

Points reflecting the current stand of Bhutan on transboundary inland water navigation:

- It was found out that there is an absence of any legal instrument and policy in place for Bhutan which currently oversees the transboundary river management programs. And more importantly there are no plans on initiating government dialogue on transboundary river management.
- Government's concern over environment degradation, especially the aquatic and water bird habitat, and more importantly the security concern while promoting transboundary navigation are some of the genuine concern raised by government stakeholders.
- The other good reason for Bhutan showing low interest for river navigation at transboundary is mainly because the rivers in Bhutan are not feasible for navigation given the stiff terrain and fluctuation of river volume during summer and winter there for the scope lies very narrow.
- Study also found that rivers in Bhutan are prominently used for agriculture purpose and resource extraction but not for navigation.
- While there is absence of policies and regulatory frameworks directly related to navigation or river management, the study indicates that Bhutan has strong policies, acts and regulatory frameworks that seek to safeguard water resources. This contributes to maintaining healthy river system which is pollution free and the benefit that transcends across the border towards neighbouring countries. Example in case: - As per the Water Act of Bhutan 2011, the National Environment Commission

(NEC) has already initiated and instituted river basin management committee for Wangchu Basin and developed the River basin management plan, and similarly the management plans for other three basins will be developed in future. This can directly contribute to lower riparian country and will benefit the downstream communities.

- The study also found out the for Bhutan there has been also growing interest on river tourism business among private sectors and few initiatives have been already

Bhutan Diagnostic Study

Locations:

- ✓ Punakha in west central
- ✓ Phuntsholing in southwestern
- ✓ Manas in central south

Stakeholders: Government officials, Local government representatives, NGOs and CSOs, Private sector, Community representatives

Methodology: Field survey, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), multi-layered stakeholder consultations

under taken. However, initiating this at the trans-boundary level needs proper study/assessment keeping in mind environmental and social sensitivity, national security and so forth. The outcome of study could possibly contribute to planning a river system based integrated livelihoods programme for the target areas.

- Recent signing of agreement between Bhutan and Bangladesh government on access to port for trade and transport in April, 2017 may provide a basis for possible up scaling of similar initiative in future especially the transboundary navigation in relation to trade.
- And of late the present government has proposed to establish National Water Commission (NWC) which now after may be mandated with responsibility to look after the transboundary affairs.

The project 'Expanding tradable benefits of trans-boundary water: Promoting navigational usage of inland waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra basins' is being implemented by CUTS International and its strategic partners – Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and Unnayan Shamannay. More details are available at: www.cuts-citee.org/IW/

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