A STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO WATER CRISES: EXAMINING THE APPLICATION OF INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN

NAJIBULLAH YAMIN

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NAJIBULLAH YAMIN 5037977 ENRM/M

M. Sc. (NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT)

THESIS ADVISORS: LECT. KANCHANA NAKHAPAKORN, D. TECH. SC.
ASSOC. PROF. KAMPANAD BHAKTIKUL, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The two types of water resource related crises in Afghanistan are natural resource crises and human-made crises. While natural crises include all instabilities related to water resources such as floods, droughts and water shortages, human-made crises has centered on managerial issues such as differences in individual organisational visions and acting policies. Almost three decades of warfare and the existence of seven ministries/organisations direct and indirect related to water resource management (with very little coordination among them) have led the country to a crisis in water resource management. Based on the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Integrated Water and Resources Management (IWRM) concept and its principles originated to cope with water resource natural and human-made crises.

Qualitative research employing in-depth interviews with policy and decision makers were conducted in addition to an intensive review of secondary data in the Afghanistan's Ministry of Energy and Water. The two objectives of the study were: first, to examine the applicability of IWRM; and, second, to determine the significance of IWRM principles in sustaining water resource management in Afghanistan.

The results of this study indicated that the IWRM concept is applicable as its principles can be utilized to offer an efficient and strategic response to water resources managerial crises in Afghanistan. An IWRM principle of water pricing already exists in Afghanistan and other legal and institutional frameworks are being developed. For proper implementation of the IWRM concept in Afghanistan, it is absolutely necessary to promote social awareness and participation, raise professionals and institutional capacities, improve efficient coordination among organizations and in transboundary level and consider environmental protection.

For further study a question is addressed: how can a mechanism for the proper implementation of IWRM in the context of Afghanistan be developed, considering especially the country's transboundary issues and the people practical participation. It is recommended that Afghanistan in particular, can be developed as a practical model for the IWRM concept by initiating IWRM principles on the ground.

KEY WORDS: WATER CRISES/ LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS IWRM CONCEPT AND PRINCIPLES/ TRANSBOUNDARY ISSUES

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