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**Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies
Kathmandu**

PRESS RELEASE

Improving Water Security in Nepal: Agendas for Research, Policy and Practice

**Kathmandu
11th July 2014**

A one-day consultation program was hosted on 11th July 2011 at Yala Maya Kendra in Patan on “Improving Water Security in Nepal: Agendas for Research, Policy and Practice.” This was hosted by Kathmandu-based Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) in collaboration with the Nepal Office of International Water Management Institute (IWMI) in order to arrive at common themes and action points to guide research, policy and practice on water security, especially focusing on the poor and marginalized groups. The event was chaired and facilitated by Dr. Hari Dhungana, who is the Executive Director of Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS).

This consultation event brought together a total of twenty-eight representatives from national and international research organizations, government agencies, universities, water user federations and community federations. There was wide diversity of participation from amongst researchers, policy-makers, practitioners and activists.

The consultation was initiated in light of the fact that addressing water security is one of the most serious challenges facing countries like Nepal. Indeed in Nepal, the availability of water is central to rural and urban livelihoods and for the attainment of long-term socio-economic goals at a national and local scale. Water security is critical for the provision of basic health and sanitation needs, improved agricultural productivity, and a reliable and sustainable energy supply. Indeed, every year Nepal’s GDP growth is linked to the monsoon rains. The challenges of water security have however become more complex in the context of growing urbanization, climate change, a weak state capacity and persistence of social inequity and conflict at various scales.

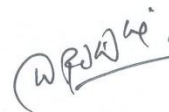
Dr. Hari Dhungana moderated the half-day consultation, which focused on the following points:

- Water security issues in specific sectors—Hydro, Drinking water, Irrigation, Sanitation
- Water pollution and control
- Water security policies and institutions –formalization issues
- Urbanization and water security
- Fragile state, political transition and opportunities for change
- Stakeholder’s role on research, policy and practice

The participants of this consultation event highlighted that there have indeed been ongoing efforts in research, policy and practice surrounding water security are underway—but important questions still remain to be understood and addressed. In particular, it highlighted the need for concerted collective effort from government agencies, research organizations and the civil society so that the country develops critical need policies and national capacity and an effective range of formal as well as informal institutions and decision systems to address the growing uncertainties and risks on water availability, variability, and to clarify the roles of the state and non-state actors. It is important to capitalize the vast hydro potential of the country on one hand, and to minimize the risks and uncertainties caused by water and hydrological process in general. The government's policy orientation over the past two decades have resulted in some progress, but it is equally important to harness the opportunities associated with broad array of informal institutions linked to water management. It is also critical to differentiate water availability from water access, as provision of water security through government or non-government interventions will be ineffective if institutional arrangements or social structures exclude particular socio-economic groups. Greater emphasis is also required to attend to environmental issues and to safeguard regimes that are yet to be streamlined throughout the integrated water management framework and basin approaches that have remained the government's priority for the past several years.

The consultation event also came up with a number of recommendations for the role of different stakeholders and how disparate efforts from these efforts could be combined. These deliberations are expected to provide important inputs for policy and program development for participating organizations.

Thank you.



Hari Dhungana, PhD
Executive Director
SIAS