

## Message

**Abdur Razzaq**  
Minister  
Ministry of Water Resources

Water is one of our most vital national resources, and its proper utilization is of utmost importance in achieving our long-term goals and objectives.

The Government has attached priority to resolving the long-outstanding issues in the sector and has made significant progress in recent years. Signature of the historic Ganges Water Treaty in 1996 is one example of the regional initiatives that are being vigorously pursued. In January of this year, the Government published the first-ever National Water Policy, which provides clear direction for all those concerned with planning, managing and using water.

The Water Resources Planning Organization (WARPO) has been charged with assisting the Executive Committee of the National Water Resources Council in framing plans and rules for management of the water sector, and in ensuring the multi-sectoral co-ordination that is essential for efficient management of our water resources. WARPO is currently undertaking the preparation of the National Water Management Plan and developing the National Water Sector Database.

WARPO's activities are therefore of much interest to us all. I particularly welcome their initiative in producing this Newsletter, which I hope will keep us informed of their many and varied activities.

## Message

**Dr. A.T. M. Shamsul Huda**  
Secretary  
Ministry of Water Resource

In setting out the National Policy, the Government has given due recognition to the many facets of modern day planning and management of water resources. Amongst these, special attention has been given to stakeholder participation in a manner that is intended to elicit direct input from people at all levels of engagement. Stakeholder involvement needs to be an integral part of water resources management.

In preparing the National Water Management Plan, WARPO has been given a challenging and onerous task. Success will depend not only on a high standard of technical analysis and strategic assessment, but also in a demonstrable capacity to identify the concerns of all stakeholders and bring forward solutions, which the majority will support. To this end, WARPO has embarked on a wide series of consultation programmes across the country, from village level up to national level.

This Newsletter is one of several measures being taken to upgrade WARPO's ability to disseminate information and ideas to a wide audience and to elicit feedback. I believe this to be a positive step forward and wish it every success.

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# WARPO – *Its past and future*

The alluvial soil of Bengal delta, inundated annually from time immemorial, produced enough food for the population of the region. However, with the passage of time and the rapid increase of population, the damaging effects of flood and the rising demands for year round supplies to meet multi-sectoral demands have reached critical proportions. An effective capacity to plan and monitor water resources management in a country like Bangladesh, therefore, is of utmost importance.

National level planning of the water resources of Bangladesh dates back to 1964 when the then East Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority's (EPWAPDA) Master Plan was published. Later in 1986, the Master

Plan Organisation (MPO) prepared a draft National Water Plan, which was updated in 1991. The severe floods of 1987 and 1988 prompted widespread support from the international community for the Flood Action Plan, (FAP) a series of five regional plans and supporting studies. This culminated in the Bangladesh Water and Flood Management Strategy report prepared by the Flood Plan Coordination Organisation (FPCO)

in 1995 and revised in 1998.

These reports and the accompanying studies have contributed to a very substantial appreciation of the nation's water resources, although successive plans have varied significantly as how best to develop them. This was recognised in the 1995 report, which recommended that the Government



should formulate a National Water Policy that addressed these issues and that a comprehensive National Water Management Plan (NWMP) should be prepared within this framework. It was also recommended that FPCO should be merged into the permanent Water Resources Planning Organization with a mandate to prepare NWMP, to monitor activities within the sector and to provide information and advice on best practice.

In June 1992 MPO was renamed as the Water Resources Planning Organization (WARPO). The mandate for the new organisation was published in Bangladesh Gazette in December 1991 and the Water Resources Planning Act (Act no XII of 1992) provides its legal framework. The National Water Policy (see Article, page 3), published in January 1999,

establishes a clear and revised role for WARPO as an apex planning body in the water sector. WARPO will also act as a secretariat to the Executive Committee to the National Water Resources Council, (NWRC) and is charged with acting as custodian of the National

Water Resources Database (see Article, page 6) and as a clearing-house for water sector projects.

WARPO is a small organisation with some 35 professional staff drawn from a wide range of disciplines. To align with its new responsibilities, WARPO's mandate is being revised and the organisation is being restructured and strengthened to meet the challenges ahead.

# The National Water Policy

## – a clear direction forward

Policies guide actions to meet prescribed objectives. Many countries in Asia, like Thailand and India, have published statements on national water policy. Others like China, Philippines and Indonesia have embedded water policies in their legal codes. The need in Bangladesh for a clear policy has been felt for a long time, and its absence gave rise to conflicts between sub-sectors and different aspects of water use.

Water is of essence in the development of the quality of life in Bangladesh. However, it is a finite resource with problems of different dimensions and issues. Bangladesh's National Water Policy, published in January 1999, attaches special importance to the conjunctive use of ground and surface water. Directions are provided on such issues as overall basin-wide planning, water rights and allocation, public and private involvement, public investment, water supply and sanitation, fisheries, navigation, agriculture, industry and environment. The document is intended to guide both public and private actions to ensure optimal development and management of water that benefits both individuals and society at large. The Policy has six main objectives:

- ❑ To address issues related to the harnessing, development and efficient management of all forms of surface water and ground water;

- ❑ To ensure the availability of water to all elements of the society;
- ❑ To accelerate the development of sustainable public and private water delivery systems;
- ❑ To bring the necessary institutional changes that will help decentralize the management of water resources and enhance the role of women in water management;
- ❑ To develop a state of knowledge and capability that will ensure the water management objectives through broad public participation.

To attain these objectives, the Policy has identified 16 main areas of activities:

- ❑ River Basin Management
- ❑ Planning and Management of Water Resources
- ❑ Water Rights and Allocation
- ❑ Public and Private Involvement
- ❑ Public Water Investment
- ❑ Water Supply and Sanitation
- ❑ Water and Agriculture
- ❑ Water and Industry
- ❑ Water and Fisheries and Wildlife.
- ❑ Water and Navigation

- ❑ Water for Hydropower and Recreation.
- ❑ Water for the Environment.
- ❑ Water for Preservation of Haors, Baors and Beels
- ❑ Economic and Financial Management
- ❑ Research and Information Management
- ❑ Stakeholder Participation

The Policy also underlines the importance of effective institutions and legal framework. The National Water Resources Council (NWRC) provides the means to oversee all water resources management activities in the country and WARPO will act as its Secretariat under the direction of NWRC's Executive Committee. Government is also committed to revising the legislative framework governing ownership, development, appropriation, utilization, conservation and protection of water resources and will soon enact a National Water Policy Code.





# National Water Management Plan –Outputs and Process

WARPO commenced preparation of the National Water Management Plan in March 1998, to be completed in three phases by March 2001. Arising from the Phase 1 findings, the NWMP will have four main components.

- ❑ **Development Strategy:** a consensus document setting out a consolidated set of goals and objectives, and issues and options, for the National Water Management Plan
- ❑ **Water Management Programme:** a priority programme for the period up to 2005, within the context of a long-term programme up to 2025, identifying and assessing the structural and non-structural measures to be implemented nationally and for each region.
- ❑ **Investment Portfolio:** national, regional and sub-regional projects, as prepared by sector agencies, screened by WARPO for inclusion in the above programmes.
- ❑ **Ganges Dependent Area studies:** a review of the opportunities presented by signature of the Ganges Water Treaty incorporating a recommended strategy for augmentation of dry season flows

Other outputs of the project also include:

- ❑ Institutional strengthening of WARPO
- ❑ The National Water Resources Database (NWRD)
- ❑ A People's Participation and

Consultation System (PPCS) to support this and future planning exercises

- ❑ Procedures and criteria for WARPO to act as a clearing house for water sector projects
- ❑ Reports on institutional arrangements, legislative reforms, guidelines, regulatory and economic instruments, environmental protection and management and monitoring and evaluation.

Following the second National Workshop in December 1998, many have indicated their wish to contribute more actively to the planning process than was possible in the originally defined approach. The project is

responding in a number of ways, primarily by adopting a phased approach to formulating the key Development Strategy report, allowing stakeholders opportunity to contribute ideas at each stage. The medium for this is a series of 18 Topic Papers to be produced over the next 8 months. These Topic Papers fall into five groups.

The first elaborates on the process of reaching consensus and seeks agreement on this and the goals for the NWMP. Key issues are highlighted from a review of policy and the results of the first round of

the People's Participation and Consultation Programme (PPCP).

The next six papers are to agree on the background and setting for Plan formulation. They include reviews of the economic, environmental and institutional setting, social and gender issues, discussion of the lessons from past experience and discussion of the resources available.

The third group of eight papers will focus attention on specific issues in



the water sector, and evaluate the options available to address them.

Two papers follow to discuss the overall strategic alternatives and implications on the planning process. These will provide the possible framework within which the Water Management Programme can later be developed.

The final paper, Conclusions, to be prepared after a third round of the PPCP and a 4th National Workshop, will discuss the strategic choices and summarise the principal considerations in selecting the Strategy.

# People's Participation in the NWMP

A widespread criticism of previous water sector plans in Bangladesh was that the social and environmental impacts of water resources development were not being properly addressed. The National Water Policy therefore gives prominence to stakeholder participation at all stages of planning and development.

WARPO is responding to this by developing and implementing a People's Participation and Consultation Programme. The PPCP is targeted at a wide cross-section of stakeholders. It is conducted through programmes of village, union, thana and district meetings, national and regional workshops and special group meetings with Government agencies. The new web-site will extend the process further, allowing others to voice their views also.

Guided by the earlier efforts of the National Environment Management Action Plan (NEMAP), three rounds of bottom-up consultations with stakeholders have been planned amongst stakeholders at union to district levels. The first round, completed in March 1999, mainly covered water-related problems and suggested some solutions. The second, scheduled in June and July, will probe deeper into

what solutions are preferred, how best they can be introduced and what roles the different actors are to play in this. The results will help the planners define and assess practical options and strategies. The third round, proposed for January 2000, will air the proposed options and strategies to get stakeholders' reactions prior to submission of the draft Strategy Development

The results, reported independently by the Consultants and BIDS, on the basis of the data processed and tabulated by BIDS, are being used by WARPO to develop ideas through a series of detailed Topic Papers. Data from the three rounds will become part of the permanent WARPO database, accessible both to in-house professionals and to others on request.



Few previous attempts have been made in Bangladesh to conduct such widespread consultations at national level. There is a learning process and Round 1 was not without its mistakes. Time slippage occurred because of the heavy flooding and the involvement of the NGOs in the relief operations. Eagerness to know more, sooner rather than later, resulted in a checklist

Report in March 2000.

The PPCP is a collaborative effort in which even the planning of the programme is itself a consultative process. WARPO staff, NWMP consultants, NGOs through the facilitation of ADAB and CEN, and senior staff from BIDS are involved at all stages. Each organisation plays a different role according to its institutional strength.

of questions too long for the time allotted to consultations. Still, despite some shortcomings, the results stand up to scrutiny and known realities of other research and previous consultation efforts. Camaraderie developed among the players, who are now perhaps even more eager to go back into the field for Round 2.

For more information on the PPCP, contact Mr. Md Shahjahan, PSO at WARPO.

# ENVIRONMENT

## - an essential feature of the NWMP

The aim of the environmental component of the National Water Management Plan is to ensure an environmentally sound and sustainable perspective to the plan including specific pro-active environmental management measures. A parallel aim is to establish an environmental screening and management capability in WARPO under its Section Chief, Dr Nilufa Islam, PSO.

### **Identification of important environmental components**

The important environmental components for NWMP have been identified using different methodologies and from different perspectives. A scoping exercise was carried out at regional level, which identified 32 major IECs. These were ranked overall to produce the 12 most important national issues, which were then cross-checked with the National Environment Management Action

Plan (NEMAP). These were reviewed at the 2nd National Workshop in December 1998 and suggested additions made. The results of the first round of the PPCP were also analyzed and the key issue of access to "safe" domestic water supplies was identified, including issues of surface and groundwater quality and water related human health. The four most important environmental issues have thus been identified as:

- Water supply, quality, sanitation and water related human disease
- Floods and drainage
- Fish and fisheries
- Sensitive area management including conservation and bio-diversity

### *Identification of possible interventions and their environmental impacts*

A scoping has been carried out of a wide range of possible

interventions. These include both structural and non structural measures, the latter including institutional steps. Interventions from within the water sector have been considered, as

well as those from outside but which could be expected to impinge on it, e.g. roads, fisheries, agriculture, forestry etc.

A broad assessment of the likely impacts of these interventions has been carried out from reviews of past projects. In addition, an assessment of 22 newly constructed projects is being carried out, which include many that are not typical FCD. An assessment matrix has been developed which identifies likely impacts on environmental components (both positive and negative), against differing types of intervention.

### **Next Steps**

The next task for the environmental component is to produce Topic Papers on the Environmental Setting and Managing the Environment as it relates to the water sector. These will be based upon more detailed analysis of the key environmental issues, using the data sets that are being entered into the National Water Resources Database.

Inputs will then be provided into the formulation of strategy planning for the water sector and drawing up a range of options. Later, methods will be developed for WARPO to screen proposed water sector projects to ensure that they are environmentally sound and sustainable and conform to government policies and legislation.





## From the DG's Desk

WARPO is passing through a period of transformation, and many exciting new initiatives are being taken up. Times of change nevertheless are periods when particularly we must do our best to keep people informed. This newsletter is one way in which we can help the many people interested in the water sector keep up-to-date with what's going on. In later issues, we will be reserving space for articles and contributions from outside WARPO. We hope you will help us in making the Newsletter a lively and interesting publication.

In this first issue, we are featuring the National Water Policy, a major achievement of the present Government, and one that has bearing on all water sector activities. We are also highlighting our current main activity, preparation of the National Water Management Plan, and its three key areas — people's participation and consultation programme, development of the National Water Resources Database and the setting of environmental goals for the NWMP.

Aside from these activities, WARPO is starting to play a key role in promoting new concepts in water resource planning and management. Members of staff, including myself, have been active in many workshops and seminars and are providing talks and lectures to a new generation of students in Bangladesh. We are also participating in the Bangladesh Water Partnership's preparation of a Vision for 2025 and other regional and international initiatives.

Please don't hesitate to write or send e-mails to me if you have any comments to make or contributions for future articles. We look forward to hearing from you.

**Tauhidul Anwar Khan**  
Director General, WARPO

## New OFFICE

As part of the organization's upgrading plans, WARPO is moving to a new office located at **House No 4A, Road No 22, Gulshan-1212**. This will allow WARPO to bring all of its staff under one roof in a modern and efficient working environment. The facilities will include conference and meeting rooms and an Information and Documentation Centre, incorporating the extensive WARPO library, reading area and access facilities to the National Water Resources Database. The move from the current offices in DoHS is expected to be complete by early July.

## WebSite



WARPO is also modernising its communication systems to enable more people to be aware of its activities and be able to contribute ideas and suggestions. This is seen as particularly important during preparation of major plans, such as the current work on the National Water Management Plan.

The WARPO hopes to launch the web site within June 1999, to help in the dissemination of the Topic Papers and other information, and to provide ready means for comments. The planned domain name is [www.warpo.org](http://www.warpo.org).

The site will include information such as:

- background information on WARPO and the NWMP
- a description of the National Water Resources Database
- consultation documents (both as summaries and complete documents)
- the latest news
- a discussion forum

For more information on the web site, please contact WARPO.

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