

## **Management Issues in River Basins of Sri Lanka A Stakeholders View Based on Maha Oya River Basin**



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## **Maha Oya River**

**Inter-provincial River**

**flows trough four provinces - Central, Sabaragand,  
North Western and Western  
five districts. - Kandy , Kegalle, Kurunegala,  
Puttalam, Gampaha**

**Main Uses – Domestic Water , Sand and Clay**

**Minor Uses – Industrial Water , Hydropower, Irrigation  
(tributaries)**

## Weakness in legal provisions

- ❖ No specific Act for river or river basin management
- ❖ Legal provisions are scattered in number of acts ( State Land Ordinance, National Environment Act, and Water Supply & Drainage Board Act etc:
- ❖ Number of agencies involved in various activities, but lack co-ordination.
- ❖ Difficult to find a law imposing authority for some activities.

## Administrative complications



Rivers are more often boundaries of provinces

Provincial administrations apply different rules for one and the same subject.

(e.g : NWP restrict sand mining but Sabaragamuwa allows.)

Central Environment Authority (CEA) is responsible for pollution control. but, CEA has no machinery at field level to enforce.

Local bodies have a substantial role in environment management but weak in implementation.

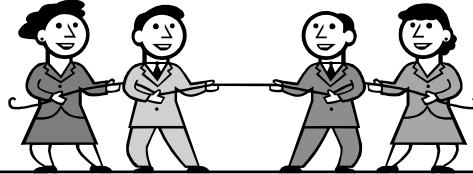
Certain Govt. rules prohibit provision of basic facilities for some category of persons. (e.g : Provision of latrines for encroaches.)

Lack of co-ordination among local level Government Institutions, Local Bodies and Stakeholder Groups.

Village level govt. officer( Grama Niladari) is not functioning as a law enforcement officer.

## Political Issues

- ❖ Problem arises when Provincial Council and the local body are represented by two rival parties.
- ❖ In most cases they do not compromise for a common cause.
- ❖ Members to are elected on the preferential voting system.
- ❖ The members do not have specific wards.
- ❖ Therefore they are not responsible over a particular area.
- ❖ They can avoid issues as they have no wards.
- ❖ When the party politics operate in the villages, villagers do not co-operate for common programmes.
- ❖ Politicians sometimes do not co-operate with Govt. Officials.
- ❖ Politicians help and cover up law breakers.



## Water Resource issues.

- ❖ The average flow of Maha Oya is very high.
- ❖ However river goes dry in some months (February, March, June, July, September)
- ❖ Creates sever problems for drinking water supply.
- ❖ Out of 18 Water supply schemes only 8 provide 24 hours service.
- ❖ Catchment area is cleared with population expansion.
- ❖ Urgent need for a regulatory reservoir in the upstream.
- ❖ Some studies have carried out for a regulatory reservoir, but the progress is slow.
- ❖ Domestic water needs are increasing with urbanization.
- ❖ Locating new industries need to be considered carefully with the increase in domestic water needs.



## Water Quality issues.

- Disposal of toilets direct to the river by certain communities.
- Some families on river banks use the river as toilet.
- Sometimes urban garbage is discharge into the river.
- Local bodies more often arrange garbage disposal through contacts.
- Contractors dump garbage at places convenient to them.
- Most local bodies do not have proper places to dump garbage.
- Sometimes industrialist release effluents without treatments.
- Dumping of saw dust and rice husk by millers.
- Bathing of a large number of elephants daily. (Pinnawala)



## Degradation of the River Environment

- ♣ No reservation areas along the river in Privately owned lands.
- ♣ Private persons build houses up to the river bank itself.
- ♣ Uncontrolled Sand mining even during low flows.
- ♣ Collapsing of River Banks due to sand mining and encroachments.
- ♣ Clearance of source areas in the upstreams.
- ♣ Lack of re-forestation programme in the upper catchment.



## **What is needed for Better Management !**

- ❖ **Understanding the role of each Organisations.  
( Govt, Local bodies and NGOs)**
- ❖ **Build sound co-operation between govt. local govt. and NGO  
Institutions.**
- ❖ **Use community based organizations to improve river environment.**
- ❖ **Create vigilant groups to arrest damaging incidents.**
- ❖ **Launch reforestation programmes in the upper catchment and river  
banks with community based organizations.**



Thank You