NPS Workshop Proceedings

Stakeholder Consultation on Policy Coherence among Food, Land, and Water Systems in India

Garima Taneja, Suparana Katyaini, Suchiradipta Bhattacharjee, Kartikey Chaturvedi, Archisman Mitra, Shilp Verma and Nitin Bassi

Background

As part of the global CGIAR Initiative on National Policies and Strategies (NPS), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) partnered with the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) to organize a half-day stakeholder consultation on 16th June 2023 at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi. The event was chaired by Ms Debashree Mukherjee, Special Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, and co-chaired by Sh. Avinash Mishra, Advisor, Water and Land Resources, Niti Aayog. Participants at the consultation included invited experts from the government, academia, and civil society.

Welcome Remarks

Alok Sikka, Country Representative, IWMI-India

Alok Sikka welcomed Ms Debashree Mukherjee and Sh. Avinash Mishra to the meeting. He highlighted the importance of their role at the helm of policy formulation. He also provided background on the NPS initiative, one of the 16 global CGIAR Initiatives being implemented in India. IWMI and CEEW have collaborated to explore the interconnections between food, land, and water (FLW) systems. He emphasized that coherence is necessary to optimally utilize the resources and maximize social returns on investments within the FLW systems. Thus, the NPS initiative aims to delve into these aspects. Accordingly, the workshop was organized to share findings and insights from different stakeholders and create a roadmap for operationalizing policy coherence.

Opening Remarks

Sh. Avinash Mishra, Adviser - Water and Land Resources, Niti Aayog

Sh. Avinash Mishra applauded the much-needed initiative of IWMI and CEEW on policy coherence among the food, land, and water sectors. The interconnection between these sectors and the management of these resources, he said, is crucial for enhancing food productivity and water efficiency in situations of global crises. It is necessary to focus on improving land productivity and decreasing water scarcity. He suggested that policy measures should establish connections between these sectors and work towards improving the productivity of the FLW system.

Efforts are being made towards increasing water efficiency through schemes such as ‘Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana – Per Drop More Crop (PMKSY-PDMC)’ and ‘Atal Bhujal Yojana’, but sustainability is still a concern due to factors such as pricing of water, maintenance of water structures, etc. Afforestation can help address land desertification, and the wastewater treatment issue needs to be addressed. The PMKSY campaign of the Government of India has helped improve farmers’ production levels. However, there is a need to accelerate the process further. To a certain level, the convergence of schemes already exists, but it needs to be strengthened. Amrit Sarovar is one such scheme focusing on rejuvenating small water bodies, improving land and soil fertility and increasing water storage and efficiency.

He also reminded us that partnership is an essential part of policy coherence – the UN World Water Development Report emphasizes the value of partnership to sustain resources. This work under the NPS initiative can thus provide a framework for building synergies across sectors.

Policy Coherence among Food, Land and Water Systems

Archisman Mitra (IWMI) and Nitin Bassi (CEEW)

The IWMI-CEEW presentation provided an overview of the relationship between food, land, and water policies at the central level in India. The presentation emphasized the importance of policy coherence and alignment across different levels of government and departments. It stressed the need for policies and schemes to be consistent in intent and implementation. The analysis focused on seven selected schemes, which underwent stakeholder interviews to understand their implementation and coherence in the food, land, and water sectors.

The process involved collecting data on 60 schemes, policies and acts related to food, land, and water (46 schemes and 14 policies and acts), with the majority falling under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Jal Shakti, and Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairy. These schemes accounted for 11% of the Union budget (excluding fertilizer subsidies). A shortlist of 11 schemes was created using quantitative criteria, and the final seven schemes were selected through discussions with stakeholders and qualitative criteria. The analysis also mapped the impact areas of the schemes to five key areas: nutrition and food security, poverty reduction and livelihoods, environment and health, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and gender equality and inclusion. Most of the schemes primarily addressed nutrition and food security, and poverty reduction, with less explicit focus on gender equality and inclusion.

The focus of the presentation was on the challenges and opportunities for coherence in the shortlisted policies, including Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY), Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana - Watershed Development Component (PMKSY – WDC), National Mission for Clean Ganga – Namami Gange Programme (NMCG-NGP), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana - Per Drop More Crop (RKVY – PDMC), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). The speaker discussed the objectives of each policy, emphasizing the importance of water-stressed districts, water conservation, and management.

The speaker noted that the selected central sector schemes had institutions or mechanisms in place for planning, implementation, and monitoring. However, gaps existed in terms of impact evaluation mechanisms that go beyond outputs, except for ABY and partially for MIDH. The presentation also

highlighted specific challenges related to policy coherence, such as the need for integration across priorities in the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture and addressing water management policies at the state level for PMMSY. They also mentioned the importance of revisiting water security plans, consolidating plans at a larger hydrological scale, and strengthening groundwater regulation for Atal Bhujal Yojana. The key recommendations emerging from the IWMI-CEEW analyses include [a] re-evaluate current institutions at various levels; [b] establish a procedure to ensure that Water Security Plans (WSPs) are reviewed annually; [c] mainstream climate risk assessment; [d] create indicators to gauge coherence in the absence of available data; and [e] strengthen the impact evaluation reporting. The presentation also included connections between SDGs and the five CGIAR impact areas. It concluded by requesting feedback on the approach followed, the outcomes, and the offered recommendations. The speakers moderated the session which was facilitated by Ekansha Khanduja from CEEW.

Special Remarks

Ms Debashree Mukherjee, Special Secretary, Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India

Ms Debashree Mukherjee congratulated the IWMI-CEEW team for the timely and valuable exercise on understanding policy coherence across the food, land, and water sectors. She highlighted that the water sector needs to work in coherence with various ministries, stakeholders, and organizations to prepare for adverse weather events caused by climate change. Improving water-use efficiency and creating institutional mechanisms for facilitating convergence is critical in achieving this goal. She cited the example of the 'Per Drop More Crop' component of PMKSY (PMKSY-PDMC), which is crucial in achieving improved water use efficiency, but for it to be successful, it has to be a collaborative effort. She also mentioned that certain mechanisms for fostering coherence across sectors already exist and spoke about the working of the 'Sectoral Group of Secretaries' at the national level. However, since much of the action is at the state, district, and village levels, there is a need for similar mechanisms at each of these levels. She emphasized that existing institutions at these levels should be leveraged and strengthened. In the case of Atal Bhujal Yojana, she elaborated, there were no new institutions created, but the existing water-sanitation committees at the village level were utilized with the inclusion of farmers.

She suggested using a dipstick approach to identify missed opportunities: federate water user associations with FPOs and look into command area management issues where water user associations failed to succeed as the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has done with the Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Also, water user associations do not sustain if only tasked with managing water. Water is linked to livelihoods, agriculture, and forward and backward linkages. These linkages with agriculture and horticulture are crucial for the sustainability of water bodies. Thus, incentives must be provided for communities to manage and maintain water bodies. Structures and institutions must be created in such a way that the departments align their work better with each other to achieve their objectives efficiently.

Discussion on Policy Coherence

Pratul Saxena, Ministry of Jal Shakti, highlighted the need to update water security plans. These plans should be reviewed annually. He also mentioned challenges regarding reaching the lowest level of Gram Panchayat. It is not enough to only focus on water conservation and efficiency, as it should also be linked to livelihood aspects. Therefore, it is essential to prioritize water and view it holistically, considering social, cultural, and livelihood aspects. It is crucial to ensure coherence in policies.

Subhash Chandra, Department of Fisheries, spoke about the importance of structured monitoring and evaluation for schemes like PMKSY, which involve central and state entities. The state Department of Fisheries is included in this scheme, which covers marine water stocks, artificial structures, and major river systems. He also suggested that the IWMI-CEEW report should be shared with concerned departments for review.

Vivek Chaudhary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, emphasized the need for coherence and sustainability at all levels of government (national, state, district, and village). Water is a state subject, and involvement of all levels of governance is essential, including the local/village level. He recommended that the study choose one common state across all the shortlisted schemes to gather the key lessons on policy coherence. Another vital aspect to consider is ecological. Namami Gange focuses on coherence, including policy, geo-hydrological and biological. Also, it is important to have good-quality data.

Ishaq Ahmed, Technical Wing, National Mission on Clean Ganga, emphasized the incorporation of ecosystems in the IWMI-CEEW policy analyses and the qualitative aspects of water.

Anu Chettal, National Mission for Clean Ganga, highlighted the importance of collaboration with local communities and district committees for addressing local problems faced in Namami Gange. She suggested synergies with other programs can also be built along with Namani Gange.

Vishakha Jha, GIZ, mentioned that impact evaluation should cover tangible and intangible aspects, particularly water. It is also important to look into life beyond a project or a scheme, i.e., to develop an appropriate 'withdrawal strategy' through community participation.

Chhaya Namchu, UN Women, talked about the work on coherence framework with a gender lens. This framework has many opportunities for schemes, such as Atal Bhujal Yojana and RKVY, to engage with communities and ensure last-mile delivery.

Veena Bandyopadhyay, UNICEF, emphasized that schemes should aim for relevant and equitable resource access. Achieving this vision could lead to better livelihoods, improved food and nutrition security, and reduced poverty. Crucially, data systems are required to facilitate policy coherence, and these need adequate data structures and support. Policies must also consider distribution effects to ensure benefits are shared fairly, considering the rights and needs of marginal communities, including children. Also, aligning agriculture, industrial, and drinking water policies is crucial, necessitating coherent policy structure, monitoring, and evaluation. Short-term schemes must be viewed considering their lifecycle, intentions, and ultimate goals.

Sunil Padale, UNDP, mentioned that for combating desertification and drought, there should be clarity as to the extent these problems are structural or incidental. Thus, there is a need to improve linkages and evaluate impacts, for which tools and frameworks must consider tangible and intangible aspects. Parameters such as the agrobiodiversity index may be relevant, particularly monitoring and evaluation and impact evaluation phases.

Sudipto Chatterjee, The Nature Conservancy, emphasizes looking into the potential impact of water, being transboundary in nature, particularly in the Himalayan region. There are also linkages between the Green India Mission and the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture and agroforestry mission.

Sakshi Chadha Dasgupta, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, highlighted that policy coherence should consider geophysical diversity, such as hills, forests, and coastal areas. The impact of policies/schemes on special coastal zone regulations and the revival or creation of new infrastructure must be emphasized. Accessibility to insurance, interaction with land and forest acts, and the use of data collection systems and budgetary allocations for impact evaluations are important. In this regard, the granularity of data and the kind of data systems in place are essential.

Nathaniel Bhakupar Dkhar, Mu Gamma Pvt. Ltd., suggested that the time frame for bringing change is also a significant consideration. Coherence is also required in implementation. An example is the

proximity of dairy farms to landfill sites. Water that is contaminated by the landfill would seep into the food systems through dairy. Therefore, food, land, and water systems are degraded. He also suggested that the indicators on which data is collected should be uniform across the ministries. Communicating policies to stakeholders in meaningful ways is also required.

Prasun Das, GIZ, suggested that baseline studies should be conducted to assess the impact of schemes such as PM-KUSUM. Implementable strategies should be designed at the grassroots level, and water recycling should be considered. Several other schemes with which the linkages need to be mapped in the future. He suggested that when considering impact evaluation, a gold standard or a perfect framework should not be the aim but a basic framework for collecting and developing the information, along with the government.

Palak Khanna and Madhuparna Maity, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), emphasized value chain mapping, conducting a strong baseline for monitoring progress and evaluating the impacts. They also highlighted the need to involve stakeholders in policy planning. They suggested that hydrological diversity across different climatic zones, especially in food, land, and water sectors should also be considered.

Raj Shekhar Singh, Right to Food Campaign, appreciated that the coherent nature of policies and schemes is being acknowledged. He highlighted the role played by political activists in the conceptualization of MGNREGA. He also mentioned an example of the mango cultivation initiative in Jharkhand, which has ensured equal pay for men and women.

Dinesh Abrol, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), indicated that states with local planning can provide examples of change in Gram Panchayat-level power relations. Kudumbashree is a successful example that has led to the formation of women’s collectives for empowerment and poverty action. He added that the lens of transformation should be applied to assess the intent of policies and to address the gaps in food systems fully. He also spoke about the importance of strengthening science and policy links.

Arun Padiyar, World Fish, indicated that departmental convergence needs to be facilitated by allocating budgetary provisions. As an example of coherence in Odisha, under the Mission Shakti scheme, Panchayat assets are utilized by women SHGs. The inclusion of landless farmers should also be explored. KPIs can be used to drive stakeholder behaviour toward convergence, and a framework needs to emerge to facilitate communication between different departments. The integration of climate risk should be included in the analyses.

Basant Maheshwari, Western Sydney University, Australia, highlighted the potential of Atal Bhujal Yojana to make a real difference in the water security of India. Groundwater will be critical to coping with climate change. The ultimate success of the scheme will depend on how it will lead to Gram Panchayats and villagers taking ownership of managing groundwater. He also suggested that to measure groundwater management's success; there is a need to look beyond measuring changes in the water table.

Sandeep Yadav and Martha Peediyakan, Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR), focused on the need to look into reasons for different levels of impact of SDGs. An example of ecosystem-based adaptation was mentioned, in which all stakeholders try to come together for climate risk adaptation and to ensure biodiversity conservation, thereby emphasising sustainable aspects.

Prachi Patil, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) suggested that it would be essential to understand the level of support provided to local institutions such as Water Users' Associations (WUAs), SHGs, and Gram Panchayats. Developing comprehensive indicators for schemes and their potential impacts on various stakeholders would be beneficial. By establishing broader indicators, it can be ensured that schemes do not contradict their intended effects and that the broader consequences, or major tradeoffs, are known.

Apoorve Khandelwal, CEEW, reflected on the need to build on the existing process and repurpose the institutions to make them more sustainable. He also focused on the importance of mainstreaming risks and thinking about resilience for developing these indicators.

Vishwas Chitale, CEEW, emphasized the need for climate risk assessment to be integrated into the discourse around policy coherence and taking lessons from the success stories and experiences of different state governments in bringing about a positive change.

Shilp Verma, IWMI, discussed the significance of discussing incentives at different scales, including those for district collectors and gram panchayats. He suggested that our understanding of coherence must be expanded, and the 'cost of coherence' must also be considered and accounted for. As indicated earlier by the chair, examining the difference in the success of WUAs vis-à-vis SHGs would be very interesting. Farm income and livelihoods have emerged as a key focus of the policies reviewed in India – this might reflect the Government of India's focus on 'doubling farmers' income'. As NPS undertakes similar exercises in other countries, it would be interesting to observe the points of convergence and focus emerging elsewhere.

Marie Charlotte, IWMI, mentioned that it is encouraging to see that everyone agrees that coherence is crucial. It is also encouraging to hear that there are already processes addressing coherence in policy formulation. She emphasized that g ram-panchayat level integration is an excellent example of achieving coherence. She also suggested that it would be interesting to map and understand the impact of multiple schemes working together, whether they deliver higher impacts together or in silos.

Alan Nicol, IWMI, NPS Initiative Co-lead, mentioned that India is the first country under the NPS initiative to address coherence and contextualize it in the larger policy arena. He emphasized the need for incentives, specific policy objectives, and equity as additional factors to consider when tackling coherence.

Closing Remarks

Saahil Parekh, CEEW

Saahil Parekh concluded the meeting with a special thanks to the chair for bringing attention to the necessity for integrated, holistic solutions that consider nutritional security and environmental sustainability. He highlighted some key takeaways from the workshop, such as leveraging and strengthening existing institutions, recalibrating the role and responsibilities of existing institutions like WUAs, coherence at the local level, and more nuanced analysis across different geographies. Government and non-government stakeholders must come together, with a strong focus on social inclusion, to sustain policy impacts over the long term.

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