

Capability Demonstration: Cauvery River Dispute



Overview

Poor management of Indian cities' water resources have significantly increased [Social Risk](#) across the country. Political in-fighting, inter-state water wars, and illegal water mining have increased water scarcity for nearly a billion people. The Cauvery River dispute between two of the fastest growing south Indian states—Karnataka and Tamil Nadu—remains the most contentious water conflict in India, affecting nearly 100 million people across both states. By analyzing online discussions, ENODO uncovered key topics and their associated public sentiment related to the Cauvery dispute to provide key stakeholders an understanding of the underlying grievances.

Findings: Sentiment Analysis

Measured public sentiment of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu online discussions:

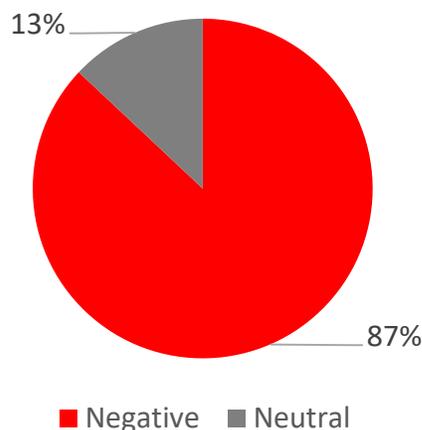
Tamil Nadu:

- 87% of negative sentiment was primarily associated with the poor conduct by Tamil Nadu's elected representatives in the Indian Parliament
 - Between 8 - 9 January, 31 Members of Parliament (MPs) from Tamil Nadu's ruling AIADMK Party were [suspended](#) following their protest against an Indian Government proposal to construct a Dam on the Cauvery River

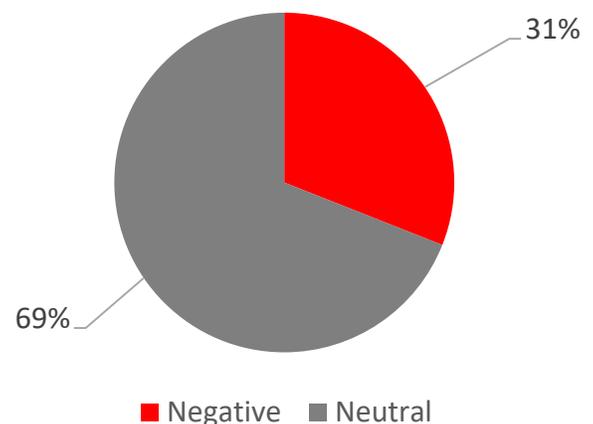
Karnataka:

- 69% of neutral sentiment is attributed to uncertainty over the impact of the Indian Government's Cauvery Tribunal and the livelihoods of people around Karnataka's urban areas (e.g. Bengaluru)
- 31% of negative sentiment is due to the Karnataka Government's decision to build a USD 12 billion [statue](#) for "Mother Cauvery," which is perceived as a wasteful political stunt

Public Sentiment in Tamil Nadu



Public Sentiment in Karnataka



“Our Karnataka, our people, our Cauvery, we are the only one who can have it.” Ravi, [Facebook](#)

Findings: Karnataka Topic Modeling

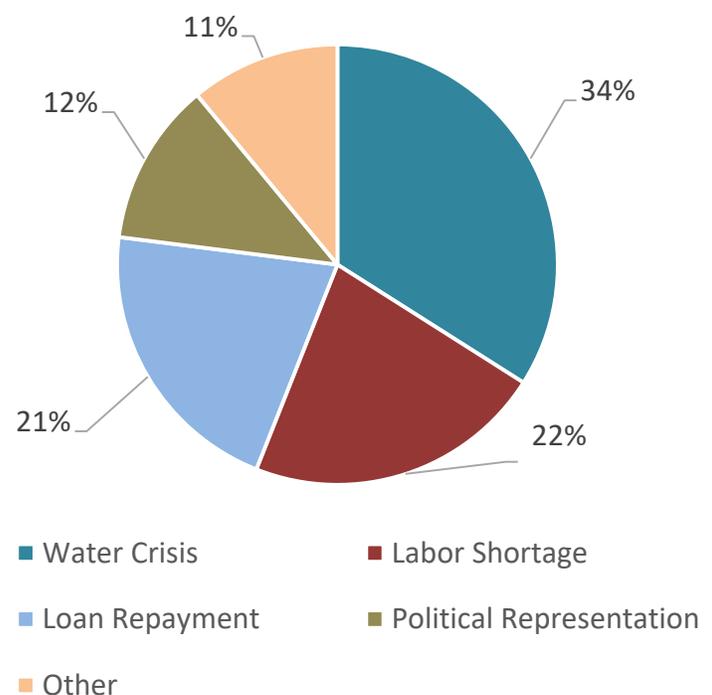
Identified issues that shaped public perceptions of the Cauvery River dispute in Karnataka. Four key topics regarding the dispute emerged from online discussions in Karnataka:

- **Water Crisis:** 34% of discussions regarding farmers outside Bengaluru metropolitan areas originated from Tamil Nadu
- **Labor Shortage:** 22% of discussions concerned the shortage of the male farm-hands as cities, including Bengaluru, continue to attract young men from rural areas
- **Loan Repayment:** 21% indicated disappointment in the government’s failure to deliver on its promise to waive farming loans in the Cauvery’s drought-prone, upstream region
- **Political Representation:** 12% of discussions emerged from ethnic and religious minority groups (e.g. Kodagu People, Muslims) citing poor representation in state and central government policies concerning Cauvery River



“Save Cauvery” group’s Social Media post with the 10-point manifesto from the Kodagu people (Source: [Twitter](#))

Cauvery River dispute topics discussed online in Karnataka



“I think it is better the farmers from both the sides sit together and resolve the issue. Centre will never ensure an amicable solution..” Senthil Vasan, [Facebook](#)

Findings: Tamil Nadu Topic Modeling

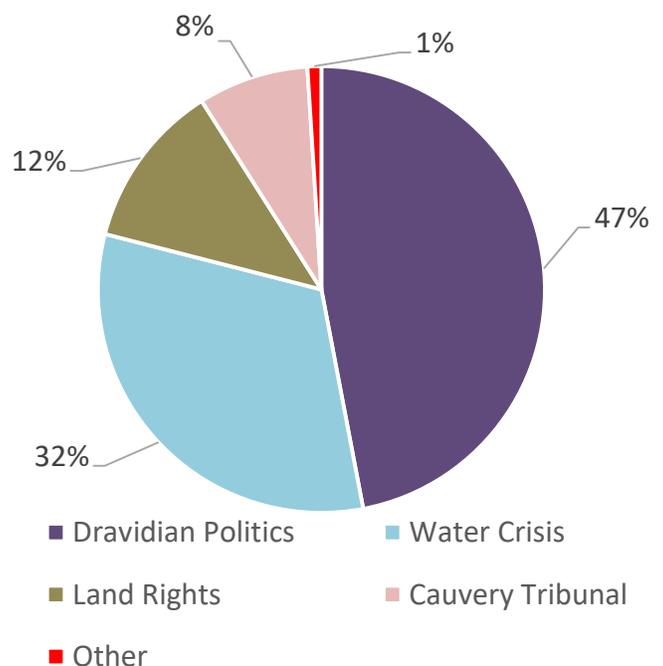
Identified issues that shaped public perceptions of the Cauvery River dispute in Tamil Nadu. Four key topics regarding the dispute emerged from online discussions in Tamil Nadu:

- **Dravidian Politics:** 47% of discussions, of which (67%) originated from urban areas, included the in-fighting between the two Dravidian (ethnic group) political parties in Tamil Nadu (DMK and AIADMK)
- **Water Crisis:** 32% of the discussions, of which (71%) originated from smaller urban areas (~100,000 population), pertained to the ongoing water crisis affecting the farmers along the Cauvery Delta in southern Tamil Nadu
- **Land Rights:** Nearly 12% were concerned about the farming land dispute, particularly in the land bordering Karnataka
- **Cauvery Tribunal:** 8% were against the ruling AIADMK party’s poor leadership to resolve the dissolution of the 28-year Cauvery River Tribunal



Tamil Nadu political parties walk out of Indian Parliament over Cauvery dam issue (Source: [ND TV](#))

Cauvery River dispute topics discussed online in Tamil Nadu



“The most well irrigated areas of Karnataka saw the most farmer suicides. Can't believe the blessed Cauvery and Krishna basins saw the worst” Kiran Kumar, [Twitter](#)

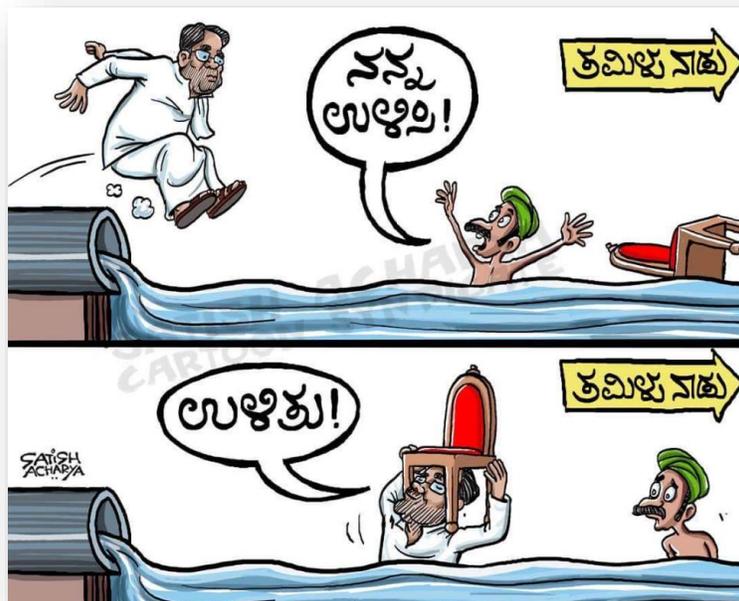
Recommendations

Conduct [Social Risk Investigation](#) and/or on-going social media monitoring in order to:

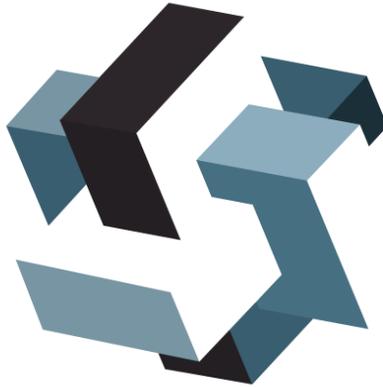
- Measure real-time changes in how citizens discuss the dispute key topics and their associated public sentiment
- Inform communication and engagement strategies that addresses the key concerns faced by people in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu
 - Build trust within communities served by the Cauvery River and various stakeholders in the region (e.g. private sector companies, local politicians in the rural Cauvery delta region, and communities in the Kodagu and Coorg areas)
 - Utilize social media platforms, local language news, and TV outlets (e.g. Kannada and Tamil) to deliver geographically targeted messages to Cauvery delta citizens

Data Analytics

ENODO collected and analyzed 82,080 Twitter posts, 71,647 Facebook posts, 51,970 Instagram posts, 39,879 YouTube comments, 21,870 news websites, and 18,907 blogs in English, Kannada, and Tamil to identify key topics and measure public perceptions of the Cauvery River dispute.



Political cartoon mocking Karnataka politicians saving their “seats” in the government in the name of saving the farmers around Cauvery (Source: [Kiran Kumar](#))



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