

## **Workshop on Environmental Justice, Ecological Economics and Water Infrastructure in Northeast India: Hydropower and Waterways**

**2-4 March, 2019| Indian Institute of Banking Management, Guwahati**

Forum for Policy Dialogue on Water Conflicts in India (Water Conflict Forum) is organising a two and half day workshop on Environmental Justice (EJ) in Guwahati. The overall objective of this workshop is to build capacities of a group of academics and activists from the Northeast region of India to engage with the water and environmental related issues in the region. Research and teaching on environmental justice (EJ) is beginning in India (see EJ Atlas, and the Special Section of Ecology, Economy and Society, the INSEE journal Vol 2 (1) Jan 2019 (Open access <http://www.ecoinsee.org/journal/>), and ecological economics has been around for over 2 decades in India as an important branch of heterodox economics, that studies the relationships between ecology, economy and society.

For us to understand, anticipate and engage with EJ issues on the ground, we need capacities among various stakeholders (the state, communities, organized and unorganized workers, academics, responsible industry, farmers, and consumers) to frame our questions about nature, justice and time, and to find our answers. Building these capacities is the first objective of this workshop. The other related objective is to provide a platform for researchers and activists for regular interaction on environmental and water issues in the region and explore the possibility of developing a good network around EJ in the region. The idea is not to make it a one-off event but more of a continuing exercise which would offer a platform for the communities, activists and academics to come together periodically and reflect on the water and environmental issues in Northeast India.

The workshop would provide a good conceptual understanding of environmental justice and ecological economics (in terms of frameworks, basic concepts, tools of analysis, and knowledge politics) as an overarching framework to look at water and other environmental issues in the Northeast region. It would also take up two water infrastructure programmes in the Northeast – Hydropower and Water Ways (as part of the National Water Ways programme) – for a detailed engagement. Hydropower related issues are pretty well discussed in the region. Water Ways is a relatively new issue coming up in the region. The Government of India is going ahead aggressively with its National Waterways Project. The national waterways is a massive multi-nodal transportation system with massive dredging of rivers for huge vessels to pass through and building huge infrastructures on and near rivers. About 20 of the 111 declared National Waterways are from the North-Eastern region. NW-2 (Brahmaputra) from Dhubri to Sadiya is 891 km long, and is operational for transport. Barak waterway is targeted to be made operational in the next two years. It will have huge social and economic costs and play havoc with the riverine ecosystems. Manthan, an NGO involved in research and policy work related to water and energy issues, has been working on national waterways for the last couple of years including the water ways in the northeast and they would lead this component of the workshop.

Organisers: Deepa Joshi, Vimal Khawas, Anamika Barua, Bert Bruins, Rajeswari Raina, Shripad Dharmadhikary, Partha Das and K. J. Joy