

### **Project Launch Meeting**

#### **Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganges and Brahmaputra Basins (IW Project)**

Venue: The Lily Hotel, Guwahati, India  
Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2016

### **Background Note**

#### **Objectives**

1. Discussion and validation of activities, outputs and desired/expected outcomes
2. Explore possible collaborations with other Civil Society Fund partners

#### **Expected Outputs**

1. Revision of work plan, including key outcomes (if required)
2. A detailed plan for each collaborating organisation
3. Finalisation of a monitoring and evaluation plan

#### **Background and Context**

Eastern South Asia, consisting of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN region), is fed by two of the mightiest Himalayan rivers, viz. the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. Historically, the inland waterways created by these river systems have supported human activities over the centuries; be it livelihood, culture or transport.

However, political boundaries had divided the region and with that came decades-long tussles over water resources resulting in mistrust and standalone planning and management of these rivers and associated inland waterways. Over time, the management of these rivers and associated inland waterways became highly politicised and the discourse for cross-border cooperation dwindled as national organisations and agencies tried to maximize national interest at the cost of regional interest.

It is also noteworthy that inland water bodies have the potential to be an alternative mode of transportation, particularly for trade and transportation towards enhancing the cooperation and connectivity in the region. It is envisaged that this might and should ideally lead to a renewed interest in the navigability of inland waterways with the result that water flow within and across borders will get higher policy focus. Inland waterways trade can also function as a bridge for trans-boundary water cooperation.

In recent times, however, there are palpable shifts in political will towards higher cooperation among the countries of this region. This is apparent in some of the bilateral and regional agreements that were renewed and/or signed like the India-Bangladesh Inland Waterways Transit Treaty and the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement.

Along with these developments, India, the biggest and arguably the most important player in the region, has started initiating progressive actions on improving its domestic inland waterways.

Similarly, Bangladesh is making investments to improve its domestic connectivity via inland waterways. Bhutan is interested to revive its connectivity with India and Bangladesh via inland waterways in the Brahmaputra basin. Nepal is taking steps to improve navigation along the Kosi and the Gandak rivers, which are part of the Ganges basin.

Therefore, the present time is just right to push the agenda for cooperation on inland waterways among the countries of this region and making this discourse more participatory with the involvement of civil society organisations and their engagement with policy-makers.

Given this background, this project will be implemented by CUTS International in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh; SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation), Bhutan; and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, Nepal.

### **Way Forward**

1. Create an alternative policy discourse between policy-makers, civil society, and communities for enabling reform measures and better governance of inland waterways
2. Share knowledge between governments and CSOs on governance of inland waterways

**Project Launch Meeting**

**Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins**

The Lily Hotel, Guwahati, India

Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2016

**Agenda**

<b>09:00 – 09:30</b>	<b>Registration</b>
<b>09:30 – 10:00</b>	<p><b>Opening</b> <i>Introduction about the project and its importance for the BBIN region</i></p> <p><b>Welcome Remarks</b> Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International</p> <p><b>Introductory Remarks</b> Aditya Pillai, Program Officer, The Asia Foundation</p> <p><b>Keynote Address</b> Arup Kumar Dutta, Senior Journalist, Guwahati</p> <p><b>Opening Address</b> A K Bansal, Director, Inland Waterways Authority of India, Guwahati Bharat Bushan Dev Choudhury, Director, Inland Water Transport, Department of Transport, Government of Assam</p>
<b>10:00 – 10:15</b>	<b>Tea/Coffee</b>
<b>10:15 – 11:45</b>	<p><b><i>Work Plan - Activities, Outputs and Outcomes</i></b></p> <p><b>Chair</b> Dina Mani Pokharel, Senior Environmental Lawyer, National Law College Nepal &amp; Member Secretary, ISET-Nepal</p> <p><b>Presentation</b> Veena Vidyadharan, Policy Analyst, CUTS International and Deputy Head, CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics &amp; Environment</p> <p><b>Discussants</b> Mini Bhattacharyya Thakur, Head, Department of Anthropology, Guwahati University Abhinandan Saikia, Assistant Professor, Tata Institute of Social Science Sobhanlal Bonnerjee, Principal Architect, S. Bonnerjee and Associates</p> <p><b>General discussion on work plan</b></p>

11:45 – 13:45	<p><b><i>Country-Specific Institutional Analysis of Governing Inland Waterways</i></b></p> <p><b>Chair</b> Dwarika Nath Dhungel, Senior Researcher Social Science, Former Executive Director- IIDS, Former Secretary- Ministry of Water Resources Government of Nepal</p> <p><b>Presentations</b>  <b>Bangladesh:</b> A.K. Enamul Haque, Professor, East-West University, Dhaka and Consultant, Unnayan Shamannay  <b>Bhutan:</b> Narayan Ghalley, Project Officer, Conservation and Sustainable Livelihood Program, Royal Society for Protection of Nature  <b>Nepal:</b> Dikshya Singh, Research Officer, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics &amp; Environment  <b>India – Ganges Basin:</b> Rakesh Tiwary, Assistant Professor, A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna  <b>India – Brahmaputra Basin:</b> Aneeta Dutta, Assistant Director, Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi, Guwahati</p> <p><b>Discussants</b> Sangeeta Choudhary, Faculty, Department of Management, Guwahati University Govinda Sharma Pokharel, Vice Chairperson, Nepal Water Conservation Foundation Nirmalya Choudhury, General Manager – Operations, Assam Bengal Navigation</p> <p><b>General discussion on institutions governing inland waterways</b></p>
13:45 – 14:30	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
14:30 – 16:00	<p><b><i>Scope of Cooperation Under Civil Society Fund in Water Governance and Diplomacy in BBIN Region</i></b></p> <p><b>Chair</b> Shahriar Wahid, Director - Kosi Basin Initiative, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development</p> <p><b>Presentations by CSF/SAWGP collaborators</b>  Shilpa Chohan, Partner, Indian Environment Law Organization, New Delhi  Vishwaranjan Sinha, Programme Officer, Natural Resources Group, IUCN Asia Regional Office, Bangkok  Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Secretary General &amp; CEO, Aaranyak, Guwahati  Arundhati Deka, Research Associate, SaciWATERS, Secunderabad</p> <p><b>Discussants</b>  Sabyasachi Dutta, Founder Director, Asian Confluence  Sushanta Talukdar, Editor, NEZINE  Mreeshi Agarwala, Assistant Professor, Assam Institute of Management</p> <p><b>General discussion on cooperation among various partners</b></p>

<b>16:00 – 16:15</b>	<b>Tea/Coffee</b>
<b>16:15 – 17:30</b>	<p><i>Monitoring and Evaluation of the Project and Way Forward</i></p> <p><b>Chair</b></p> <p>Ratnesh Kumar, Management Specialist, United Nations Development Programme, New Delhi, India</p> <p><b>Presentation on M&amp;E</b></p> <p>Kyle Cote, Policy Analyst, CUTS International</p> <p><b>Way Forward</b></p> <p>Aditya Pillai, Program Officer, The Asia Foundation</p> <p>Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International</p>