

Report on India's National Action Plan on Climate Change THERE IS LITTLE HOPE HERE**The plan will help neither the poor, nor the climate
NAPCC lacks urgency, democracy and perspective**

The South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People has just published a critique of the India's National Action Plan on Climate change (NAPCC), titled: "There is little Hope here". India is more vulnerable to the climate change impacts than the US, the Europe or even China. And the poor within India, whose contribution to the climate change is the least, are the most vulnerable, considering their dependence on natural resources. The report, which includes recommendations of several civil society consultations, concludes that the NAPCC has been formulated through a most non transparent process; it will help neither the poor, nor the climate. The climate change provides a unique opportunity to make India's development path people and environment friendly, but the NAPCC completely misses that opportunity.

There is little doubt that the responsibility of having created this specter that threatens our very survival, lies with the policies and practices of the counties of the Global North. It is also true that the western world, the UN and all the various multilateral agencies, including the UNFCCC have not managed to come up with anything more than feeble, cosmetic efforts towards addressing this challenge. Given these circumstances, the western world has forfeited the right to lecture on this issue.

It is the cruel irony that those who are the most immediately, most directly affected have been completely left out of the process, planning and indeed the vision of the NAPCC and the missions like the National Water Mission of NAPCC. Nor has the government consulted the people while formulating the plan or the mission documents. Rather than challenge the destructive model of development that has already jeopardized the livelihood of millions & continues to do so & which has also contributed to the climate change, the NAPCC endorses it & says that sustaining the GDP growth on the same old path is top priority.

The Prime Minister of India released the NAPCC on June 30, 2008, see <http://pmindia.nic.in/Pg01-52.pdf>. The National Plan is likely to work only to the advantage of the already privileged elite, with all the adverse impacts going to the share of already disadvantaged. This is particularly evident from the way the so called Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects have progressed so far here. The central and state governments see CDM benefits as free gifts and are not bothered to ascertain if these projects are indeed helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions, are sustainable, do not have significant social and environmental footprints or the local communities are benefiting from the credits or even participant in the project planning and decision making. The Executive Board of the United Nations Frame Convention on Climate Change has neither the mechanism nor the will to ensure that any of these are happening. The CDM and the failed carbon market, unfortunately, continue to remain the cornerstone of world efforts to tackle climate change.

In Water Sector, the plan attempts to push for more big dams, irrigation projects, hydropower projects, interlinking of rivers and such other long distance water transfer projects. This is in spite of the increasing evidence of non performance of such projects. On the other hand, there are many examples where the community driven processes have shown that through local water systems, it is possible to achieve equitable, sustainable and pro poor development, but such systems have no worthwhile place in the plan. This is particularly true for Agriculture sector, where India's lifeline is groundwater, and which can only be sustained through local water systems. Here the emphasis on GM crops is completely misplaced and unjustified, in stead, what is required is sincere efforts to push organic farming and promoting water and resource efficient and also high yielding methods like the System of Rice Intensification. In Energy sector, while the emphasis on energy efficiency is welcome, the continued and increased reliance on mega thermal power plants, big hydropower and nuclear projects cannot be termed environment friendly or climate friendly. Particularly when there is so little emphasis on peak-hour-power demand management.

The document provides detailed recommendations from Civil Society groups. The central message of the analysis of the process and content of NAPCC is reflected in the title: *There is Little Hope here*. NAPCC lacks proper perspective, urgency and sincerity in taking note of contributions of various sectors and classes in India's current and future emissions. The plan is not based on any democratic process of assessing least cost options before the society. While there are some positive suggestions in the plan, they are not sufficient in inspiring confidence since we have yet to see effective action or action plans to ensure their implementation. Unless a bottom up, participatory process for formulation of a fresh climate action plan is urgently taken up, it seems we are going to miss an opportunity to push for a people friendly and environment friendly development path.