



Knowledge Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilient Livelihoods in the Koshi Basin

Pre-Event Press Release

Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA) and
International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
Venue: BAMETI, Near Potato Research Institute, Patna, India
4-5 February, 2016

While the floodplains of the Koshi basin in southern Nepal and northern Bihar are some of the most fertile in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, they also routinely suffer from crippling floods and drought. Regional disaster management around these events frequently lacks coordination, which in turn impacts investment in infrastructure and agricultural productivity. Despite the vast agricultural resources, recurring disasters have left individuals living on the floodplains as some of the most economically poor in the region.

Research has found that floods in the basin are increasing, while at the same time, water available for agriculture is decreasing. Communities in the Koshi basin have yet to widely adopt adaptation strategies such as embankments, drought-resistant crops, and floodplain zoning. This lack of action is due to a number of reasons, including limited financial resources, lack of technical knowledge and awareness, unclear property rights, and weak state agencies.

Since its inception in 2013, the Koshi Basin Programme at the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), with the support from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia, has been working to develop knowledge and tools to better address water issues in the basin. This includes piloting an online flood outlook, and developing tools that are able to measure the basin's water availability and demand. These efforts support national flood forecasting, aid planners in building hydropower dams, and help communities manage resources more efficiently.

In an attempt to build a strong, regional knowledge network to better ensure water security and resilient livelihoods in the Koshi basin, the Koshi Basin Programme is working with the Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA), AN Sinha Institute of Social Studies (ANSISS), IIT Kanpur, the Institute of Economic Growth (IEG, Delhi University), and other key knowledge resource institutions in Nepal and China to organize a knowledge forum from 4-5 February in BAMETI, Patna. The aim of the program is to reduce disaster risks and improve rural livelihoods in the Koshi basin. It will include discussions on evidence-based knowledge and tools and their role in disasters, and challenges and potentials for converting knowledge into actionable policy.

The first day will include two technical sessions focusing on disaster risk reduction and geohazards in the Koshi basin, while the second day will focus on livelihood resilience in the face of disasters, and potential policy for improved river basin management.

More than two hundred and fifty participants representing ICIMOD's current and potential partner organizations, government agencies, academic and research institutions, international development organizations, local non-governmental and community organizations, diplomats, and representatives of the private sector are expected to attend this important event.