

# Collusion to Consensus

## Case of water source negotiation in Bidur, Nepal

K Devkota, N Dahal, KR Neupane, and T Joshi  
Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies  
(www.sias-southasia.org)

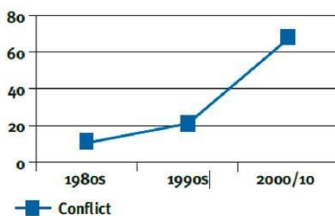
### Introduction

People from Bidur in mid hill of central Nepal depended on water supplied from Nalagaun source since early 1980 s. However, in recent decades, water demand in Nalagaun increased after gradual drying of local sources. On the other side, water demand in Bidur also accelerated. This situation led to conflicts over the upstream community (source) and downstream community (Bidur Municipality). Similar situations exist in many mountain villages (fig 1).

After the re-establishment of open political systems in 1990, local community of Nepal started demanding their preferential rights over water sources existed around their settlements. The subsequent political changes led Nalagaun residents to question the validity of the agreement made decades back to water from local sources to Bidur without mutual benefits.

This paper aims to analyze the decision making context between up and down stream people while negotiating for the source of water by taking the case between Nalagaun and Bidur of midhill Nepal. It is drafted based on the preliminary findings of the research "Political economy of water security, ecosystem services and livelihoods in the western Himalaya" being conducted by Cambridge University, SIAS and CEDAR.

Fig. 1: Increasing trends of water source conflicts in Nepal

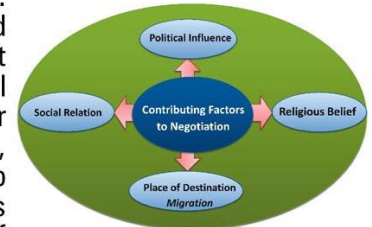


Source: WaterAid Nepal, 2012

### Results

The agreement between Bidur and Nalagaun was held in 1982. Four major factors contributed to materialize the agreement at that time. They include political influence, religious belief (water as a essential good for life), socio-political relation among up and downstream communities and preferential destination of upstream households to migrate ( Fig 2).

Fig. 2: Contributing Factors to Negotiate Source of Water



After the significant sociopolitical change over the time, the new generations of upstream people are claiming that the agreement held during early 80's is to be revised now. They further claimed that the agreement was done without consensus hence their resource is being used by downstream people.

#### Some testimonials by upstream people

- “Our irrigated land has been drying gradually.” – A local land owner
- “We can't even wet our paddy seed banks now.” – A local farmer
- “The agreement was held with muscles power.” – A local youth near by source

Bidur Drinking Water and Sanitation User Committee who have been taping the water claimed that the decision was held as per the policy. They further appealed that the ongoing discussions are being held among diverse stakeholders.

### Methods

Bidur is one among the six case study towns in the project. This paper is the part of ongoing analysis of ecosystem services and local level decision making process in Bidur. This case is prepared after the series of interaction among stakeholders from both up and downstream region. We conducted following activities while gathering data for the analysis.

Tools	No.
Focused Group Discussion	2
Stakeholder Consultation	1
Key Informant Survey	12
Document Review	



### Key Findings

- In Bidur, conventional approach to negotiation and decisions primarily depended on power balance, which has been severely contested in changed political context.
- In recent years, local communities have started negotiation based on principles of mutual interests. In Nalagau case, the new negotiation has been initiated through a consensus building approach.
- This case offers a good example to create environment for negotiation between upstream and downstream based on consensus building approach, which is different from conventional of collusion oriented.

### References

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- ICIMOD, 2014. Towards A Better Understanding of Water Resources Management in the Hindu Kush Himalayas. [online] Available at: <<http://www.icimod.org/?q=14241>> [Accessed on 18 Nov, 2014].
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