



Proceedings of the
Brain Storming Session on
“The Arsenic Problem”

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PREFACE

This volume of the UNESCO sponsored workshop proceedings contain all invited papers dealing with the Arsenic problem in general and in the Bengal Basin in particular. While a large number of literature are available on the arsenic problem in Bangladesh and West Bengal state in India, still no real solution has been found to effectively address the issues. There are also other potential areas in the sub continent that may become part of the arsenic problem not too long in the distant future. It hence becomes imperative to understand the arsenic problem in its totality. Many questions are still unanswered in the arsenic issues- Source of arsenic, methods of mobilisation, factors controlling the enrichment in the sub-surface waters, lateral spread of the arsenic enriched waters and cost effective in situ solutions. While several papers in the literature deal with many techniques, so far actual application of any such techniques under field conditions to mitigate the suffering of the affected population is still a far away dream. While the health aspects have been highlighted by many workers with appealing photographs, remedial measures are not forthcoming.

The present set of papers try to address all issues connected with the arsenic problem in many environments. Experts in the respective areas have discussed the scientific issues related to the problems and stress the need to study the problem in many countries to come out with the commonality so that potential solutions take into considerations the overall behavior of Arsenic in our present environment. One paper on florosis is included since the problems are similar to that of arsenic; also one paper on impact of fossil fuel burning on water quality is included due to commonality of problems affecting water quality in south Asia.

This brain storming session is being held as a part of our proposal to IGCP-UNESCO to undertake an international co-ordinated project involving many countries including some outside the Bengal Basin area. An IGCP proposal involving scientists from India, Bangladesh, Belgium, UK, Germany Japan and Kenya were put about a year ago and after a favorable initial response from the committee, we were asked to get a feed back in a brainstorming session so that the project proposal can be farther taken up by the funding agency. With this in view, the invited papers have been pre-published to facilitate a free and frank discussion to evolve a workable approach to handle the global concern on the arsenic problems. Hopefully specific recommendations can be made in the workshop for suitable follow up action by the organisers.

Editor

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