

call for submissions

for case
studies on

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AROUND RIVERS

deadline: 10th July 2025
details: bit.ly/smrivers25

joykjoy2@gmail.com
asid@veditum.org



Context

Rivers are complex ecosystems and hydro-social territories composed of various elements such as water, riparian forest, wetlands, meanders, culverts, and river branches. Rivers are not only carriers of water; they also carry biota and silt. Rivers and the various elements are also spaces of life, livelihoods, culture, history and spirituality. In India rivers have also been spaces of exclusions and contestations.

The integrity of our river systems are getting increasingly compromised. There are different pressures on our river systems including damming and regulation, channelisation, pollution and water extraction/grabbing. Climate change is another added layer. These have serious implications for both human and non-human life forms that depend on riverine ecosystems.

The fundamental issue/approach that underpins all these pressures is the “hydraulic mission” mode to water resource development. Hydraulic mission mode emerged as a distinctive approach to water and rivers towards the end of the 19th century in the West and got fully developed as a system in the 20th century. Large dams, power generation and huge transmission networks and large-scale water resource development infrastructure are the outcomes of this approach.

This hydraulic mission worldview still informs the knowledge produced, the policies crafted, and interventions made, especially in developing countries. The different pressures on rivers, as described above, have also given rise to resistances, conflicts, social movements and alternative articulations.

Overall vision and project

Given the above background, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and Wageningen University and Research (WUR) have decided to develop case studies on social movements around rivers. This initiative is part of the “River Commons Project” (2021-26) of The Water Resources Management Chairgroup at the Wageningen University and Research (WUR), The Netherlands.

INTACH will commission 6 case studies of social movements around rivers in India.

These case studies, along with an introductory article by the project editors - K. J. Joy (SOPPECOM & IRF), Manu Bhatnagar (INTACH & IRF), and Siddharth Agarwal (Veditum India Foundation & IRF), will form a compendium.

The case studies will be comprehensive reports focussing on a particular social movement around a river in India. Social movement could be also seen as collective action with mass involvement or social mobilisation. This study is an attempt to understand both the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of social movements around rivers. The emphasis is on exploring how issues emerge,

what dominates the strategies and actions of social movements and what comprises the making of a social movement.

It is important to know why collective action has emerged, how collective action has evolved and been sustained in protecting rivers and what outcomes it led to. The case study will situate the movement for the reader, and highlight the social, ecological, as well as political conditions and contexts which led to its formation and development. It will also dive into the roles played by various actors (both within the movement and outside), the current status of the movement, and key lessons that may have emerged from it.

The case study will investigate the normative framework/concerns of the movement in terms of how the river is imagined, framed and articulated and also the core promise or the super-ordination principle that has helped in mobilising people.

The final case studies are expected to be approximately 6000 words each, accompanied by a few visuals and maps. Selected case studies will be offered an honorarium of INR 20,000 rupees.

Contingent on the quality of the final case studies, the editors will make an effort to have the compendium of case studies published as a book.

Efforts will be made to bring all the contributors together for a peer review meeting/workshop.

Invitation for abstracts

The editors of the project are inviting abstracts in English from interested participants, who wish to contribute case studies on social movements on rivers from across India. These abstracts can be submitted latest by midnight of 10th July 2025, via the form at this link:

<https://bit.ly/smrivers25>

Some notes about the abstract:

1. The abstract should be between 250-500 words.
2. Participants must offer a general structure of their proposed case study along with their abstract.
3. The abstract has to be accompanied by published writing samples from the applicant.
4. It will be helpful if the participants illustrate their relationship with the social movement that they are proposing to write about.

Timeline

- Open call for abstracts: 16th June 2025
- Deadline for abstract submission: 10th July 2025

- Case study shortlisting: 31st July 2025
- Draft report submission: 15 October 2025
- Final case study submission: 31st December 2025

Additional notes

- The decisions of the editors on choice of case studies will be final and binding.
- In case of any queries, please reach out to KJ Joy at joykjoy2@gmail.com or Siddharth Agarwal at asid@veditum.org