

Comments on the EIA of Ghogra Upper Irrigation Project

Ghogra Upper Irrigation Project is in the agenda of 69th EAC meeting for the Nov 11-12, 2013. This is a small project and normally won't have been A category project, except it being less than 10 km from a protected area. A quick look at its 156 page EIA, however, raises some issues which are discussed below.

1. Most important issue is that at least three poor Schedule Caste persons have submitted compliant, as attached with the PH that their land has already been used for the project and they have not even been given compensation. If nothing else, EAC should take the project authorities to task for this and ensure that these poor persons are immediately paid compensation with interest and a certificate from them, vetted by the local gram sabha and independent credible agency is obtained before the project is granted EC. This is absolute bare minimum the EAC can do and is also relevant since this issue has come through the public hearing process. An undertaking/assessment to see if there are more such cases should also be initiated. The persons responsible for this illegality should also be held accountable.
2. From the above and another submission in the public hearing stating that excessive number of trees HAVE ALREADY BEEN CUT, it seem the project work has far advanced without the EC and taking EC is only being done as procedure requirement. The EAC should allow this illegality by the project authority unattended.
3. EIA is of very shockingly poor quality and strong strictures should be passed against the agency and the Project Proponent. The agency also does not seem to be accredited, nor have they provided the undertaking they were asked to provide in the TOR.
4. The area does not seem to have any raingauge. The Project proponent should be asked to put one immediately.
5. As per the Official Memorandum (No J 11013/1/2013-IA-I) of MoEF of 28th May 2013, all states have been asked to initiate basin studies and cumulative impact assessments. This project is in Narmada Valley and in this basin already a very large number of projects have been built or are being built. The MoEF should ask the project authority to initiate one for this river basin immediately in time bound manner.

Himanshu Thakkar(ht.sandrp@gmail.com)