

# ADB's coastal development project document rejected

*By Mumtaz Uqaili*

THATTA: Speakers at a workshop have unanimously rejected the Asian Development Bank's Sindh coastal and inland community development project document and decided to launch a joint struggle for incorporating "the real problems of the coastal communities" in the project.

The workshop entitled "Consultative Workshop on Sindh Coastal and Inland Projects," was jointly organised by the Participatory Development Initiatives (PDI) and Kinjhar Fishermen Welfare Society at Sonehri House Thatta on Monday.

Several community organisations, civil society activists, researchers and experts participated in the workshop. The participants said the ADB report envisaged execution of the project through official media and bureaucrats instead of the local community participation.

The participants expressed their concern on the fact that the ADB document completely ignored the key issues of coastal Sindh, especially the issues of continuing degradation of fertile land, growing seawater intrusion, destruction of fisheries and salinity of the delta-land due to lack of water in the Indus from Kotri downstream.

They said the document has not addressed the key issue of water rights of lower riparian, especially of coastal districts of Thatta and Badin. The participants were of the view that the Wapda, the World Bank and the ADB are equally responsible for the deteriorating conditions of delta-land resulting from lack of downstream Kotri water and faulty design of the tidal link of left bank outfall drain (LBOD).

They alleged that the project document was prepared without proper community participation and representatives of the local community were not invited to the final workshop held in Karachi on Feb 18.

They demanded of the ADB to prepare a new document with meaningful participation of coastal communities and their representatives, giving real importance to the genuine problems of the coastal areas.

The workshop also formed a "Save Indus Delta Committee" to initiate the struggle to save the coastal areas of Sindh and encourage the participation of local community in all projects to be initiated by the government and also by foreign donor agencies

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# Hundreds rally against WB, ADB projects in Thatta, Badin

*By Dr Mumtaz Uqaili*

THATTA: Hundreds of Indus Delta communities staged a protest rally against the mega projects of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, including the forthcoming coastal projects of both the banks on the eve of International Day of Action against Dams and for the Rivers, at Ahmed Mian on the bank of the Indus river in Gorabari Taluka on Tuesday.

The rally was organised on a call of the Save Indus Delta Network (SIDN), a conglomerate of more than 50 civil society organisations of the Indus Delta, with the support of the Actionaid Pakistan.

The participants were carrying banners and placards inscribed with different slogans like, "Mega Project — Mega Destruction", "Delta Needs Water not Consultants", "Stop Degradation of Indus Delta", "Release Water Downstream Kotri Barrage", etc.

The rally was addressed by activists of a number of civil society organisations, including Adam Gandaro of Fishermen Welfare Society, Sikander Brohi of PDI, Ahmed Ajeeb of Mehran Welfare Association, Hina Shahid of Actionaid, and Abdullah Sabro of Kainat Welfare Organisation, Muhammad Haneef Talpur, Comrade Gul Muhammad Khushik, Nazeer Jakharo, Nargis Bano and Nazli.

They said the mega projects, especially in the water sector, including dams and barrages, have had the worst-ever negative impact on the coastal communities and their livelihoods. They said as a result of the construction of dams the coastal region which was rich in biodiversity and livelihood resources with more than 12 sea ports engaged in trade with the regional countries, has now reached the brink of disaster as more than 2.2 million acres of arable land of the region has been lost to sea intrusion and thousands of villages and hundreds of towns have completely been wiped out resulting in the mass migration of the communities.

The leaders said that despite this the coastal region and its communities have never been considered as victims of the mega projects and no rehabilitation programme has yet been initiated for them. They said that in the face of such continuing degradation construction of three more dams as announced by the president would completely wipe out the coastal region and its communities.

They added that mega projects in the water sector would be possible only on the dead bodies of millions of people of the coastal communities.

They said after degrading thousands of acres of land and affecting hundreds of villages through their faulty Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) project, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank are initiating two new mega projects in the coastal region. They alleged that the documents of these mega projects are being prepared secretly without consulting the coastal community.

They alleged that the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have completely neglected the key issues of coastal Sindh, especially the issues of continuing degradation

of the fertile land, growing seawater intrusion and drastic reduction in fisheries livelihoods as a result of reduction in Indus flows downstream Kotri Barrage and have suggested no remedial or policy measures for properly addressing these issues.

They further alleged that the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are equally responsible for deaths and disaster that occurred in Badin and Thatta districts as a result of wrong design of the Tidal Link of LBOD. They should announce compensation for the deaths in more than 300 communities, displacement of more than 5,000 people and degradation of thousands of acres of land, the speakers said. It was the moral and legal responsibility of the ADB to address the negative impacts of the LBOD and suggest measures for the rehabilitation of the affected communities and their resources in this coastal project.

However, the documents of the coming projects of both the banks have not addressed the LBOD Tidal Link issue and have not suggested any rehabilitation programme for the victims of the LBOD Project in Badin and Thatta.

They alleged that the new projects of the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank mainly emphasise on the so-called institutional reforms in the Coastal Development Authority, Sindh Fisheries Department and other departments while ignoring the basic community needs.

On the occasion several people observed hunger strike. The hunger strikers alleged that the so-called institutional reforms have been suggested only to spend project loan amounts on the foreign and local so-called consultants and big vehicles, etc. They said the past experiences of the so-called institutional reforms at the behest of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank miserably failed in Pakistan further deteriorating the condition of the institutions.

They demanded that Indus Delta communities be considered as the real victims of the mega projects, especially such projects in the water sector, including dams and no mega dams of any kind be constructed on the Indus river and a comprehensive rehabilitation package should be prepared for the coastal communities affected by the mega projects, including dams and LBOD Project.

They also demanded that the project documents of the Asian Development Bank Project "Coastal and Inland Community Development Project" and World Bank Project "Supporting Vulnerable Communities in Thatta and Badin" be cancelled and new project documents be prepared with active consultation and participation of the coastal communities.

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