

January 22 2013

To,
Chairperson and members,
Expert Appraisal Committee on River Valley and Hydroelectric Projects
MoEF, New Delhi

Subject: Submission against granting TORs to Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme in Maharashtra

Respected Chairperson and members,

We had sent you a submission on 19.12.12 about granting EC and TOR to Lower Tapi Lift irrigation Scheme and Shirapur Lift Irrigation schemes respectively by Water Resources Department (WRD), Government of Maharashtra. We see that Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme will be considered for TOR Clearance in the upcoming 64th EAC meeting on 1-2 Feb 2013. (Shirapur Lift irrigation Scheme Project in Solapur District of Maharashtra by M/s. Water resources Department, Government of Maharashtra –for Reconsideration of TOR).

We would like to point out that the said scheme is entirely unworthy of being considered by the EAC even at TOR stage as it is hydrologically, economically and ecologically entirely unviable. Some of the reasons for this conclusion are stated below:

1. Water from Ujani Dam has been already over allocated, no water available for Shirapur Lift Irrigation Scheme:

A brief look at the prevailing water allocations from Ujani project makes it clear that the available water has already been over-allocated for several schemes, many of which are not functioning. This is the case when, canal work of Ujani is still to be completed according to White Paper on Irrigation projects brought out by Maharashtra WRD in December 2012. Ujani project lies in drought prone area of Maharashtra and has been filled to its capacity only once in the last five years.

Live Storage of the project is 1517 MCM. Currently, this is supplying (All figures from White Paper on Irrigation Projects, Maharashtra WRD, 2012):

- a. **Sugarcane:** the White Paper claims that 92000 hectares of Sugarcane depends of Ujani Water This itself requires about **1840 MCM of water, exceeding the Live Storage of the dam. (The actual area maybe higher)**
- b. **Irrigation:** Additionally, it says **100309 hectares** of crops besides sugarcane are irrigated.
- c. **Drinking Water:** Ujani provides drinking water to 426 villages and 35 lakh population: Even with a very low standard of 70 lpcd, this comes to **89.4 MCM water.**
- d. **Industries:** There are 13 Industrial, 1320 MW National Thermal Power Plant at Solapur depending on Ujani, which itself needs **35 MCM water annually.**
- e. **Additional Irrigation:** In addition, even as main canals envisaged by the project are yet to be completed, work on increasing length of present canals is going on:
 - a. Right bank 112 kms to 132 kms to irrigate 11704 ha additional land.
 - b. Branch of left bank canal increased from 38 to 65 kms to irrigate south & North Solapur. Left bank expansion supposed to irrigate 41283 ha in North & South Solapur & Akkalkot)

It appears as if Ujani has never ending supply of water and is able to supply water to as many Lift Irrigation schemes, inter basin transfers, tunnels, canal expansions as the Maharashtra Water Resource Department and other vested interests wish.

Table: Details of on-going Lift Irrigation Schemes depending on Ujani Water **Source:** White paper on Irrigation Projects, Maharashtra Water Resources Department, 2012)

Sr. no.	Name of the LIS	MCM Water to be Lifted from Ujani	Irrigation Potential	Env Clearance granted?	Current Status of work	Amount Rs spent till March 2012
1.	Shirapur LIS 446 ha land will be required	48.9 MCM through Bhima Seena link canal	14200 ha	No 92.99 ha in Great busatd sanctuary affected	Pump house 60%, Distribution pool: 100%, Pipeline: 95%. Pumphouse II: civil works 95%, Instrumentation: 50% complete, pipeline 95 %, Link canal 100% complete n 1-11	131 Crores
2.	Ashti LIS, Dist Solapur Work started in 1997.	43.8 MCM from Ujani & Ashti Medium Irrigation Project	12780 ha	NO	50% work complete. Slow progress due no funds.	50 Crores
3.	Sangola LIS: From Ujani right bank canal to Neera right bank canal		10701 ha	NO		
4.	Barshi LIS: Dist Solapur Land affected: 482 hectares.	70.46 MCM from Ujani to Seena river: Bheema-Seena Link Canal	21300 ha	NO	50% work completed. Distribution network work not completed due to paucity of funds 90% work on main canal completed.	189.12 Crores
5.	Ekrukha LIS Dist Solapur (with Bori medium Irrigation project) Land required: 688 ha	86.03 MCM from Ujani to Bori Medium Irrigation project : private LIS distributed further	29905 ha	Approved	Bori medium project completed in 2005 Pumphouse: 75% Pipeline: 70% Pump house II: 80%	155 Crores
6.	Shirala LIS Dist Osmanabad	6.5 MCM From Ujani to Bheema Seena Link Canal	4047 ha	NO	—	50.44 Crores
7.	Bhima Seena link canal Interbrain link. 20.255 km long tunnel from Ujani to Seena river	89.14 MCM	32660 ha	NO	Operating since 2002. Irrigating 11050 ha. sugarcane	96.68 Crores
8.	Dahigaon LIS Dist Solapur Land required: 223 ha	51.22 MCM	13335 ha	NO	Pump house 80% pipeline: 70% Distribution pool: 90% Canal network: 80%	79.62 Crores
9.	Seena Madha LIS Dist Solapur	133.85 MCM	24550 Ha. 2470 hectares irrigated.	NO	Pumphouse, Pipeline, Distribution Pool completed Main canal 22 kms complete. Left bank canal 13 complete. Distribution network 42%	231 Crores
TOTAL		529.9 MCM				982.44 Crores

However, the sombre reality is that reservoir currently has **ZERO Live Storage as on 14th January 2013** (<http://www.mahawrd.org/>). The drought prone areas, cities and villages are suffering very badly due to water cuts, some which go on for 28 days at a stretch¹. The dam has been filled to its capacity only once in the past 5 years. Several major, medium, minor projects and lift irrigation schemes have come up in the upstream areas. Demands from cities like Pune and Pimpri Chichwad have increased exponentially, intercepting water flowing into Ujani Dam, whose storage has been reducing.

In this scenario, even considering an additional Lift Irrigation Scheme on Ujani will be a complete waste of resources, as the above situation will only worsen in the coming years. We request the EAC to reject this project at TOR stage and to demand clear picture of overall water allocation from Ujani Project and the justification behind proposing any new schemes in this region.

2. More than 10 Lift Irrigation Schemes proposed on Ujani Project; demanding additional 529.9 MCM water: There is no Water for Shirapur LIS

Even in this highly over allocated scenario, the Maharashtra Water Resources Department (WRD) is currently working on as many as TEN Lift Irrigation schemes on Ujani and even transferring water from this scarce basin to Marathwada region through Bhima-Seena Link Canal, see the table on previous page! These include:

Ashti, Shirapur, Ekrukh, Barshi, Seena-Madha, Dahigain, Sangola, Lakdi, Bheema-Seena Link Canal and Shirala to irrigate 1 155 524 ha or 11.56 lakh ha!

To top this, Maharashtra WRD also claims that additional Lift Irrigation from Ujani (besides all these proposed projects) has potential to bring 26386 ha further additional area under irrigation! The double accounting and bloated water availability figures being used for multiple non-functional schemes depending on this single dam are simply mind boggling.

Water from existing LISs as well as Ujani is mostly going to sugarcane, entirely unfit in this drought prone area. However, these are being pushed at the behest of politicians and big wigs, who have shareholdings in the sugar factories.² Even when it was clear that this will be one of the worst droughts, cropping pattern was not changed surrounding Ujani dam. This shows the power of the politically supported sugar lobby in Maharashtra. Encouraging this by more non-functional Lift Irrigation schemes, while being blind to the field reality will be disastrous.

3. Lift Irrigation has been a resounding failure in Maharashtra:

Shri. Vijay Pandhare, serving Chief Engineer (Design, Training, Research and Quality Control), Maharashtra Engineering Training Academy (META), Nashik has said in his letter to the Secretary Water Resources Department on 5th May 2012:

“The 20-30 thousand Crore Rupees spent on Lift Irrigation Schemes (LIS) in Maharashtra so far is an absolute waste. LIS have proved their failure in Maharashtra time and again, and in spite of that, authorities and political leaders push for these schemes only to get huge percentages and cuts from tenders. Many uneconomic, gigantic and absolutely

¹ <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/pvkfJrd1C2WRX2P1RELePj/Maharashtra-faces-drought-as-opposition-alleges-mismanagemen.html>

² <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/ministers-divert-water-meant-for-parched-regions-to-their-constituencies/1/204107.html>

useless LIS have been undertaken in Maharashtra. Administrators eat people's money, without the community getting any benefit out of these schemes. All of this investment will be going to waste; and I'm pointing this out as a whistle blower. Of the 1000s of LIS in Maharashtra, 99% are now closed and unused. This is our history of Lift irrigation. Who is responsible for this loss of public money? B/C ration for LIS is a jugglery and is used only to make unfeasible projects feasible.

When the LIS scenario is so bad, why are we still hankering after more such projects? Is this being done only for pocketing percentages? Aren't we all, involved in tendering and sanctioning LIS, nothing but criminals? We do not have electricity, the rate is not affordable, water tariffs for LIS is too high and not affordable to farmers, maintenance is not easy and designs are faulty and incorrect. Even then we are sanctioning more and more such schemes. Where are we going to pay for our sins? **Responsible leadership and officers with integrity should stop sanctioning and undertaking such schemes.** (Emphasis added)

When the EAC has these facts at its disposal which come from a serving Chief Engineer and which can be verified on ground, granting TOR to one more such scheme will be a fallacy.

4. Incomplete, Misleading Information and faults in Form I, Form IA and PFR uploaded on MoEF Website:

- PFR of the project is not available. Link to PFR opens into an a one page Annexure, not into Pre Feasibility Report.
- To the question: "Areas important or sensitive for ecological reasons like Wetlands (Aerial distance of 15 kms from proposed project location boundary), Form 1 says: NO This is entirely incorrect. Ujani Dam itself is a proposed Ramsar site. State Wildlife Board is considering proposing Ujani Dam as a Ramsar site in its upcoming meeting on the 24th January 2013.
- To the question: protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over wintering, migration, within 15 kms Aerial distance, the answer is **NO. This is entirely misleading due to above reason. Ujani provides wintering habitat to thousands of Flamingos and other water birds, including endangered species.**

5. Affecting Great Bustard Sanctuary

As per the Forest Department, the project is affecting **92 ha** of Great Bustard Sanctuary in Solapur. The Great Indian Bustard is a critically endangered species³ with a very small population. Pushing this vulnerable species further for a scheme which is being proposed only for financial and political benefits, will be a tragedy.

6. SIT investigating Maharashtra Dam Scam

A Special Investigation Team is investigating Maharashtra Dam Scam, the reasons for cost and time over runs and low efficiency of projects. Till the time SIT comes up with its report, it will be inappropriate to grant TORs to any such controversial Lift Irrigation Schemes.

³ <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=2767>

Shockingly, of the nine Lift Irrigation Schemes stated in Table I, only 1 LIS has received EC recommendation from the EAC.

All the other 8 have spent hundreds of crores of rupees on works which are ongoing, without Environmental Clearance. This is blatantly illegal work and shocking state of affairs. We urge the EAC to recommend penal action against those responsible for taking up this work without the mandatory statutory clearance and urge MoEF to urgently take action against such illegal work without EC and applying for clearances when the work is already long way done.

This is true for Shirapur LIS now being considered, but also for many others as listed in Table above. The information that work has already been done and large amounts of money have been spent comes from a Maharashtra Govt document, available on Maharashtra Irrigation Dept website.

If the EAC and MoEF does not take note and steps warranted therefrom, what will be the sanctity of statutory clearances?

We hope that EAC will see merit in the suggestions made here. The problems in the Maharashtra Water Resources Department are of very serious nature. We hope EAC will not turn a blind eye towards above mentioned violations and take proactive steps.

We also hope that this submission is discussed in the EAC and reasons for acceptance/ rejection of points made are stated in the minutes.

We are willing to provide any additional information regarding this to the EAC.

Looking forward to your point wise response,

Thanking You,

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Suhas Kolhekar, Maharashtra Convener, National Alliance for People's Movements (NAPM)

Samir Mehta, River Basin Friends, Mumbai

Parineeeta Dandekar, SANDRP, Pune