

## **Draft Press Release**

### **Official Launch of the State of the Basin Report and the Water Resources Development Strategy for the Kamala River Basin, Nepal**

#### **“First example of participatory water resources planning in Nepal”**

The Government of Nepal has been working in partnership with the Government of Australia since 2014 on strengthening national capabilities in sustainable water resources development and management.

For more than 5 years this collaboration has focused on the Kamala River Basin in south-east Nepal.

Like almost all important river basins, in Nepal and elsewhere, the natural boundaries of the Kamala Basin cross many administrative, jurisdictional and other human-made boundaries. For this reason, managing water resources is inevitably a complex, trans-boundary matter.

Highly participatory approaches which engage all stakeholders and build consensus are a recommended way to address this complexity. Such approaches were applied in formulating the Water Resources Development Strategy for the Kamala River Basin, and will assist the next steps of decision-making and implementation of actions aiming Basin improvements.

Existing and new information and data for the Kamala Basin was collected, collated, verified, synthesised and assembled into a State of the Basin Report. This provided a ready reference document for all stakeholders with interests in the future use and management of the water resources.

With this shared knowledge, the stakeholders from all 3 levels of government, water users, NGOs and other community representatives defined the priorities for water-related challenges in the Kamala Basin, to improve the wellbeing of the population and the environment.

Through a series of participatory activities held in key locations in the basin, and with central government agencies in Kathmandu, these priorities were set into a widely agreed framework of goals, sub-goals and strategic actions necessary to achieve the goals.

The final three goals were focused on:

- 1- Sustainable management of the Chure, including reduced vulnerability to water-induced disasters
- 2- Improved availability, use and allocation of basin water resources
- 3- Growth of commercial and scientific agriculture.

All the goals are aimed at reducing risks and providing sustainable improvements to livelihood security and economic prosperity for the population in the region.

The agreed framework was the basis for further analysis, to define the details of the steps along the development pathways to realise the goals.

A numerical model was constructed to quantify the network of surface water flows through the basin, including the largest uses for irrigation. This was also used to quantify and enable investigation of nominated options for water supply and future improvements, including their impacts, approximate costs and benefits.

A novel methodology, using multi-factor analysis, was applied to examine the details of strategic actions required to implement the defined development pathways. The analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the issues to be addressed, defining responsibilities for key actions, known and possible barriers to progress and recommended solutions.

Throughout the consultations and analysis, common themes emerged among the recommended strategic actions to achieve all three goals. These recurring themes were identified as essential elements of the development pathway; they are: specific reforms of formal institutions; increased collaboration across boundaries; enhanced policy processes; and supportive organisational structures. Implementation of these essential actions could be initiated immediately, in advance of any other proposed activities for the basin.

The Strategy contains many detailed recommendations for proceeding with the next steps in development of the water resources of the Kamala Basin. They include both infrastructure works and capability strengthening components, with suggested combinations, order and timing of implementation, together requiring significant engagements with and commitments by key stakeholders.

To facilitate the decision-making and appreciation of preferred development pathways, the likely next step is to refine the options and actions described in the Strategy into a Basin Plan.

Based on the experience gained in compiling the Strategy, a strong recommendation is to apply the same or similar tools and methods to the continuation of the decision-making and implementation processes for the Kamala Basin. This methodology may also be effectively applied in other basins in Nepal.

The leading organisations are the Water and Energy Commission Secretariat (WECS), and the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) Australia, on behalf of the Governments of Nepal and Australia respectively.

National consultants JVS and PEI, and a very wide range of national, provincial and local government agencies, as well as non-government organisations and community groups, all contributed significantly to the development of the Strategy.

### **Launch Ceremony**

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August 2021** 11:00 am to 12:00 noon at Hotel Yak and Yeti (venue to be confirmed) for strictly limited participants, and others participating remotely.

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