

PROCEEDINGS OF THE

Koshi Basin Disaster Risk Reduction Knowledge Hub annual dialogue 2022

15–17 December 2022 | ICIMOD, Kathmandu

SECTION 1

About the event

The Koshi Basin Disaster Risk Reduction Knowledge Hub (KDKH) annual dialogue brought together the coorganisers of the KDKH, members of the hub's eight transboundary working groups (TbWGs), subject experts, community representatives, and members from the secretariat (ICIMOD). The hub is a platform for like-minded institutions, stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers to create and capitalise on opportunities to enhance resilience in the Koshi Basin.

The annual dialogue aimed to enhance scientific and evidence-based collaboration to address multihazard disaster risks in the basin and to explore opportunities to strengthen the TbWGs. The event included panel discussions, policy roundtable dialogues, technical presentations, and a field visit to the ICIMOD Knowledge Park in Godavari to observe sustainable technologies and solutions. It was coorganised by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA), Nepal; the Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA), India; the Institute of Mountain Hazard and Environment (IMHE), China; and ICIMOD, with support from the Australian Embassy in Nepal and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

SECTION 2

Key discussions

Knowledge and data gaps, and potential for knowledge generation

Speakers highlighted the knowledge and data gaps concerning several issues in the Koshi River Basin. In the Landslide and Sedimentation TbWG, Santosh Nepal (International Water Management Institute) shared that the science on sedimentation is lacking, making it one of the most neglected study areas in the Koshi Basin. Panellists in the Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) TbWG expressed that the database on CBDRM is severely limited and presents large gaps for analysis. At the policy roundtable dialogue, Kapil Gnawali (Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, Government of Nepal) noted that real-time information system at a basin level is lacking, which presents difficulties for transboundary collaboration on disaster risk reduction (DRR). The participants noted that such gaps provide enormous opportunities for knowledge generation in the Koshi Basin.

Capacity building at the local level

One of the highlights from the discussion was that strengthening capacity at the local level would be crucial for enhancing disaster preparedness. Local government bodies focus on disaster response rather than preparedness because of poor understanding of risk-

informed planning and limited resources, including skilled human resources. Therefore, as pointed out by Shakti Gurung (Center for Disaster Management Studies, Nepal), it is imperative for local bodies to engage in knowledge, resource, and capacity building in order to comprehensively engage with disaster preparedness.

Community leadership and gender equality, disability, and social inclusion

The participants also spoke about the importance of community participation and leadership in DRR. The CBDRM panel stressed that river-dependent communities are impacted first and affected the most, and policies should be designed to protect such vulnerable communities. It is also crucial for communities to be closely involved in the planning process, and to be consulted when funding decisions are made for implementation.

Members also spoke about the importance of inclusion of different marginalised groups, and the need for a transformative thinking. Nivedita Mani (Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group, India) stressed that women need to be perceived as leaders, and not just as participants and sufferers. Pratima Gurung (National Indigenous Disabled Woman Association Nepal) also emphasised on the importance of considering diverse perspectives during policy making, including those from persons with disabilities. She noted that persons with disabilities are experts on their own issues, and these groups must be actively included in the formulation and implementation of policy processes.

Moving beyond water treaties to water governance

One of the key highlights from the policy dialogue – articulated by Medha Bist (South Asian University, India) – was the consensus that the discourse needs to be expanded into transboundary water governance, moving away from the current narrow focus on water-sharing treaties and technical committees for dams and barrage management. The panel on policy and advocacy also noted that considering the geopolitical sensitivity of countries in the Koshi Basin, more knowledge and understanding for stakeholders on how transboundary collaboration can be achieved is necessary.

SECTION 3

Potential and opportunities

Influence of informal systems and local efforts

The participants highlighted the importance of informal systems and local efforts for DRR. Mechanisms such as community-based early warning systems have paved a path for effective community-led interventions for preparedness and response. However, as noted by Chen Ningsheng (Chinese Academy of Sciences, China), the effectiveness of such mechanisms should be enhanced by ensuring their sustainability.

Anil Kumar Gupta (National Institute of Disaster Management, Government of India) noted that the success of such local efforts could further be amplified through documentation and regional sharing for cross learning.

Scope for multistakeholder collaboration

The participants also discussed the multipartnership nature of DRR activities and the role of the private sector, civil society, and government in the DRR process. Sewa Lamsal (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal) stated that existing bilateral mechanisms between the basin countries should be further strengthened. In addition, coordination between different agencies to avoid duplication of efforts would be crucial.

Multihazard assessment and loss and damage

Following the COP27 agreement on the establishment of loss and damage funds for vulnerable countries, the participants agreed on the need to plan and further discuss this important agenda during COP28. Panellists also noted that for challenging basins like the Koshi Basin, the concept of loss and damage must be considered along with the multihazards approach. In his presentation, Arun Bhakta Shrestha (ICIMOD) spoke about how incidents like the [2021 Melamchi flood disaster](#) cannot be attributed to a single factor and was a result of multiple anthropogenic and climatic factors. Therefore, as cascading hazards are becoming more common in the Koshi Basin, a more holistic approach to hazard assessment and risk management is crucial.

SECTION 4

Way forward

The participants commended the depth of knowledge, insights, and recommendations generated in the dialogue and committed to continue working together for effective disaster risk management and reduction. Uday Kant Mishra (BSDMA) suggested the KDKH to consider setting some milestones on DRR that could be reviewed before the upcoming flood season.

The potential for the expansion of TbWGs into other related areas is also being considered. As per the feedback of students and early career researchers present at the dialogue, a TbWG on youth would be greatly beneficial to encourage youth leadership and foster youth engagement in DRR-related matters. In addition, considering the interconnectedness between DRR and the economy and livelihoods, a TbWG on livelihoods was also suggested by livelihood experts.

The coleads of the TbWGs brought to attention the potential role the KDKH could play in ICIMOD's new Medium-Term Action Plan V, where multihazard risk assessment is one of the key action areas.

Additional event information and materials are available at: <https://www.icimod.org/event/annual-dialogue-on-koshi-disaster-risk-reduction-knowledge-hub-annual-dialogue-2022/>

Compiled by: Sharmila Dhungana, ICIMOD

Rapporteurs: Anup Kumar Saha, Amrita Pokharel, Ava Adhikari, Bini Neupane, Kushal Baral, Pooja Koirala, Prashant Baral, Sabin Acharya, Sabina Pokharel, Sneha Bhatta, Suman Chapagain, Sundar Tandan, and

Tekraj Koirala

Organised by: National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority (NDRRMA), Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA), and Institute of Mountain Hazard and Environment

Supported by: Koshi Basin Initiative, Regional Programme on River Basins and Cryosphere, ICIMOD