, and spread toxic chemicals. The land and water are then contaminated with harmful toxins. These toxins enter the water we drink and food we eat, resulting in health hazards for human beings and animals. This also has negative impact on livelihoods, the environment, ecosystem, health and well-being.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka are endowed with thousands of rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, wetlands and coastal aquifers. Several of the water bodies are wetlands or Ramsar sites that are economically important due to tourism potential, and ecologically important owing to their biological richness and as host to mainly endemic, rare, and threatened species. Many water sources including the region's largest rivers-Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra-are transboundary in nature and are a source of potential tension or conflict. Fifty-seven out of 405 rivers in Bangladesh are transboundary; all the rivers in Nepal eventually merge with Ganges that runs through India and Bangladesh; and India shares water bodies with Nepal and Bangladesh. As an island, Sri Lanka faces double disadvantage through intrusion of polluted water coming from upstream countries that dilutes in the Indian Ocean, along with its own in-country water pollution. The transboundary nature of South Asian waters has further escalated the severity and scale of the problem.

These countries have devised a number of policies to address water-pollution, but significant positive results have not yet been achieved. There are four major reasons behind such gap in policy results. Firstly, there is a lack of systematic efforts to review, analyze, document and share policies. Secondly, there are gaps in capacity of national level stakeholders and water users to address the issues of land-based water pollution. Thirdly, despite a large number of good practices developed and practiced by countries independently (e.g. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)), little efforts has been made to promote a regional level exchange of knowledge, skill and experiences. Lastly, a well-functioning regional level cooperation, coordination and communication mechanism to facilitate regional connectivity and pursue the regional or cross-country water governance and management is nearly non-existent.

Several factors addressing the aforementioned gaps call for- (i) understanding the region's existing policies, operational mechanisms, gaps and contradictions, and identifying ways to integrate these policies; (ii) Identify stakeholders' capacity needs, and design activities to build capacity to enable them to advocate for the land-based water pollution issues; (iii) identify and share good practices at country and local level for regional learning and up-scaling; and finally, in order to collectively address the trans boundary problem of water pollution, establish regional level water governance and management mechanisms.

The project will address these gaps through the following broader objectives. The activities designed to achieve these objectives are listed along with the respective objectives.

Objective 1: Take stock of national policies and strategies on agriculture, livestock and other land-based sources of water pollution

Activities under Objective 1:

- Identify country, province and context specific gaps in policies, strategies, regulations, and share among partners and stakeholders.
- Identify, document and share in-country good and replicable practices of integrated water resource management (IWRM)

Objective 2: Strengthen country and regional capacity to address challenges pertaining to land-based water pollution and its consequences on ecosystem, biodiversity, human health and livelihoods

Activities under Objective 2:

- Assess capacity gap of national and regional stakeholders responsible for addressing land-based pollution
- Design and deliver national and regional level training, short-courses and curricula on sources and impacts of land-based pollution and IWRM
- Raise awareness and promote advocacy by engaging multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary teams at national and regional levels
- Integrate issues and mitigation measures of land-based water pollution in academic curricula at universities/colleges

Objective 3: Pilot, test and exchange high-impact water pollution mitigation technologies and practices, and improve agricultural productivity and human health through action research

Activities under Objective 3:

- Identify, pilot and validate mitigation technologies and practices of land-based water pollution such as IWRM. Enhance in-country capacity for Payment for Watershed Services (PWS) mechanism and pilot it in a selected site
- Train local governments in bringing positive change in their behavior on IWRM and land-based pollutions

Objective 4: Establish a regional level multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary mechanism to promote regional connectivity for reducing land-based pollution

Activities under Objective 4:

- Identify and document regional gaps and common threads binding the partner countries and reducing the potential for conflicts
- Explore and document constraints for fostering cross border and regional cooperation on shared waters
- Form and mobilize regional a multi-stakeholder platform for technical think tanks and policy experts to foster regional cooperation in order to reduce land-based pollution at the trans boundary level

Project Implementation Mechanism and Stakeholder Engagement

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) in each country guides and supports respective country-project-implementation-team to ensure quality of program delivery. The PAC is also instrumental in scaling up project activities to influence regional level policy making processes. A Regional PAC will be composed of representatives from each country PAC. Besides the concerned government agencies, the project also collaborates with universities and the private sector.

Consortium Partners

Caritas Switzerland

Caritas Switzerland prevents, combats and alleviates poverty worldwide in more than 30 countries. With its projects in development cooperation, it works in the areas of food security, water, climate protection, disaster prevention and migration as well as education for children and adults. It provides emergency relief in disasters and is actively involved in reconstruction work. Both its work in Switzerland and its international engagement are Caritas Switzerland's contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), set out by the UN in the 2030 Agenda. In South Asia, Caritas Switzerland is working through several partners with main focus on water, sanitation and hygiene, food security, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and migration coordinated through offices in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Caritas Bangladesh, Bangladesh

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB) established Caritas Bangladesh (CB) to carry out activities promoting integrated social welfare and development. It was founded in 1967 as the eastern branch of Caritas Pakistan. Following the cyclone of November 1970 it was re-organised

and became known as CORR (Christian Organisation for Relief and Rehabilitation) and took on the character of a national organisation on January 13, 1971. The name Caritas was re-introduced in 1976. CB is working on six thematic areas namely social welfare and community development; quality education; health care and education; disaster management; ecological conservation and development; and development of indigenous people. Currently, Caritas Bangladesh is operational in 50 districts through its 189 offices with 1,728,348 direct program participants.

Arthacharya Foundation, Srilanka

Established in 1992, Arthacharya Foundation is an NGO which socially mobilizes the poorest sections of Sri Lankan society to reduce and alleviate their poverty. Its five priority groups are rain fed farmers of the dry zone who have no access to irrigation facilities and are dependent on seasonal and erratic rainfall; communities displaced by war, population pressure and landlessness; coastal fishing communities; urban slum and shanty dwellers; and plantation communities and traditional villages in the periphery of plantations.

DHAN Foundation, India

Development of Humane Action (DHAN) Foundation is an NGO operating in 14 states of India and reaching over 16 hundred thousand poor families. DHAN Foundation's focus is to reduce poverty through sustainable community institutions. DHAN works on various themes such as women empowerment through community banking (microfinance); tank-fed agriculture development through rebuilding small scale water bodies; rain-fed agriculture to make it more remunerative; farmer producer institution for the benefit of marginal and small farmers; micro insurance; community health; application of pro-poor information, communication and technology; and building good governance through democratisation of the Panchayat institutions. It works in collaboration with mainstream institutions and government for development over the past 25 years.

LI-BIRD, Nepal

Established in 1995, Local Initiatives for Biodiversity, Research and Development (LI-BIRD) is a Nepal based non-profit making, non-governmental organization recognized in the field of 'research for development' on agriculture, biodiversity, climate change and natural resource management. LI-BIRD capitalizes on local resources, innovations, and institutions for sustainable improvement of livelihoods of smallholder farmers. The organization has developed and institutionalized participatory approaches in crop improvement, community based biodiversity management, home garden, climate change adaptation, etc.



Photo: LI-BIRD Photo Bank

Contact Details

Regional Project Coordination Office
Focal Point for Project Undertaking in Bhutan
Agricultural and Water Pollution Project, Caritas Switzerland
 Address: Sanepa Chowk, Didi-Bahini Marg,
 Kathmandu, Nepal
 Tel: +977-01-555 3551
 Email: amahat@caritas.ch
 Web : www.caritas.ch

Arthacharya Foundation
Agricultural and Water Pollution Project
 Address: No.40, 4th lane,Ratmalana,Sri Lanka.
 Tel: +94-11-2635249; +94-11-4863730
 Fax: +94-11-2623074
 Email: artfound92@gmail.com
 Web: www.arthacharya.lk

Caritas Bangladesh
Agricultural and Water Pollution Project
 Address: 2, Outer Circular Road, Shantibagh, Dhaka-1217
 G.P.O. Box: 994, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh Bangladesh
 Tel: +880- 02- 48315405-9
 Fax: +880 -02- 48314993
 Email: ed@caritasbd.org
 Web: www.caritasbd.org

Development of Humane Action (DHAN) Foundation
Agricultural and Water Pollution Project
 Tata-Dhan Academy
 Address: T. Malaipatti, Thenkarai BO, Mullipallam SO
 Vadipatti Taluk, Madurai District 625 207
 Tel: +91-4543-293405; +91-7373-793405
 Email: tatadhanacademy@dhan.org and wkc@dhan.org
 Web: www.dhan.org/tda

Local Initiatives for Biodiversity,
Research and Development (LI-BIRD)
Agricultural and Water Pollution Project
 P.O. Box 324
 Address: Pokhara, Kaski,Nepal
 Tel: +977-61-535357; +977-61-526834
 Fax: (+977)-61-539956
 Email:info@libird.org
 Web: www.libird.org



CARITAS Schweiz
 Suisse
 Svizzera
 Svizra

