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This UPTW Newsletter was compiled by Helsinki University of Technology (TKK) together with Oregon State University.

FIRST ISSUE OF UPTW NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the first issue of the Universities Partnership for Transboundary Waters (UPTW) Newsletter! The Newsletter provides information about the UPTW, its Partner Universities and their current activities. More information about the UPTW, including this Newsletter, can be found at: <http://waterpartners.geo.orst.edu>

Last month, three UPTW Partner Universities - University of British Columbia, Yunnan University and Oregon State University- participated in the Symposium entitled, "Transboundary River Governance in the Face of Uncertainty: The Columbia River Treaty, 2014." The purpose of the symposium was to explore the question "How do

we design and implement governance of international watercourses in the face of uncertainty?" Invitees to the symposium included universities, non-government organizations, government agencies, companies and tribes from all parts of the basin.

The two-day symposium offered a unique experience; we found ourselves as researchers, community members and stakeholders of the Columbia Basin. While the symposium was filled with many contrasting opinions and approaches, there was an air of optimism towards the future, fuelled more by the opportunity to work together. While this is only one of many forums on this topic, the good will, respect, and willingness to listen and be engaged, generated such enthusiasm that it should give us all hope!

It is this kind of experience, this same spirit and energy that we hope to rekindle here. This newsletter is an effort to keep the synergy of our community, our partnership going.

So use this newsletter to stay engaged, to highlight your research, showcase your institute and programs, and share your ideas. We welcome your news and stories, and look forward to publishing them in future issues.



NEWSLETTER STRUCTURE

The Newsletter template has been developed by the Helsinki University of Technology (TKK) together with the Oregon State University. Our idea has been to keep the Newsletter simple and short, so that it can be easily read – and also modified if need arises.

The first half of the Newsletter is reserved for general information on UPTW and its partners, while the latter half presents the activities of the UPTW Partner University that is putting the particular issue together. For the general UPTW part, we anticipate having both topical issues and common features, such as 'Emerging water issues' to be written by different professors.

The responsibility for putting the Newsletter together will rotate among partners, with two or three issues published per year. In this way the Newsletter will enable us also to learn more about the current activities of different Partner Universities.

Any suggestions regarding the Newsletter are naturally very welcome; please send them to Lynette de Silva (desilval@geo.oregonstate.edu) and Marko Keskinen (keskinen@iki.fi).

UPTW COMMITTEES

To improve the functioning of the UPTW, the following committees have been formed for period May 2009 – May 2010.

Funding Committee

Yunnan University: Daming He
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University of South Australia: Jennifer McKay
(jennifer.mckay@unisa.edu.au)

Council for Scientific and Industrial Research:
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Linköping University/SIWI: Jan Lundqvist
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LIVEDIVERSE PROJECT

Four UPTW Partner Universities –Linköping University, Sweden; Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica; Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa; and the UNESCO IHP-HELP Centre for Water Law, Policy & Science, UK– participate in the EC FP7-funded interdisciplinary project Sustainable Livelihoods and Biodiversity in Developing Countries (LiveDiverse). The project is led by Professor Geoffrey Goch (Linköping/Dundee Universities) and it also includes four partner institutions from Vietnam, India, the Netherlands and Italy.



Figure 1. Participants of LiveDiverse Project's kick-off meeting in Costa Rica.

The project focuses on four specific case areas: Terreba River in Costa Rica; Warna River in India; Greater Kruger in South Africa; and Ba Be National Park in Vietnam.

The aim of the LiveDiverse project is to develop knowledge and understanding related to the analysis of vulnerability to environmental change, with a particular focus on the livelihoods of indigenous and marginal peoples within developing countries. Vulnerability is assessed through different perspectives, including environmental, cultural and spiritual, and economic and social.

Assessing the resilience of governance systems to environmental change is also a key aspect of LiveDiverse. Having assessed vulnerability and resilience, the project will then develop scenarios in collaboration with stakeholders within the case study areas in order to identify the value of likely policy interventions.

The project started in 1 February, 2009 with the kick-off meeting taking place in San Isidoro in Costa Rica.

For more information on the project, please have a look at project's web site: www.livediverse.eu

TOUCHSTONE LTD.

Since the debacle at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Tony Turton has been busy establishing a new company. Called TouchStone Resources (Pty) Ltd., the company is based on the core logic that many economies in Southern Africa are constrained by water and energy, so TouchStone is about developing both New Water and New Energy in order to sustain economic growth and social development.

The business plan is available online at www.anthonyturton.com (see About Me section). This company is an experiment at developing a viable instrument for change, so the planning is to grow TouchStone Resources into a Social Entrepreneurship vehicle.

FIRST CHINESE EIA ON AN INTERNATIONAL RIVER?

On March 26, the Chinese Huaneng Lancang River Hydropower Co. Ltd. released a report on Yunnan's Lidi hydropower station on the Lancang-Mekong River. It may be the first Chinese Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report on an international river. The Lidi hydropower dam is located on the upper reaches of the Lancang-Mekong River, and it is the 3rd cascade dam of the seven planned dams on the river. The dam height is 74 meters with installed capacity of 420 MW and the total reservoir capacity of 75 million cubic meters.

The report is divided into three parts. The analysis sheet, which mainly constitutes the first part, lists the environmental impacts of the project, such as effects on the growth of fish habitats and impacts on the ecological environment. The positive influences are also described, including provision of clean energy and promotion of power grid construction.



Figure 2. The Manwan hydropower station on the Lancang River (Source: Chinese Power News Network)

In the 2nd part of the report, adverse effects of the dam are listed, including air pollution, noise effect and waste slag during the construction period, eutrophication of water quality in the reservoir area, reduced vegetation productivity, reservoir inundation and resettlement. The strategy and measures of prevention and mitigation of adverse environmental impact are then described in the last part of the report.

In the past 50 years, China has rarely unveiled specifics in hydropower planning, let alone releasing detailed EIAs. However, things have slowly changed after the “Nu River Storm” in 2004. That year, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao ordered a halt to the project on Nu River and called for the project to be “seriously reviewed and decided scientifically” because there were many environment concerns voiced. After that, Chinese companies have gradually revealed their EIA’s before or during dam building.

Wang Zhijian

A visiting scholar in Geosciences Department, Oregon State University, from School of Law of Hohai University, China

NEXT UPTW NEWSLETTER

The next UPTW Newsletter is planned to be published in autumn 2009, and we will announce shortly the UPTW Partner University that will compile the Newsletter.

Suggestions for the news items and stories for the next Newsletter –as well as feedback on this first issue– can be sent to Lynette at desilval@geo.oregonstate.edu.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The theme of this year’s World Water Week (<http://www.worldwaterweek.org/>) is ‘Responding to Global Changes – Accessing Water for the Common Good’. In addition, the World Water Week has a special focus on transboundary waters, and several UPTW partner universities are therefore expected to be travelling to Stockholm.

Please contact Lynette (desilval@geo.oregonstate.edu) for more information on possible UPTW-related activities during the World Water Week.



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TRANSBOUNDARY WATER RESEARCH AT TKK

TKK in a nutshell

This issue of UPTW Newsletter was compiled by the Water & Development Research Group of the Helsinki University of Technology (TKK).

The research group look at the interconnections between water and development with a comprehensive view, with a specific focus on large Asian river basins. Current research activities focus geographically on South and Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

For more information, please see: <http://water.tkk.fi/global>

Water management & impact assessment in the Mekong Basin

TKK has been actively engaged in multi- and interdisciplinary research in the Mekong River Basin since 2001, in close cooperation with national and regional organisations. The research has produced interesting findings on physical and hydrological as well as social, political and institutional aspects related to water management, highlighting the need to better incorporate these different aspects into the research and management activities.

Particularly important have been our findings on the estimated impacts of planned large-scale hydropower construction in the upper parts of the basin. These findings are largely based on the research carried out within so-called WUP-FIN Project (<http://www.eia.fi/wup-fin>) under the Mekong River Commission (MRC).

The findings from the impact assessment studies illustrate potentially devastating cumulative impacts of planned hydropower dams for both water quality and quantity particularly in the Mekong floodplains, including the unique Tonle Sap Lake and its flood pulse system. If constructed as planned, the dams are likely to impact seriously the high ecological productivity of the floodplains, reducing fish production and bringing serious social and economic consequences for majority of the population living in the floodplains.

The research findings have been published online as policy briefs as well as journal articles and special issues. For more information, contact Olli Varis (olli.varis@tkk.fi) or click the links below:

<http://water.tkk.fi/global/publications>

<http://www.eia.fi/wup-fin/wup-fin2>



Figure 3. Floating house in Cambodia's Tonle Sap Lake
(Photo: Marko Keskinen).

Climate change and water

One of our most recent research activities is looking at the interconnections between water and climate change adaptation.

The research focuses on the Mekong River Basin, and it has been carried out in cooperation with SEA START Regional Center in Thailand together with several national partners.

The main findings of this research activity can be summarised as follows:

- Understanding of hydrological cycle, and therefore water management, is critical for successful climate change adaptation
- Climate change is not the only change around, but also other changes impacting water cycle need to be considered in climate change adaptation studies; cumulative impact assessment is the key
- Particularly important is to consider the different timescales that the different 'change factors' have

For more information on the research and related publications, please contact Marko Keskinen (keskinen@iki.fi) or visit the project web site at: <http://users.tkk.fi/u/mkummu/water&cc>

New Book on Central Asian waters



Helsinki University of Technology, Global Water Partnership and the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia have jointly published a book that scrutinizes the challenges of

Central Asian water resources development and management.

The book is entitled 'Central Asian Waters: Social, Economic, Environmental and Governance Puzzle' and its electronic version is available at: <http://water.tkk.fi/global/publications>

A limited number of print versions are available on request, free of cost, for academic and research institutions working on Central Asian issues: please contact Muhammad Mizanur Rahaman (mizanur.rahaman@tkk.fi).

IWRM: Constraints and opportunities

TKK's Water & Development Research Group is also carrying out research on the constraints and opportunities related to the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). The research looks at both policy and field levels related to the IWRM, and it focuses on four Asian river basins i.e. Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna (South Asia) and Amu Darya (Central Asia).

IWRM has been chosen as a focus of this study as practically all contemporary international conferences, summits, regional water policies and declarations promote the IWRM concept for the effective and efficient management of water resources.

The research has two main parts. First part of the research analyses the evolution of the IWRM concept and the principles that have been developed at international conferences over the last three decades. The second part focuses then on the actual implementation of the IWRM in the transboundary river basin contexts.

For more information on the research, please contact Muhammad Mizanur Rahaman (mizanur.rahaman@tkk.fi) and Olli Varis (olli.varis@tkk.fi).



Figure 4. Meeting point of Ganges and Brahmaputra Rivers at Goalanda, Bangladesh. (Photo: Mizanur Rahaman)