

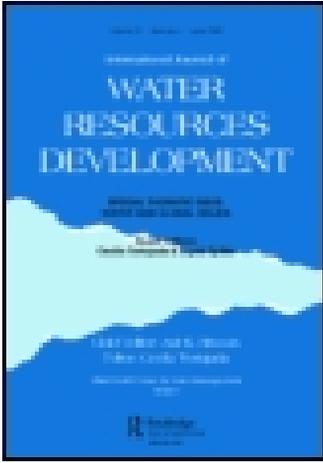
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Editorial

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Editorial

The year 1995 saw the fifth anniversary of the annual Stockholm Water Symposium. The symposium has continued to evolve during the past five years, and it is indeed remarkable that it has continued to improve each year: every year it has been better than the year before. The fact that the fifth symposium was attended by some 530 participants from 61 countries clearly indicates that this gathering has now become an important annual event in the calendar of water professionals from all parts of the world.

One of the innovations that was successfully introduced some three years ago was the convening of a series of highly focused workshops within the overall framework of the symposium. This has ensured that a critical mass of papers on a timely and complex subject could be presented and discussed during a specific workshop. The general practice has been to invite one or two key papers on the workshop subject from international experts, and then select the rest from abstracts received from a call for papers for the symposium. One of the main workshops for the 1995 symposium was on 'Sharing of Water Resources: Upstream/Downstream Dimensions'.

The papers published in this Special Issue were presented and discussed at the above workshop and the symposium. Professor John Kolars was specially invited to outline the results of the Middle East Water Commission, which is supported by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation; and Professor Jayanta Bandyopadhyay was requested to discuss the complex issue of water sharing in the Ganges-Brahmaputra basin of the Indian subcontinent. Also included in this Special Issue is the Plenary Lecture of Professor Franklin Fisher. The rest of the papers were selected jointly by Professor Malin Falkenmark (Chairman, Scientific Committee, Stockholm Water Symposium) and Professor Asit K. Biswas (Member of the Scientific Committee and Chairman of the Workshop) from the 27 abstracts received for the workshop from different parts of the world. Lars Lindblom (Stockholm Vatten) and Cecilia Tortajada Quiroz (National Water Commission of Mexico) served as Rapporteurs for the Workshop.

The papers presented and the ensuing discussions clearly indicated the problem of upstream/downstream conflicts in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. A common thread connecting all the papers was that there is already a paucity of water to satisfy all the uses in the arid and semi-arid regions considered by the authors. Furthermore, increasing population and higher standards of living will only worsen the situation in the future, unless some fundamental policy changes can be made. The scarcity of water and inefficient management practices have also often contributed to water quality deterioration. Thus, significant water management changes are needed urgently.

The upstream/downstream conflicts were pronounced in all the cases discussed. The issues were international when the rivers flowed through two or more countries, and interstate when they passed through two or more states of the same country. On the basis of presentations made, the upstream/down-

stream issues were equally complex, irrespective of whether the rivers were international or interstate.

The root of the English word *rival* is from the latin term *rivalis*, which originally meant using the same stream, or *rivus*. When there was enough water in a stream, there was no upstream/downstream conflict. As water scarcity started to develop, competition developed between the various users of the stream, and they became *rivals*!

Management of international and interstate waters has not received the attention it deserves in recent decades, both nationally and internationally. International organizations have for the most part tended to shy away from the resolution of specific problems of international waters because they are viewed as politically sensitive issues. To the extent they have become involved in such activities, the emphasis has been on 'non-threatening' issues such as data collection, exchange of information, sending of expert missions and convening of seminars and conferences. The discussions of the Ganges–Brahmaputra conflict during the workshop indicated that even data collection can no longer be considered as a 'non-threatening' issue! The workshop bemoaned the absence of the leadership shown in the 1950s by the President of the World Bank, Eugene Black, to resolve the dispute between India and Pakistan over the Indus River. Such enlightened and dynamic leadership is in stark contrast with the current 'softly, softly' approach of the international organizations.

The interstate rivers have generally been ignored for the most part because of the national sovereignty issue.

The discussions during the workshop and the symposium itself raised the issue of serious water scarcity to be faced by numerous countries during the early part of the 21st century. This overall question was also discussed by the present Stockholm Water Symposium as well as the earlier ones. Although the water professionals have come to the consensus conclusion that water scarcity is already a serious issue in many parts of the world, and will become more serious and cover an even wider area in the near future, there appears to be a certain 'deafness' among policy makers preventing them 'hearing' this critical message. Unless this problem of 'water deafness' can be resolved successfully in the near future, solutions cannot be found and implemented in time to alleviate the sufferings of millions of people, especially in developing countries. Since implementation of solutions will take time, money and efforts, these cannot be expected to occur overnight. Thus, globally, water professionals have a challenging task ahead: how to put water in the international agenda on a priority basis.

We hope the papers in this Special Issue will contribute to the global water scarcity discussion and will make people aware of the seriousness of the situation. Only by convincing the decision makers of the seriousness of the impending water crisis can we solve the 'water deafness' problem.

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