

The Voice of Asian Water Management Practitioners

April 12, 2017

We, the Network of Asian River Basin Organizations (NARBO) members, held the 6th NARBO General Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia from February 22 to 24, 2017 and herein summarize them as “the Voice of Asian Water Management Practitioners” (hereinafter referred to as “the Voice”). This will be one of the specified directions based on the Manila Declaration of 10-year Anniversary Meeting of NARBO on November 20, 2014, and be to guide for materializing sustainable water management in Asia. From now on, we will promote the Voice for deepening discussions about water management improvement.

NARBO activities in the past

1. NARBO has been doing its utmost to work on “Dissemination of IWRM concept” and “Capacity enhancement of RBOs” since its establishment in February 2004.
 - Dissemination of IWRM concept
 - ✓ Developing the IWRM spiral model to show the process of problem-solution
 - ✓ Promoting IWRM through trainings and thematic workshops, etc
 - ✓ Developing and applying IWRM Indicator which enables its users to evaluate IWRM progress by themselves
 - Capacity enhancement of RBOs
 - ✓ Sharing best practices, experiences and knowledge through the IWRM Training, Thematic workshops and Twinning Program among NARBO members
 - ✓ Developing and applying RBO Performance Benchmarking which is for self-evaluation and institutional strengthening
2. NARBO has been fostering mutual trust among Asian water management practitioners by sharing information. NARBO is now recognized as a “Regional public goods in Asia.” Not limited in Asian Monsoon region, the presence of NARBO has been broadly enhanced in the world since we have been publicizing the information in water related international events.
3. Furthermore, the number of NARBO members has increased from 43 organizations out of 10 countries to 92 organizations out of 19 countries as of March 31, 2017.

Current situation around NARBO

4. While finding out lots of commonality in Asian water use, disaster and their management through the past 13 year NARBO activities, NARBO has further recognized the necessity of sustainable water management based on local conditions such as variety of Asian cultures, histories and existing national and local governance systems.
 - Commonality of Asia
 - ✓ Monsoon, wet and dry seasons, huge population, too much water, too little

water, too dirty water, needs on high infrastructure are the major background.

- Necessity of water management based on local conditions of Asia
 - ✓ Asia spreads over extremely widely and has variety of social, economic and environmental conditions.
 - ✓ It may not fit well to copy-paste single standard model to water management in various river basins.
 - ✓ It is required to adopt the appropriate and applicable approach in the context of local condition for materializing sustainable water management. In addition, it would be also essential to bring up domestic private business.
- 5. Strengthening of information sharing enables to find some hint to resolve a common issue. In parallel, it is essential for sustainable and optimal water management to respect and consider local culture including water use, and existing water governance in a specific area. A copy-paste-type technical import requiring drastic change of existing management system may not be acceptable and unsustainable for local stakeholders as a result. In this sense, the role of local practitioners is very important and their sincere experiences and opinions need to be incorporated proactively.
- 6. NARBO, which is a knowledge sharing network among RBOs in various Asian rivers, can collaborate with Official Development Assistance (ODA) organizations. It is expected that NARBO will be further recognized as a value-added network by continuing and developing ODA activities and also their follow-up activities.

Strategic directions for NARBO members (water management practitioners)

- 7. “Water management fitting local conditions” is always a key for sustainable and optimal water use and would be the most beneficial for riparian users even though it needs to be continuously and gradually modified or upgraded along with social and economic requirements. All the practitioners responsible for water management have an important role to make and direct a substantial decision for solving existing issues and to develop appropriate institutional systems with consensus among stakeholders.
- 8. “Developing quality infrastructure” will enhance the sustainability of facilities which also directly affect to investment efficiency. Here, the “Quality infrastructure” does not always mean expensive or state-of-art technologies. It can be defined as infrastructure with high sustainability of functions. An appropriate and applicable technology can support quality infrastructure and make possible sustainable water use. Followings are the major specific points to be focused on.
 - (1) Designing and constructing “Quality infrastructure” and its proper operation and maintenance should be a principal direction.
 - (2) Fostering domestic businesses will enable to maintain and repair water related facilities with less cost and less interruption of service. Use of domestic products, development of new local technologies and localization of foreign industries would be strategic directions.

- (3) Selection of the appropriate technology will be made with reference to the past lots of successful and unsuccessful experiences and the future strategies of national development. These information will be encouraged to share from NARBO.

9. “Sharing experiences, best practices and lessons learned” will be the most effective approach for improving existing systems. In this context, the UNESCO-NARBO-IWRM Guidelines is one of the good references to clarify the step-wise improvement which is described as the spiral model concept. As in the past, NARBO will continue to promote knowledge sharing for improving water security in Asia in collaboration with NARBO members and other international water-related networks, keeping its focus on water utilization, sustainable management of water related facilities, environment conservation, and stakeholder involvement. Furthermore, NARBO will seek for the understanding and cooperation from all the related organizations to promote policies such as the “Mainstreaming of risk reduction”, “Sound water cycle” and approach on “Water, food and energy nexus”.