

Ganga Basin Policy Dialogue

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

Hotel Greenwich Village, Kathmandu, Nepal on Friday, 14th July, 2017

Background Note

Objectives:

1. To present findings from the country specific diagnostic studies conducted in Ganga Basin and facilitate knowledge sharing on waterways governance within and across borders
2. To promote alternative policy discourses for bringing in the upper and lower riparian (including trans-boundary) concerns for enabling reform measures on management and governance of inland waterways

Expected Outcome:

- Bring in the lower and upper riparian basin-level discourses and create an enabling environment for advocating a better regulatory regime for management of inland waterways

Background and Context:

As part of the Civil Society Fund by The Asia Foundation, CUTS International and its strategic partners are implementing the project titled 'Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins'. CUTS is implementing the project in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh; Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN), Bhutan; and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal.

The goal of the project is to contribute to improving policies, laws and regulations for inland waterways governance with particular emphasis on transport connectivity and livelihood in the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) region. We envision achieving this goal by promoting an alternative policy discourse for enabling reform measures between policy-makers, civil society, and communities. More details about the project is available here: <http://www.cuts-citee.org/IW/>

Synthesizing the findings from the field-based diagnostic study, national reference group meetings, sub-national and national policy dialogues across 11 locations in four countries, the basin policy dialogue (BPD) will present the diagnostic study report from the project. For the BPD of the Ganga basin, relevant stakeholders are from Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The dialogue will be organised with government officials, policy makers, private players, media, organisations working on gender issues and CSO representatives at Nepal for the Ganga basin.

Taking forward the inputs from the basin policy dialogues, CUTS will strengthen its work on inclusive policy discourse for its regional level dialogue as well as future work.

Key Discussions:

- Challenges in maintaining navigability of the channel throughout the year
- Lukewarm interests of private sector due to hard challenges (infrastructure and facilities related) and soft challenges (regulatory aspects)
- Very few companies, and logistics service providers for the commercial movement in Protocol Route 1 between India and Bangladesh
- Limited number of vessels leading to undue advantage and uncompetitive freight charges by few private operators
- Conflicts with other sectors (like agriculture, industry, drinking, fisheries etc.) in maintaining minimum depth between upper and lower riparian
- Environmental concerns due to dredging, pollution and environmental flow
- Objections posed by pontoon bridges for navigation
- Coordination between relevant ministries at state, national and regional levels
- New opportunities in cross border tourism between India and Bangladesh
- Green protocols for sustainable tourism
- Exploring multi model connectivity between India and Nepal