



Case Study: Narmada Dams Controversy

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Appendix A: Chronology

M.J. Peterson
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References used in this section:

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Narmada Dams Chronology

The timeline below documents the events associated with the Narmada Dams controversy. Use the key below to quickly find information on the major events in the dam project, decisions made by the government of India, and decisions/actions made by the World Bank.

Key
Orange: major events in the Narmada Dam project
Brown: Government of India decisions and actions
Blue: World Bank decisions and events

1946

Central Waterways, Irrigation and Navigation Commission (CWINC) asked by governments of the Central Provinces and Berar and of Bombay to assess the whole Narmada River basin for potential in flood control, irrigation, navigation, and electric power generation. Commission recommends seven promising water storage sites.

1950

mid 1950s Central Water and Power Commission (formerly CWINC) carries out further studies of Narmada Basin hydro-electric potential.

1963

Nov Bhopal Agreement between Government of India and state governments of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh on construction, financing, and use of benefits from dams at Navagam and Punasa. Gujarat legislative assembly accepts the plan, Madhya Pradesh legislative assembly rejects out of concern that the height of the proposed dam at Navagam will limit benefits of upriver projects. Maharashtra government supports Madhya Pradesh positions.

1964

Sep Union (national) Government commissions a new technical report on Narmada Basin proposals from a special committee chaired by A.N. Khosla.

1965

Sep Khosla Committee Technical report favors high dam at Navagam favored by Gujarat over counter-proposals supported by Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

1968

Jul State of Gujarat formally complains to the Union Government about the Narmada waters dispute and invokes the Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956 to request establishment of a Water Disputes Tribunal.

1969

May Indian government establishes the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal.

State of Rajasthan adds to the complications by indicating that it will claim a share of Narmada waters and demand that the proposed canal to bring water from the Narmada to northern Gujarat be extended into Rajasthan.

Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh oppose Rajasthan's claims; Gujarat supports because doing so increases the likelihood of Rajasthan cooperation on other water projects.

Oct Indian Government appoints Supreme Court Justice V. Ramaswami (trained in chemistry as well as law), Justice G.C. Mathur of the Allahabad High Court and V.P. Gopalan Nambiar, retired chief justice of Kerala to the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT)

1972

Feb NWDT determines that Union Government reference of Rajasthan's claim was outside the terms of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, but that reference of Gujarat's claim was proper.

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh appeal to Indian Supreme Court against NWDT ruling; Supreme Court orders suspension of NWDT proceedings until it rules on these appeals.

Indira Gandhi's faction of the Congress Party, Congress (R), sweeps state elections, giving all four disputing states governments drawn from the same political party. This leads to a new round of political consultations among the contending states. Chief ministers of the states agree that the Narmada provides 28 maf of water, of which Rajasthan should receive 0.5 maf and Maharashtra 0.25 maf. Other issues remain unsettled.

1974

Aug NWDT resumes its deliberations.

1979

Dec NWDT issues Report and Award outlining project to consist of a network of 30 major dams, 126 medium dams and 3000 small dams on the Narmada and its 41 tributaries plus a 520km (329 mile) cement-lined canal reaching from the terminal (most downriver) dam at Navagam (Sardar Sarovar Dam) to northern Gujarat and into Rajasthan. Award defines

some basic design features, allocates costs of the project, and apportions waters subject to a review of the apportionment in 2025. Report also includes provisions for Resettlement and Rehabilitation of families who had title to land that would be lost to the planned reservoirs would be compensated on the basis of "land for land" rather than monetary payments.

1980

Indian Parliament adopts the Forest Conservation Act. This gives Ministry of the Environment and Forests authority to require an environmental impact assessment of projects that will affect forests before the Central Government will approve them.

Jan

construction of foundations for Sardar Sarovar Dam begins.

1981

Government of Gujarat hires Centre for Social Studies to assess and monitor conditions in 19 villages slated for resettlement as Sardar Sarovar reservoir rises.

1982

Local NGOs in Gujarat begin working to provide social services in rural villages and start taking up issues relating to resettlement of Sardar Sarovar Dam oustees

1983

Union Government establishes the National Water Resources Council (NWRC), consisting of India's prime minister and the chief ministers of states and union territories, plus central ministers dealing with water projects to unify water policy.

Ministry of Environment and Forests determines that neither Sardar Sarovar nor Narmada Sagar dam projects meet requirements regarding environmental consequences and withholds clearance.

Jan

World Bank establishes office of Vice President for Environmentally Sustainable Development grouping together the staff departments on Environment, Agricultural and Natural Resources, Transport, Water, and Urban Development.

World Bank adds a Social Policy and Resettlement Division to the Environmental Department.

NGOs unhappy with various World Bank projects form a coordinated Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) campaign to pressure international development banks, particularly the World Bank, and their major member governments to improve the environmental and social impacts of loans.

1984

Government of Gujarat expands contract with Centre for Social Studies to include resettlement and rehabilitation activity.

Major demonstrations by oustees and their supporters attract international attention to the resettlement issue.

Foundations of Narvagam (later Sardar Sarovar) Dam laid.

Foundations of Narmada Sagar (later Indira Sagar) Dam laid.

World Bank-commissioned report by Professor Thayer Scudder (California Technical Institute, USA) confirms inadequacies of resettlement programs.

1985

Oct First meeting of NWRC

1986

Indian Parliament amends Inter-State Water Disputes Act to permit the Union Government to refer disputes on its own authority (rather than on request of a state).

1987

Yielding to oustee and NGO pressures, government of Gujarat establishes more generous resettlement provisions and cover people without formal land title in the program.

Sep NWRC adopts the National Water Policy of India. It includes provisions for greater district and village role in managing irrigation systems.

unkown Ministry of Environment and Forests issues conditional clearances for construction of Sardar Sarovar and Indira Savar dams.

1989

MDB Campaign and others successful in persuading US Congress to adopt legislation specifying environmental conditions that US government must take into account in deciding whether to support loans for particular projects by multilateral development banks of which the USA is a member.

Narmada Bachao Andolan (Save the Narmada Movement) coalesces, sealing the growing split between pragmatist NGOs focusing on resettlement and more oppositionist NGOs also seeking to stop the Narmada Project.

1990

- Mar Narmada Bachao Abdoloan and supporters persuade Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh to reconsider the Narmada Project. His announcement regarding reconsideration sparks large pro-project rallies and much discontent in Gujarat.
- Transnational coalition of environmentalist and development NGOs persuades the World Bank to examine the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project more closely before it authorizes additional loans for its construction.

1991

- Jan 21 day standoff between *Narmada Bachao Andolan* leaders and supporters seeking to stop construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on one side and Gujarat police and project supporters. It ends when NBA calls off the confrontation.
- Sep Supreme Court orders the resettlement and rehabilitation sub-section of the Narmada Control Authority to monitor, inspect, and report to the Court on resettlement in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra .
- Dec Swedish Right Livelihood Foundation confers a Right Livelihood Award (sometimes called "the alternative Nobel Prize") on Medha Patkar, Baba Amte and *Narmada Bachao Andolan*, confirming their international prestige.

1992

- Jun Construction of Indira Sagar (formerly Narmada Sagar) Dam begins.
- World Bank-commissioned Independent Review (Morse Committee) issues report criticizing environment and resettlement aspects of the Narmada Project and suggesting that the World Bank "step back" from (suspend) the loans until there is assurance the project will comply with Indian government orders on environmental mitigation and resettlement.
- Sep Follow-up Report by World Bank staff review team rejects many Independent Review conclusions but agrees that resettlement programs are inadequate. It suggests that Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra should adopt all features of the 1987 Gujarat resettlement program.
- Sep – Oct Strong contention on World Bank Executive Board about whether to grant Sardar Sarovar-related loans.
- Oct Executive Board adopts West German-proposed compromise of authorizing loan if India meets certain conditions regarding environmental impacts and resettlement within 6 months.

Nov	Negotiations for 10 th replenishment of IDA (IDA-10) begin.
1993	
Mar	As widely anticipated, the Union government and the three state governments decide to continue the Narmada Project without World Bank funding.
	Review of 192 World Bank-financed involuntary resettlement projects leads to tighter World Bank policy regarding resettlement and increased supervision to ensure compliance by borrowers. This does not affect Narmada Project but has implications for other projects in India.
May	A transnational coalition of NGOs proposes to legislators in donor states that they allocate IDA-10 money to “more democratic institutions” if it does not adopt an open information policy and create a citizens appeal panel to deal with complaints from persons directly affected by World Bank projects.
Aug	World Bank adopts new information policy.
Sep	World Bank Executive Directors approve establishment of a 3-member Inspection Panel to deal with complaints from any member of the public in a borrowing country alleging that the Bank or a Bank-funded project is not complying with Bank policies and procedures.
1994	
May	<i>Narmada Bachao Andolan</i> petitions Indian Supreme Court to stop construction of Narmada Project dams, at least until resettlement issues are handled satisfactorily.
1995	
Jan	Indian Supreme Court issues a stay order limiting Sardar Sarovar construction to 80.5 meter height already attained pending further review; the order does not require stopping work on canal or other aspects of the project.
	State of Gujarat introduces Participatory Irrigation Management.
1997	
Apr	World Bank-IUCN Workshop on Large Dams, leading to creation of World Commission on Dams to consider the functions of dams in water projects and the best ways to design and construct them.
	Blasting near Maheshwar to begin construction of dam. <i>Narmada Bachao Andolan</i> begins sit-in to stop it.
1998	

Apr	Madhya Pradesh government invokes emergency police powers to break up the sit-in at the Maheshwar site.
May	World Commission on Dams established.
	State of Gujarat offers the same aid to Sardar Sarovar Dam oustees in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra preferring to remain in those states as offered to those willing to move to Gujarat.
1999	
Feb	State of Gujarat establishes a special Grievances Redressal Authority to handle oustee complaints of poor treatment. It proves very effective and even <i>Narmada Bachao Andolan</i> praises its work.
	Indian Supreme Court authorizes construction to increase height of Sardar Sarovar Dam to 85 meters.
2000	
	World Commission on Dams completes work and issues its Report.
	Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra establish Grievance Redressal Authorities modeled after the Gujarat GRA.
Oct	Indian Supreme Court rules that the Narmada Project will go ahead as designed in the NWDT Award, orders that oustees be resettled before each additional stage of dam construction is undertaken, and reaffirms oustees' right to "land for land," and instructs the Narmada Control Authority established under the NWDT Award to monitor compliance and suspend work if compliance is not forthcoming.
	work on Sardar Sarovar dam resumes.
2001	
Nov – Apr 2007	Dams and Development Project (UN Environmental Program) promoting regional, national, and local forums to continue stakeholder discussions of the World Commission on Dams recommendations.
2002	
	Indian Parliament revises Inter-State Waters Dispute Act to give Water Dispute Tribunals' awards the same status in law as decisions of the Indian Supreme Court. (Confirming a portion of the above ruling.)
	National Water Policy of India revised.

Dec	Sardar Sarovar dam reaches 90 meters.
2003	<p>Sardar Sarovar Dam reaches 100 meters (336 feet).</p> <p>Revisions of existing water development programs to place all under a new set of <i>Hariyali</i> (Greening) Guidelines.</p>
2004	<p>Jan All units of Indira Sardar Dam powerhouse in operation; reservoir limited to 260 meters by order of Jabalpur High Court pending oustee resettlement.</p> <p>Dec All 5 units of Sardar Sarovar canal head powerhouse in operation.</p>
2005	<p>Mar Indira Sagar Dam opened.</p> <p>Dec Construction of irrigation canal in Gujarat nearly complete; construction of extension into Rajasthan begins.</p>
2006	<p>Jun All 6 units of Sardar Sarovar riverbed powerhouse operating.</p>
2007	<p>Jun First units of Omkareshwar Dam powerhouse go into operation. Courts limit reservoir to 189 of the planned 196 meters depth pending resolution of resettlement claims.</p>

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