

Report of the Sub-Regional Dialogue

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

Hotel Hindustan International, Kolkata, India on 26-27th October, 2017



(Participants at the CUTS sub-regional dialogue at Hotel Hindustan International, Kolkata, India on 26-27th October, 2017)



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Executive Summary

The 'Sub-regional dialogue on inland waterways' organised by CUTS International at Hotel Hindustan International, Kolkata on 26th and 27th October 2017 gathered 80 key stakeholders from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia and Nepal. The participants comprised of representatives from government departments (inland water transport, commerce, economic cooperation etc.), universities, research institutions, subject-matter experts, civil society organisations (CSOs) and international organizations working on issues related to river and trans-boundary water governance. This event was successful in identifying core policy areas based on the project findings for intervention by civil society in order to promote regional cooperation and connectivity in the Bay of Bengal region.

The dialogue was successful in identifying key intervention areas, such as:

- Development of sustainable and economically viable inland waterways sector in this sub-region can contribute towards achieving **sustainable development goals** through poverty reduction and job creation in the sub-region. Ineffective policies and under-developed supply chains are some of the major obstacles in the way of regional cooperation.
- Land locked countries like Nepal and Bhutan can benefit from the waterways in India and Bangladesh through **multimodal connectivity** as it provides access to sea. Multimodal connectivity to Myanmar also has the potential to further link India with Southeast Asia. India and Japan are working closely to link India's Act East policy with Japan's policies to improve connectivity in the region as a whole, thus development of inland waterways sector in this region will work as a base for improving and expanding Japan's production and supply chains in the long term.
- To move away from zero-sum game and reap benefits from regional cooperation by focusing on implementing necessary **regulatory reforms** at local, sub-national, national and regional levels. Removal of cross-border regulatory barriers related to customs and non-tariff barriers, sharing of data related to rivers, sea and shores have to be advocated. Apart from these, an **integrated transport policy** is required to enhance regional cooperation. Technical issues such as customs, security and other bureaucratic hurdles need to be resolved with mutual discussions and such dialogues will help in changing the mind-set as well as improving the discourse around waterways.
- Potential **socio-economic benefits of inland waterways** must be extended to the local communities especially women and other marginalised sections living near the rivers. Localisation of civil society discourse can also lead to transboundary water resource management. Riverine communities have to be consulted and engaged in the developmental process related to inland navigation.
- **Comprehensive research** on trade prospects, environmental costs and hydro-morphological aspects will generate data for planning as well as in order to contribute to informed policy decisions

- **Review of existing bilateral treaties** for trade and transit to include a provisions to use India's inland waterways for transportation of both inbound and out-bound cargos
- **River tourism** has great potential in revenue generation as well as improving livelihoods of local communities. With several cultural, religious and biodiversity hotspots in the region, cross-border river tourism is a potent area for transboundary cooperation. However, enabling regulatory framework in terms of flexibility in disembarkation points and basic infrastructure has to be in place.
- **Prospects of local trade in shorter stretches** within a state or across immediate international borders needs to be explored. This will improve local economy and livelihoods, reduce poverty, improve private sector participant and will lead to transboundary cooperation.
- There is a possibility to extend concept like concepts like **border haat** in form of floating border market on the river as such kinds of intervention has the possibilities of creating **small value chains** that can prove to be economically supportive for the local riverine and adjacent communities.

Introduction

1. A sub-regional dialogue on inland waterways titled '**Expanding Tradable Benefits of Transboundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins**' was organised at Hotel Hindustan International in Kolkata on 26th and 27th October 2017.
2. The objectives of the event were:
 - a) To promote alternative policy discourses for enabling reform measures on inland waterways to ensure regional connectivity and river-to-bay connectivity in the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) sub-region;
 - b) To present the synthesis report based on country studies from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal and facilitates knowledge sharing on waterways governance within and across borders
3. The expected outcome of the meeting was:
 - Dissemination of the knowledge from synthesis report among policy makers and CSOs as well as creation of a regional discourse on the need for cooperation among the BBIN countries for better management of inland waterways
4. This initiative is supported by The Asia Foundation (TAF) and implemented by CUTS International in India with the cooperation of Unnayan Shamannay in Bangladesh, Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) in Bhutan, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SWATEE) in Nepal under the Civil Society Fund (CSF) of South Asia Water Governance Programme of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development.
5. The Sub-regional Dialogue (SRD) was attended by more than 80 key stakeholders from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia and Nepal comprising representatives from government departments related to inland water transport, trade groups, universities and research institutions, subject-matter experts, civil society organisations (CSOs) and international organizations working on issues related to river and water-borne transportation.

Opening Session: Strategic issues and emerging opportunities in the Bay of Bengal region

6. Welcoming the participants, Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International said that over the last few years this subject has gained better political traction in the region. Development of sustainable and economically viable inland waterways in Bay of Bengal (BoB) region can not only contribute towards achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) through poverty reduction and job creation but also have the potential to make regional cooperation process more inclusive. He further emphasized on localisation of civil society discourse for fostering regional cooperation in eastern South Asia.

7. Sagar Prasai, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation, New Delhi informed the audience that for a long time, South Asian countries have neglected possible tradable benefits of water. Inland waterways navigation at regional level has never come in policy level discussions despite having historical significance. Land-locked



countries can get access to sea by using the existing waterways of neighbouring countries and can gain economic benefit of regional connectivity.

8. Shantanu Mitra, Senior Climate & Environment Advisor, DFID Asia Regional Team, British High Commission, New Delhi stressed on the need for regional connectivity through multi-modal means. Ineffective regulatory policies and under-developed supply chains are some of the major obstacles in the way of regional cooperation. Thus, regional initiatives like these are particularly important for land-locked countries.

9. Masayuki Taga, Consul General, Japan Consulate, Kolkata said that since India and Japan are working closely to link India's Act East policy with Japan's policies to improve connectivity in the region as a whole, thus development of inland waterways sector in BoB region will work as a base for improving and expanding Japan's production and supply chains in the long term. The development of this sector also requires mega investments in infrastructure in which Japan can play a vital role.

10. According to Bruce Bucknell, British Deputy High Commissioner, Kolkata, it is



necessary to move away from zero-sum game and focus more on mutual benefits from regional cooperation. For this cross-border barriers need to be removed, sharing of data related to rivers, sea and shores needs to be enhanced. Apart from them, integrated transport policy is required which can also localise the economic benefits similar to experiences of some of the developed countries. West Bengal in particular has a lot of tourism potential in terms of cultural and historical places such as Sundarbans,

which can be linked to cross-border tourism activities through inland waterways.

Plenary: A sub-regional discourse for better governance of inland waterways

11. Atiur Rahman, Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka and Chairman, Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh asserted by quoting Rabindra Nath Tagore that rivers are indeed touching stone of civilisations. If rivers recede, culture recedes. In the past, we have not done enough analytical work on comparative advantages of rivers, inland waterways and other modes of transportation. However, governments have now realised the potential benefits of using waterways for their economies and local communities. Technical issues such as customs, security and other bureaucratic hurdles needs to be solved with mutual discussions and such dialogues will help in changing the mind set as well as improving the discourse around waterways.



12. Bhola Nath Dey, Member Planning and Operation, Additional Secretary, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), Government of Bangladesh said that Bangladesh is a land of rivers with more than 700 in numbers. However, the area under inland waterways is decreasing in Bangladesh because of siltation and other environmental related challenges. Bangladesh has three sea-ports and around 30 inland waterways ports and trade volume on these ports is increasing. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Bhutan and Bangladesh to use waterways and river ports for trade purpose will also facilitate in improving relation between these two countries.



13. Pemba Wangchuk, Director General, Road Safety & Transport Authority (RSTA), Ministry of Information and Communications, Royal Government of Bhutan said that prospect of inland waterways development is not very encouraging in Bhutan because of its geographical terrain. CUTS and RSPN study also focussed on the feasibility aspect of inland waterways in Bhutan. He further said that there is a lack of proper

formal institution in Bhutan which can govern the inland waterways sector or other modes of transportation. Therefore, keeping this in mind, the government of Bhutan is in the process of renaming the existing institution/department of Road Safety & Transport Authority (RSTA) to Surface Transport Authority (STA) so that this new renamed institution can deal with all modes of transportation including inland waterways. Since Bhutan is a land-locked country and require access to sea for export/import purposes, MoU with Bangladesh and India for cross-border trade and transit using waterways will help Bhutan to get access to sea in the long term.

14. L. K. Rajak, Director, Regional Office (Kolkata), Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), Ministry of Shipping, Government of India said that inland waterways transportation is one of the oldest modes of transport in India. Prayag (modern day Allahabad), Varanasi, Ujjain, Patliputra (modern day Patna) were major cities which heavily relied on the use of waterways for transportation purpose in the past. Under the leadership of new central government, IWAI is trying to regain the old glory of waterways. In 2016, 106 rivers were declared new national waterways making the total to 111 national waterways in India. Jal Marg Vikas Project is another major step in this direction and IWAI with help of KPMG and other consultancy firms is working on several issues for the development of these waterways.
15. Keshab Dhoj Adhikari, Former Joint Secretary, Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, Government of Nepal said that Nepal has around 6000 rivers but most of them have high velocity. In recent time, access to sea has been considered very important for the trade. Kosi, Gandak and Karnali rivers are navigable but out of these navigational aspects have only been studied for Kosi. However, the outcomes of the study are not very encouraging. He further said that inland navigation can be successful only if: (a) there is willingness between lower and upper riparian countries to connect with each other; (b) transportation through inland waterways is economically and environmentally viable.

Session 1: Benefits of trans-boundary water cooperation through the development of inland waterways

16. A. K. Enamul Haque, Professor, Department of Economics, East-West University, Bangladesh spoke about the commercial viability of waterways through a cost-benefit analysis. While calculating cost and benefits of inland waterways, it is imperative to calculate the real cost which is a function of economic costs that include long term infrastructure development costs, time cost and so on. It is importance to undertake such kind of specific studies in order to make



accurate projections about inland waterways transportation.

17. Prithviraj Nath, Associate Director, CUTS International & Head, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre and Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow, CUTS International & Deputy Head, CUTS Centre for International Trade Economics & Environment presented the work done by CUTS under this project¹. Based on the findings of research following recommendations were given:

- More flexibility in terms of designated routes, jetties and disembarkation points in case of cross border tourism between India and Bangladesh
- Full-fledged customs and immigration facilities at entry and exit points on the designated routes under Indo-Bangladesh IW protocol
- Introducing mechanized/hydraulic dismantling and assembling system for pontoon bridges
- Identifying stretches and commodities (on demand-base) with trade potential within and between states and design vessels accordingly;
- Providing subsidies for country boats to rejuvenate and promote local transport and trade
- Providing subsidies for inland vessel building to attract private investors
- Enhance competitiveness of water transport sector through infrastructure development and night navigation aids
- Up-gradation of few river vessels to river-sea vessels
- Long term hydro-morphological studies to understand the behaviour of river and develop infrastructure and the navigable channel accordingly
- Better coordination among related ministries



18. Arnab Bandyopadhyay, Senior Transport Specialist, The World Bank Group, New Delhi said that for inland waterways development and transportation, we need to learn from the experiences of some other developed countries and river basins such as Danube, Rhine etc. He further stressed for comprehensive, multi-country studies focussing on various products and supply chains using multi-modal and intermodal connectivity.

19. Nilhari Neupane, Economic Analyst (Livelihoods), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Kathmandu expressed his concern on how

¹ The presentations are available on request. Please contact: Ms Susan Mathew, Assistant Policy Analyst, CUTS International (sma@cuts.org)



connectivity can be linked to the process of development with regard to livelihood generation and environmental aspects of rivers.

20. Soumya Chattopadhyay, Consultant, Regional Cooperation at Asian Development Bank, New Delhi said that BBIN countries have

common challenges with respect to capacity, manpower, human resources etc. The infrastructure investment in inland waterways is quite low when compared to road and railways. There exist several bilateral MoUs among the countries on trade and transit, but a sub-regional agreement on inland waterways deriving clauses from previously signed bilateral MoUs (similar to BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement) is yet to be realised in the inland waterways sector.

21. Stressing on the need for conducting detailed environmental impact assessment, Vishwaranjan Sinha, Programme Officer (Natural Resources Group), The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Bangkok said that to develop inland waterways in this region, we need money, hydrographic data and technology. With a combination of these, a sustainable and viable inland waterways sector can be developed for the region that will benefit trade as well as livelihoods of communities.

Session 2: Promoting trade and transit through inland waterways

22. This session stressed on the need to make inland waterways a part of transport narrative of countries in the BBIN sub-region with multimodal and intermodal junctures so that this sector becomes economically viable. To realize this, there is a need for revising existing treaties and MoUs as well as signing of new agreements which can boost overall regional connectivity initiatives. Comparative cost-benefit analysis of various modes of transportation is necessary to find the best alternative mode of transport.

23. It was also discussed in the session that development of inland waterways sector in BBIN countries would require large investments, modern technologies and specific



industries such as ship building. For example, the Indian government has taken several steps to mobilise resources including approval to utilize a part of Central Road Fund (CRF) for the development of inland waterways, yet multilateral international organizations through aid program can also play a role in it.



24. Issue of connectivity and transit is critically important not only for land locked countries like Bhutan and Nepal but also for neighbouring countries like Myanmar. The promotion and development of inland waterways in neighbouring countries can provide a lot of opportunities for Bhutan particularly for the export purpose of its vast natural resources. Waterways development has assured sea port connectivity to remote areas of Bangladesh. As far as Nepal is considered, there is a need to review the existing Nepal-India Treaty of Transit to include a provision giving Nepal right to use India’s inland waterways for ferrying the cargos coming from or bound to Nepal.

Session 3: Fostering private sector participation to promote trade and tourism within and across borders

25. This session focussed on the river tourism particularly on the potentiality of cross-border river tourism. This is feasible if private sector, local communities and



governments show willingness to develop it and gets involved in it. There are immense opportunities for water based tourism activities in Bhutan, Nepal, India and Bangladesh but there is a missing link of marketing and infrastructure. However, several new initiatives have been taken in past

few months in this regard; for example, Bangladesh and India are trying to promote cross-border river tourism through Sundarbans for a very long time and for this a new agreement has been signed and standard operating protocols (SOP) have been finalized.



26. It was also pointed out in the session that the trade related vessels carrying bulk cargo needs to report at certain ports of calls. If cross-border protocol routes for tourism related purpose are similar to the protocol routes for trade related purpose, it might not work well for the river-tourism sector as these those protocol routes are not places of tourist interests and would not be able to explore the full-potential of this sector. Also, there is an urgent need to develop separate berthing/ bunkering facilities for tourist vessels apart for cargo vessels.

27. Tourism related infrastructure and vessel industry require different approach than normal cargo sector. Apart from it, inland waterways are not sole mode of transport but a complimentary mode of transport. There has to be linkages between all the three modes of transportation – rail, road and inland waterways for the proper operation of river tourism in the long term and in all-seasons.

28. Since river tourism generates direct as well as indirect benefits to local communities in many ways, harnessing the full potential of this sector is of particular relevance for the people living near rivers. Mainly because these communities can be benefitted through wider range of employment opportunities that can be generated through the development of small-and medium cottage and handicraft industries in their areas.

29. With regards to the trade aspect through waterways, the private sector stressed the need to maintain a LAD of at least 3metres as it is feasible for smooth movement of shallow draft vessels. Since the river depth is frequently changing in the Ganga basin



and also there is a serious problem of silt collection on river beds, the present private companies in Kolkata finds it extremely difficult to navigate their vessels in such river conditions and as a result vessels become more prone to wear and tear. Improper maintenance of river navigability distracts

further private investment in this sector.

30. To reap the full benefits of trade through waterways, the private sector recommended promotion of short-haul cargo and further linking it with multimodal and intermodal connectivity to keep the business running throughout the year.

Session 4: Streamlining community and environmental concerns in inland waterways development discourse

31. This session discussed the issues of environment, eco-system and livelihoods. It was discussed that while development of inland waterways, navigation in rivers and industrial growth is necessary for human life, the protection of natural resources cannot be ignored. Thus, any development related to rivers or modifications must have strong environmental impact assessment. However, navigation through inland waterways is also eco-friendly in comparison to other modes of transportation but its development can cause some alteration in river basins and can affect local communities depending on it. For this sustainable and viable development strategies needs to be adopted.



32. It was also suggested that local communities must be taken in to confidence while preparing any strategy related to development of river. In addition to this, concepts like border *haat* should also to be extended in form of floating border market on the river as such kinds of intervention has the possibilities of creating small value chains that can prove to be economically supportive for the local riverine and adjacent communities.

Conclusion and way forward

33. The event was successful in bringing together stakeholders from different sectors across the sub-region and facilitated informed discussion on inland waterways and the larger connectivity issue. While giving the closing remarks, Shantanu Mitra stressed on the importance of such events in raising awareness, creating knowledge and providing diverse perspectives to the whole discourse on inland navigation.

34. In brief, the following points came out of the conclusion:

- There seems to be a consensus on the potential of inland navigation in establishing sub-regional connectivity. Positive attitude of private sector to work and invest in this

sector is encouraging. Also encouraging is the potential of trade benefits that can be provided to poor and marginalized communities.

- Need for policy coherence and regulatory harmonization among countries of the sub-region from the point of view of multi-modal connectivity was highlighted.
- Localisation of civil society discourse on inland waterways especially in transboundary region would lead to regional cooperation
- Inland navigation and river tourism can generate employment and livelihood and reduce poverty
- There is a need for an in-depth, systematic research and analysis to generate data as well as to understand the prospects and trade offs

Annexure 1: Agenda



Sub-regional Dialogue on Inland Waterways

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

Hotel Hindusthan International, Kolkata, India, 26th – 27th October, 2017

Agenda

Thursday, 26th October, 2017

15:15 – 15:45 Registration

Opening: Strategic issues and emerging opportunities in the Bay of Bengal region

Considering the development of various trade and connectivity initiatives in the Bay of Bengal region, the opening session will explore strategic issues and emerging opportunities of using waterways as a means of river-to-bay connectivity.

15:45 – 16:30

- Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International
- Sagar Prasai, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation, New Delhi
- Shantanu Mitra, Senior Climate & Environment Advisor, DFID Asia Regional Team, British High Commission, New Delhi
- H.E. Masayuki Taga, Consul General, Japan Consulate, Kolkata
- H.E. Bruce Bucknell, British Deputy High Commissioner, Kolkata

Plenary: A sub-regional discourse for better governance of inland waterways

This session will deliberate on the importance and scope of enhancing sub-regional connectivity through better governed institutions of inland waterways by focussing discussions on necessary regulatory reforms, legislative changes and capital investments.

16:30 – 18:00

Chair: Atiur Rahman, Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka and Chairman, Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh

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Panellists

- Bhola Nath Dey, Member Planning and Operation, Additional Secretary, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, Government of Bangladesh
- Pemba Wangchuk, Director General, Road Safety & Transport Authority, Ministry of Information and Communications, Royal Government of Bhutan
- L.K. Rajak, Director, Regional Office (Kolkata), Inland Waterways Authority of India, Ministry of Shipping, Government of India
- Keshab Dhoj Adhikari, Former Joint Secretary, Water and Energy Commission Secretariat, Government of Nepal

18:00 – 18:30 Break

Session 1: Benefits of trans-boundary water cooperation through the development of inland waterways

Presentation by CUTS International on key findings from the project and putting forward a roadmap to sustain the on-going regional connectivity momentum in the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) sub-region.

Chair: A. K. Enamul Haque, Professor, Department of Economics, East-West University, Bangladesh

Presentation

18:30 – 20:00

- Prithviraj Nath, Associate Director, CUTS International & Head, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre
- Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow, CUTS International & Deputy Head, CUTS Centre for International Trade Economics & Environment

Panellists

- Arnab Bandyopadhyay, Senior Transport Specialist, The World Bank Group, New Delhi
- Nilhari Neupane, Economic Analyst (Livelihoods), International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Kathmandu
- Soumya Chattopadhyay, Consultant, Regional Cooperation at Asian Development Bank, New Delhi
- Vishwaranjan Sinha, Programme Officer (Natural Resources Group), The International Union for Conservation of Nature, Bangkok

20:00 Reception and Dinner

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Friday, 27th October, 2017

Session 2: Promoting trade and transit through inland waterways

This session will discuss the prospects of enhancing domestic, sub-regional and regional trade and transit through inland waterways by looking into its governance and regulatory framework.

Chair: Pravir Pandey, Vice Chairman, Inland Waterways Authority of India, Ministry of Shipping, Government of India

09:30 – 11:00

Panellists

- Saiful Islam, Joint Director, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, Government of Bangladesh
- Sonam Tenzin, Director, Department of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan
- Purushottam Ojha, Former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Supplies, Government of Nepal

11:00 – 11:30 Break

Session 3: Fostering private sector participation to promote trade and tourism within and across borders

This session will explore the opportunities of promoting different kinds of trade and tourism over inland waterways by engaging private sector and advocating an enabling environment for their participation.

Chair: M. P. Bezbaruah, Former Member, North Eastern Council, Ministry of the Development of North East Region, Government of India

11:30 – 13:00

Panellists

- Taufiq Rahman, Director, Tour Operator Associations of Bangladesh
- Lam Dorji, River Guides of Panbang, Bhutan
- Y. K. Singhee, Director, Eastern Navigation Private Limited, Kolkata
- Arun Roy, Consultant, Assam Bengal Navigation
- R. Sushila, Executive Director, Vivada Inland Waterways Limited, Kolkata
- Kumar Dhamala, Managing Director, Engineering Consultancy for Constructive Development Efforts Nepal Private Limited, Nepal

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13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

Session 4: Streamlining community and environmental concerns in inland waterways development discourse

This session will focus on issues and opportunities regarding livelihood generation of riverine communities as well as environmental concerns by engaging civil society voices for inclusive and sustainable development of inland waterways in the BBIN sub-region.

Chair: Ajaya Dixit, Executive Director, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, Kathmandu

14:00 – 15:30

Panellists

- Mominul Haque Sarker, Deputy Executive Director, Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services, Bangladesh
- G. K. Chhopel, Chairman, Bhutan Water Partnership
- Shawahiq Siddiqui, Founding Partner, Indian Environment Law Organisation, New Delhi
- Sabyasachi Dutta, Founder and Director, Asian Confluence, Meghalaya
- Milon Sinha, Director (Fisheries & Animal Husbandry), Nature Environment & Wildlife Society, Kolkata

15:30 – 16:00 Break

Closing remarks

- 16:00 – 16:30**
- Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International
 - Shantanu Mitra, Senior Climate & Environment Advisor, DFID Asia Regional Team, British High Commission, New Delhi

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Annexure 2: Background Note



Sub-regional Dialogue on Inland Waterways

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

Hotel Hindusthan International, Kolkata, India, 26th – 27th October, 2017

Background Note

Objectives

- To promote alternative policy discourses for enabling reform measures on inland waterways to ensure regional connectivity and river-to-bay connectivity in the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal) sub-region
- To present the synthesis report based on country studies from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal and facilitate knowledge sharing on waterways governance within and across borders

Expected Outcome

- Dissemination of the knowledge from synthesis report among policy makers and CSOs as well as creation of a regional discourse on the need for cooperation among the BBIN countries for better management of inland waterways

Background and Context

Rivers supports lifeline for millions in the Ganga-Brahmaputra basin encompassing the BBIN countries and holds a wider importance in the region's geographical, cultural, religious, and economic development. Apart from providing several ecosystem services, rivers have been predominantly used as a means of domestic and cross-border trade and passenger transit within/between Bangladesh and India. Regarded as a cost cum energy efficient means of transportation, development of inland waterway (IW) transportation is presently being considered as a harbinger for stimulating connectivity and trade in this sub-regional grouping. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the dynamics of its development through the lens of economic, social, environmental and geo-political factors.

As part of the Civil Society Fund by The Asia Foundation, CUTS International and its strategic partners have implemented the project titled 'Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins'. CUTS has implemented 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 BBIN sub-region. We envision achieving this goal by promoting alternative policy discourses 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/>

Integrating the outcomes from preceding diagnostic studies and dialogues at sub-national, national, and basin levels, this meeting aims to share the collective knowledge on the institutions governing inland waterways and alternative policy discourses for enabling reform measures will be advocated for at national, basin level and regional meetings. This regional dialogue will also be a greater chance for governments and civil society to engage with each other on inland waterways governance in the BBIN sub-region. The participants and the broader community engaged in inland waterways are expected to show an intention to take up the alternative policy discourse for enabling reform measures.

Key Discussions Points

- **Promoting transboundary cooperation and regional discourse for better governance of inland waterways:** The opening sessions will deliberate the importance and scope of enhancing regional connectivity through the development of inland waterways by discussing the existing legislative and governing mechanisms. The discussion would focus on the synergising three developmental pillars of regulatory reforms, legislative changes (required for managing waterways at a national and regional front) and capital investment (required to finance IW infrastructure, creation of economic zones along waterway routes, and related issues).
- **Promoting trade and transit through inland waterways:** Considering the unexplored benefits of cross border trade, this session will discuss the prospects of enhancing domestic, sub-regional and regional trade and transit through inland waterways by looking into the governance and regulatory framework and further exploring opportunities for aligning it with river-to-bay connectivity.
- **Fostering private sector participation to promote trade and tourism within and across borders:** This session will explore the opportunities of promoting different kinds of trade and tourism over inland waterways by engaging private sector and advocating an enabling environment for their participation.
- **Streamlining community and environmental concerns in inland waterways development discourse:** Given concerns of riverine-dependent livelihoods and ecological losses due to development of inland waterway navigation, this session will focus on issues and opportunities regarding livelihood generation of river dependent communities as well as environmental concerns by engaging civil society voices for inclusive and sustainable development of inland waterways in the BBIN sub-region.

Annexure 3: List of participants

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Hotel Hindustan International, Kolkata, India, 26th - 27th October, 2017

S.NO.	NAME	ORGANIZATION	SIGNATURE
1	Syed Rashid Ali	Wingship Logistics Pvt. Ltd. Dhaka, Bangladesh	
2	Lenin Rajwade	PVLR, VAKANATI, SUNTECH	
3	Sybil Saha	SUNTECH	
4	Kings Dasgupta	RSPN	
5	G.K. Chakrabarty	BHWSB	
6	Komnesh Rout	BASIX-163	

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28	KUMAR SHARMA	IC CODE Nepal Pvt. Ltd.	
29	Nihar Neupane	ICIMOD, Kathmandu	
30	Abdul Jale	Unnayan Shiksha	
31	SWAN PRADEO	mman	
32	Sudhakar S.	SAILWATER	
33	A.K. Inamul Haq	Unnayan Shiksha	
34	Anesha Devi	R & N, Guwahati	Anesha Devi

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7	Papul Chatterjee	CUTS	
8	Pouba Nandak	BHUTAN	
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