

Increasing the resilience of water sector to climate change in South Asia: **A GWP South Asia-APAN Initiative with Focus on Knowledge and People**

GWP South Asia

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) was founded in 1996 to foster integrated water resources management. It is a network of partner organizations committed to the support of social and economic change processes in developing countries that fosters sustainable management and development of water resources. The GWP South Asia (GWPSAS) is one of the 13 Regional Water Partnerships of the GWP.

GWP operates in South Asia as a Regional Water Partnership, through Country Water Partnerships (CWP) in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The CWPs, their Area and Zonal Water Partnerships and Local Water Parliaments which are ground-level mechanisms for multi-stakeholder dialogues, and the partners in public and private sector, provides for a unique network with the ability to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders.

Asia Pacific Adaptation Network

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in partnership with key UN and other international organizations facilitated the formation of Global Adaptation Network (GAN), in response to the recognition of the need for relevant and usable knowledge as a prerequisite for successful climate change adaptation efforts. The Asia Pacific Adaptation Network (APAN) was launched in 2009 as the first regional network under GAN. The Network aims at building capacity, facilitating policy, planning, access to finances and actions, and knowledge dissemination in climate change adaptation.

The Regional Hub (RH) of APAN functions as a knowledge centre and provides technical assistance for adaptation. The RH assists and collaborates with its sub-regional Nodes (SRN) and thematic nodes to implement the APAN activities. There are SRNs in Central, Northeast, Southeast and South Asia, and the Pacific. The three thematic nodes cover Agriculture, Mountain and Water. In 2011, GWP South Asia was selected as the APAN's Thematic Node for Water in South Asia.

Water, Poverty and Climate Change Nexus in South Asia

- South Asia holds about 4% and 4.5% of the world's land area and water resources, respectively. In contrast, it provides a home for about 23% of the global population.
- 70% of the South Asians and 75% of the sub-region's poor live in rural areas.
- Many rural livelihoods are linked to water, and the availability of water affects seasonal pattern of poverty.
- The surface and groundwater withdrawal are approaching water scarcity threshold in several countries in the sub-region. By 2050, it is estimated that 18% of South Asians will face water scarcity, while a further 67% will be under water stress.

Rationale for intervention

- The South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Declaration on Climate Change (Dhaka 2008) agreed on the need for action to protect the lives and livelihoods from the onslaught of climate change, through ensuring food, water and energy security.
- The Heads of State of the SAARC recognized the region's dual challenge of addressing the negative impacts of climate change and pursuing socio-economic development in the Thimphu Statement of 2010. There are gaps in climate change adaptation strategies, especially in the outreach to the communities
- GWP's extensive network and experience in the sub-region has a good capability to reach the communities.



- South Asia is a disaster-prone region. Climate change has changed the pattern of extreme events by having floods in drought-prone Pakistan and droughts in flood-prone Bangladesh. There is an increase of the frequency of occurrence and the magnitude of such events as well.
- Many countries in the sub-region are dependent on the Himalayan glaciers, which are threatened by climate change, as water source.



Climate Change Adaptation in South Asia: GWP's role

- GWP's strategic plan for 2009-2013 focuses on four goals; addressing critical challenges to water security is one of them. Adaptation to climate change is a major outcome on the way to achieve this goal.
- GWP's Operational Strategy for Adapting to Climate Change focuses, inter-alia, supporting the development of solutions for adapting water resources management to climate change.
- GWP South Asia's strategy in adapting to climate change is guided by GWP's global strategies and the sub-region's political priorities

GWP South Asia's plans for 2012 onwards include undertaking a regional project to improve the resilience of South Asian countries to withstand the impacts of climate change. This project will initially benefit about 30 million people, but later the benefits will propagate to a much larger number through national policies and strategies. The major activities of the proposed project include:

- Assessment of the impacts of climate change on water resources through appropriate case studies,
- Identification of current adaptation practices and constraints to adapt at local level, and water resources management strategies at national level
- Identification of best management practices and techniques that would increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems to withstand the impacts of climate change on water resources
- Development of local adaptation plans and investment projects Based on the knowledge gained in the studies

Role of GWP South Asia as the Thematic Node on Water for APAN

The Knowledge gained during these activities requires effective dissemination for influencing the national policies and strategies. The partnership between GWP South Asia and APAN will be vitally important for this purpose. GWP South Asia identifies the following activities as APAN's thematic node for water:

- Establish linkages and collaborate with networks, initiatives, national centres of excellence, donor agencies, government and other specialized institutions working on CCA in the countries of the sub region and exchange of knowledge on CCA.
- Identify specific gaps and needs in knowledge, information and technologies for CCA and priority areas at the country and the sub regional level through dialogue with national implementing partners and regional entities.
- Assist in exchange of knowledge and dissemination of materials developed by Regional Hub, SRN, thematic nodes and national implementing partners and other sub-regional nodes and institutions through updating information on web portal "Climate Change Adaptation in Asia and the Pacific", policy briefs, etc.
- Identify and work with national implementing partners in the countries of the sub region.
- Synthesize national level information and provide regular updates to the Regional Hub and national implementing partners.
- Lead the implementation of the sub regional activities of APAN related to the water sector and climate change in climate change and water and support the implementation of national activities in collaboration with the Regional Hub, thematic nodes and national implementing partners.
- Participate and provide inputs to annual Asia Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Forum and other regional/sub-regional/national activities as necessary.
- Collaborate and work together with APAN's sub-regional nodes while implementing activities at the sub regional scale and the national level.
- Prepare annual work plan and budgets which may include application for financial assistance where necessary.



Devastating floods in Swat, Pakistan in 2010²



Droughts in Rajshahi, Bangladesh³

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Photo credits:

- 1 GWP Nepal
- 2 Pakistan Water Partnership
- 3 Bangladesh Water Partnership

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