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Designation :

Title : *Assessment of Institutional Arrangements for Water Resources Management in Sri Lanka*

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#### Background:

Sri Lanka is a country which is blessed with abundant water resources. In the era of kings and queens, water resources were basically used for agricultural and human consumptions. Early Kings and Kings' courts made the rules and regulations to manage and develop water resources in Sri Lanka based on customs, norms and religious mores. However with colonial invasion to Sri Lanka, rules and regulations were gradually changed into written legislations. The Irrigation Ordinance (No: 32) was the first enactment developed in 1856 by the British colonial administration to both legalize traditional irrigation practices and to prescribe the condition for water extraction, especially for paddy cultivation. Since then, a number of legislations have been inducted into the sphere of water resources development and management in Sri Lanka.

However, demand for water changes with time and, thus, spatial and temporal variation of existing water resources has given rise to the water scarcity situation in Sri Lanka. Ongoing population increase, urbanization, industrialization and water pollution aggravate the condition of water scarcity in Sri Lanka. Though there are a number of legislations, this has no impact on the water resources in Sri Lanka that are degrading at alarming levels.

#### Objective:

This study is focused on assessing institutional arrangements in water resources development and management in Sri Lanka. The study consists of 4 objectives:

- a) Review existing regulations with regard to water resources development and management in Sri Lanka and the institutions which are responsible in implementing the regulations.
- b) Identify the areas which are important in water resources conservation, development and management, but not been addressed yet in the existing regulations.
- c) To evaluate the factors leading to the effectiveness of the existing institutions in addressing their mandates in water resources development and management
- d) To propose an institutional framework in developing and managing water resources in Sri Lanka.

#### Research Methodology:

The legislations related to water resources sector in Sri Lanka were analyzed to identify relevant institutions, responsible person, rules and regulations related to each and every water resources activity in Sri Lanka. The gaps and overlaps of the responsibility were analyzed in the same time using questionnaire surveys and formal interviews. The effectiveness of existing institutions in addressing their mandates in water resources development and management in Sri Lanka was studied by selecting a specific problem. "River reservation encroachment" was selected as a specific problem to discuss factors leading to the failure of preventing encroachment irrespective of the availability of number of regulations and institutions. The field study and group work strived to find the effectiveness of the relevant institutions attempting to mitigate river reservation encroachment in a study sample, and understand why people encroach on the river reservations. The coordination mechanism for the water sector were identified using formal interviews with responsible persons in the institutions.

#### Research findings:

Results show that there are more than 50 legislations related to water resources development and management in Sri Lanka and a number of the legislations is subjective to researchers. There are 20 major institutions related to water resources development and management in Sri Lanka, 16 of which were established from their relevant legislations. Four other institutions were established prior to their relevant legislations. Most of the institutions act individually and some of the institutions born from enlargement of past institutions and merging of several sister agencies. However there is a lot of overlapping in the responsibilities in the water resources development and management sector in Sri Lanka. A lack of coordination among the institutions and public has led to poor performances of the institutions. Even field study and group work carried in this study proved that less enthusiasm of the responsible institutional persons, the lack of a coordination mechanism among institutions and public, personal interest of encroachers and less interruption from the institutions made the poor performances in mitigating river reservation encroachment in the study area. Water management panel (irrigation and hydropower sectors), Central Coordination Committee for Irrigation Management (CCCIM) and National Water supply and Sanitation Steering Committee (NWSSSC) were identified as the coordination mechanisms existing in the water resources sector in Sri Lanka.

#### Suggestions:

Three possible options have been proposed which include,

- a) Improvement to the existing institutional arrangements,
- b) Create new institutions through new water resources policy, and
- c) Make interventions for changes through individual projects.