

Appendix G: Current Practice Regarding Large Dams

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Appendix Contents:

- 1.) [World Commission on Dams, 7 Essential Steps in Dam Projects](#)
- 2.) [Dams and Development Project Practical Tools](#)

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World Commission on Dams, Seven Essential Steps in Dam Projects

[as summarized on the homepage of the UN Environmental Programme's Dams and Development Project, <http://www.unep.org/dams/documents/Default.asp?DocumentID=664>]

1.) Gaining Public Acceptance

Public acceptance of key decisions is essential for equitable and sustainable water and energy resources development. Acceptance emerges from recognizing rights, addressing risks, and safeguarding the entitlements of all groups of affected people, particularly indigenous and tribal peoples, women and other vulnerable groups.

Decision-making processes and mechanisms are used that enable informed participation by all groups of people, and result in the demonstrable acceptance of key decisions. Where projects affect indigenous and tribal peoples, such processes are guided by their free, prior and informed consent.

2.) Comprehensive Options Assessment

Alternatives to dams often do exist. To explore these alternatives, needs for water, food and energy are assessed and objectives clearly defined. The appropriate development response is identified from a range of possible options. The selection is based on a comprehensive and participatory assessment of the full range of policy, institutional and technical options.

In the assessment process, social and environmental aspects have the same significance as economic and financial factors. The options assessment process continues through all stages of planning, project development and operations.

3.) Addressing Existing Dams

Opportunities exist to optimize benefits from many existing dams, address outstanding social issues and strengthen environmental mitigation and restoration measures.

Dams and the context in which they operate are not seen as static over time. Benefits and impacts may be transformed by changes in water use priorities, physical and land use changes in the river basin, technological developments, and changes in public policy expressed in environment, safety, economic, and technical regulations.

Management and operation practices must adapt continuously to changing circumstances over the project's life and must address outstanding social issues.

4.) Sustaining Rivers and Livelihoods

Rivers, watersheds and aquatic ecosystems are the biological engines of the planet. They are the basis for life and the livelihoods of local communities. Dams transform landscapes and create risks of irreversible impacts. Understanding, protecting and restoring ecosystems at river basin level is essential to foster equitable human development and the welfare of all species.

Options assessment and decision-making around river development prioritizes the avoidance of impacts, followed by the minimization and mitigation of harm to the health and integrity of the river system. Avoiding impacts through good site selection and project design is a priority. Releasing tailor-made environmental flows can help maintain downstream ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

5.) Recognizing Entitlements and Sharing Benefits

Joint negotiations with adversely affected people result in mutually agreed and legally enforceable mitigation and development provisions. These provisions recognize entitlements that improve livelihoods and quality of life, and affected people are beneficiaries of the project.

Successful mitigation, resettlement and development are fundamental commitments and responsibilities of the State and the developer. They bear the onus to satisfy all affected people that moving from their current context and resources will improve their livelihoods. Accountability of responsible parties to agreed mitigation, resettlement and development provisions are ensured through legal means, such as contracts, and through accessible legal recourse at national and international levels.

6.) Ensuring Compliance

Ensuring public trust and confidence requires governments, developers, regulators and operators to meet all commitments made for the planning, implementation and operation of dams. Compliance with applicable regulations, with criteria and guidelines, and with project-specific negotiated agreements is secured at all critical stages in project planning and implementation.

A set of mutually reinforcing incentives and mechanisms is required for social, environmental and technical measures. These should involve an appropriate mix of regulatory and non-regulatory measures, incorporating incentives and sanctions. Regulatory and compliance frameworks use incentives and sanctions to ensure effectiveness where flexibility is needed to accommodate changing circumstances.

7.) Sharing Rivers for Peace, Development and Security

Storage and diversion of water on transboundary rivers has been a source of considerable tension between countries and within countries. As specific interventions for diverting water, dams require constructive co-operation. Consequently, the use and management of resources increasingly becomes the subject of agreement between States to promote mutual self-interest for regional cooperation and peaceful collaboration. This leads to a shift in focus from the narrow approach of allocating a finite resource to the sharing of rivers and their associated benefits in which States are innovative in defining the scope of issues for discussion. External financing agencies support the principles of good faith negotiations between riparian States.

Dams and Development Project Practical Tools

[from DDP website http://www.unep.org/dams/Practical_Tools/]

[the live link to each database appear as a button on the left side of the page]

The aim of DDP was improving decision-making, planning and management of dams and their alternatives. Main efforts of the Project focused on the strengthening of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure that environmental and social issues are duly accounted for in order to attain sustainable outcomes. The following practical non-prescriptive tools to help decision-makers have been developed in accordance with the main objectives of Phase 2.

Inventory of policy/normative frameworks concerning dams planning and management

A database of summary information on existing policies, laws, criteria and guidelines concerning dams' planning and management that have been adopted or issued by governments and international organizations. It is intended as an information and research tool aiming at decision-makers and managers at country and regional level. Visitors can review the summary contents of the database that is organized according to the 13-stakeholder groups structure adopted by DDP and access more detailed information linking directly to its sources. The site is interactive allowing for users to input information that will be incorporated into the database once cleared by the site moderator.

Compendium on Relevant Practices on improved decision-making, planning and management of dams and their alternatives

An information tool for decision-makers and managers providing worldwide examples of integration of key issues concerning the planning and management of dams and their alternatives into national policy/legal/regulatory frameworks and international guidelines. It covers nine issues that were prioritized by the Dams and Development Forum members as key in decision-making on dams and their alternatives. The Compendium provides relevant examples of good practices that may help decision-makers, practitioners and others in finding solution to local problems related to environmental and social impacts of dams.

Experiences and Lessons Learnt Database

A comprehensive information tool aiming at improving dams decision-making, planning and management at local level by enhancing the access to and flow of information on good and relevant practices. This is an interactive online web based system that allows for reviewing the submitted examples and adding others to the database. It is intended that through a partnership approach with other relevant organizations a wide range of similar databases focusing on specific fields dealing with water resources and energy dam related issues, will be made accessible trough this site to worldwide audiences.

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