

summary of comments on the draft project document received prior to the meeting

General Comments

- It is probably good to stress the key role of the member countries in the Executive Summary as well. It may be good to phrase this so that it is clear that ICIMOD will implement by being a coordination and facilitation point for the member countries.
- Where the Phase II costs are mentioned in the Executive Summary of the document, it would be good to include the time frame. It may be useful to put an estimate of Phase III cost and time frame at the start as well.
- The proposed project document is concerned with Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. As two other countries, Myanmar and Afghanistan, are included in the HKH initiative the project document should also include them.
- More bilateral agreements than are mentioned exist between India and Nepal, India and Bhutan, and India and Bangladesh for the transmission of data on a real-time basis and are operational. These are not indicated here. This fact has been mentioned in paragraph A.2.4. Hydrology (page 8).
- The paragraph on the Ganges Treaty Section may be replaced by the following:
" The 30 year Treaty signed in December 1996 would share between India and Bangladesh the dry season flows of the Ganges available at Farakka by ten day periods from 1 January to 31 May every year with reference to the formula provided in the Treaty".
- Bangladesh might gain access to the hydrometeorological data and information of the GBM basins on real time or near real time basis through this programme. Similar kinds of programmes are already in practice in different parts of the world that are initiatives of WMO.
- WHYCOS has a broad goal of sharing water resource information. This project is focused on floods for many good reasons but it is being conducted within the WHYCOS framework. Aren't the stations transmitting data all the time floods or no floods?
- In the last paragraph before section B, add that the database would also serve to enhance climate scale prediction efforts that can directly improve decisions made in the agricultural and water management sectors, both for reducing flood impacts and for improving agricultural production.
- Comments on population and flood prone areas need revision.
- The document focuses on real-time information sharing, which is the core of the HYCOS project. While other flood information benefits are mentioned, the document will be stronger if those additional benefits are stressed more. For example, one of the benefits of participating in the WMO HYCOS system will be the opportunity to cooperate more effectively with other members of the international community, thus ensuring access to, and benefit from, state of the art forecasting and early-warning methods.
- The project is silent on (a) defining the "...positive communications opportunity..." with stakeholders and NGOs, (b) assessing the products that end users need to minimise the loss of life and property, and (c) assuring that the project will set up continuing communication mechanisms for local and regional stakeholders to assure the preparation of needed products. This is an important omission and the project needs to include a strong commitment to user participation. Phases I, II, and III are silent on user

participation, though in Phases II and III there is a commitment to "Assess the performance and the effectiveness of the system through regular meetings of technical experts and relevant decision-makers.

"There is mention of public awareness campaigns in the project document, but that presumes representative knowledge of what the public needs. There is mention of "...a fully participatory approach that involves national and international institutions...", but no mention of a fully participatory approach with respect to users. The project must allow users to participate or run the risk of the information system being supply driven, rather than demand driven.

- The overall goal of the project is to *minimise the loss of lives and property* via the reduction in flood vulnerability in the HKH region with specific reference to the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Indus river basins.
- Without user involvement in assessing the adequacy of the HKH flood information system, the suitability of this project and HKH-HYCOS to the donor and lending communities will be greatly diminished.
- Implementing partners of Bangladesh will be Bangladesh Water Development Board and Bangladesh Meteorological Department
- Key assumptions should also include the issue of donors' support.
- In the Risks section donors' support may be included.
- This is a more general comment that came from reading certain sections of the document: Rather than being poorly adapted, the inhabitants of the basin are actually extremely well adapted to recurring flood events, especially considering the level of poverty in the basin. Extreme events, however, do cause considerable harm to this extremely poor and vulnerable population. Real-time information sharing alone, will do little to reduce the vulnerability in the basin, but can be seen as a foundation for building an array of flood information and early-warning techniques to assist with vulnerability reduction. Rather than overstate the importance of real-time flood information, it may be better to stress the fundamental nature of this information and how it may be used to enhance the forecasting and early-warning capacity throughout the region.
- The draft proposal for establishment of the HKH-HYCOS as a regional component of the WHYCOS based on the recommendations made in the 1st Consultative meeting in Kathmandu in May 2001 which I had the privilege to participate in is a faithful and factual presentation of major ideas and recommendations that emerged at the end of the said meeting. The fine-tuning of some of the broad ideas has been done very satisfactorily. The phase-wise planning of activities, identification of infrastructural and manpower requirements, and the estimated financial outlays seem to me to be quite appropriate. I have no doubt proper implementation of the project as outlined in the proposal will go a long way in bringing about the much-needed cooperation among the countries in HKH region for the timely exchange of flood data and information. Thus it will eventually lead to appreciable reduction of flood vulnerability in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Indus basins.

Conceptual Aspects of the Project

- While there are many good points in the document, I would like to mention one specifically at No. XII of Basic Elements mentioned under C.3 Framework for Co-operation (page 24) which indicates that the framework will not infringe on national ownership of data, interfere with national responsibility and substitute bilateral efforts and agreements.

Technical Aspects of the Project

- The strategic objective is indicated in the Executive Summary (page 1) and also at paragraph C-3 (page 23) and it mentions "The proposed regional flood information system aims to provide the operational concepts and tools for improving integrated river basin management, specifically by managing floods and thus contributing to minimisation of the loss of lives and property, reduction of poverty and the acceleration of economic development in a shared river basin affected by recurring flood events." Creation of reservoirs to contain floodwater for utilisation in a lean or dry period is one of the long-term solutions for flood management

and reducing flood damage. Also the HKH region has plenty of dam sites still unutilised. Hence creation of reservoirs and regulated release of water will be an important option for long-term solution of flood problems in the HKH region. This fact may be mentioned in the 'Ultimate Goal' of the project.

- During implementation some modifications may be necessary to fulfil the objectives of the project.
- Structure of PMU may not be sufficient to ensure implementation of such a huge project at regional level. In order to ensure close cooperation at-least one professional staff from each of the participating countries as well as some international experts may also be included in the PMU.
- For implementation of the project, an Action Plan needs to be formulated and meetings at Secretary level of participating countries are urgently needed, followed by meetings at political level.
- *Specific Objectives* need to be looked at, reworded and some additions made. These specific objectives relate to the three phases of the project as described in Section C.2 below.
- The activities, which have been identified in the Annex 2 and the input requirement detailed in Annex 5 need further review in detail to achieve project objectives. It is presumed that it will be a regional project with international cooperation, which will require the services of both regional and international experts on full-time as well as part-time basis. Remuneration of regional and national experts should be assessed properly. Moreover, other works also need careful assessment before it is placed before the joint donors' meeting.
- If the assumptions are recognised and valid, and if adequate mechanisms can be devised to truly minimise the risks, the chances of success will be enhanced.
- Section F. Key assumptions is a critical section. Items 5 and 6 have caused us particular problems in some parts of the world. Earlier in the project document and then in Section H on sustainability, it is noted that the countries will be responsible for maintaining stations within their borders. It was also noted that long-term budget pressures cause degradation of networks. This can be reduced either by a long-term donor commitment or a long-term commitment of national funds or a combination of the two, a cooperative relationship maybe for as long as 10 years. In item 6, the report recognises that training is an ongoing process as well, because trained staff will move on when they can get a better paying job. Is it possible to have regional trainers? Finally, perhaps another assumption is that at least some of the international organisations/institutions will maintain a long-term interest in the project.
- Except for Risk 1, the risks (section G) may be understated. The design is an exciting time, so that is expected that will go well. The other risks deal with long-term issues and are all probably medium to high rather than low or low to medium, Maybe we have to be optimistic in the project document but considerable thought will be needed to devise means to reduce the risk. Ownership of the system is important and maybe there are ways to increase and sustain the ownership and the pride and obligations of ownership. For example, will there be some form of written agreement between each country for the operation and maintenance of any station located within that country?
- Sustainability issues may also be studied during the course of the project. SWOT analysis on sustainability issues in each of the countries may be undertaken so that the concerned country may be alerted beforehand.
- Need provisions for international/regional experts.

In the budgeted proposal Phase II at Annex 5, some items, e.g. rent of office premises, cost of maintenance of office like electricity, water, telephone, fax charges, travel expenses of personnel of Project Management Unit and other miscellaneous expenditure like taxes etc. do not appear. This may be looked into.