

National Policy Dialogue

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

India International Centre, Seminar Hall 2 & 3, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi
Tuesday, 23rd May, 2017

Background Note

Objectives

1. To share the key findings of diagnostic study on national institutions and governance of inland waterways, knowledge sharing within and across borders on waterways governance, as also the trans-boundary aspects of waterways governance
2. To promote alternative policy discourses for enabling reform measures on better governance of inland waterways in India

Expected Outcome

Deliberation and gauging receptiveness on the findings of diagnostic study and creation of more inclusive alternative policy discourses at the national level for enabling reform measures and institutional changes

Background and Context

CUTS International is implementing a project entitled “Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins”.

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 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/>

Under this project, CUTS has conducted a diagnostic study in the states of Assam, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh across the Ganga and the Brahmaputra basins. The findings of the study highlight several challenges and opportunities in the development of inland waterways (IW) from the perspectives of various stakeholders like government institutions, technical institutions, private sector players and dependent communities.

The study has tried to capture matters related to governance mechanisms, convergence between state and national policies concerning IW, technical constraints involved in the development of IW infrastructure, issues related to navigability, private sector concerns in relation to trade through IW, scope of tourism and overall community perspective with regards to the impact of IW development.

Therefore, this National Policy Dialogue is being organised with government officials, private sector players, subject experts, media and CSO representatives, which will help pushing the agenda for alternative policy discourses for enabling reform measures on better governance of inland waterways.

Taking forward the inputs from this National Policy Dialogue, CUTS will share the findings from India with its strategic partners and other stakeholders in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal at the forthcoming basin and sub-regional level dialogues.

Key findings

- With regards to navigation, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is facing challenges in maintaining minimum depth and permanent terminal for navigation in both Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers due to high sedimentation and changes in river channel flow
- Given several challenges surrounding IW navigation, there is a need to conduct long term hydro-morphological studies and data collection by involving relevant technical institutions. Furthermore, better coordination among various government ministries/departments would help overcome the implementation challenges
- To make cargo transportation through IW economically viable, there is an urgent need to link IW with industrial corridors with multimodal connectivity. Policy support to incentivise private sector participation should be taken into consideration
- Promoting water tourism on Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers has great economic potential if concerns related to river navigation and vessel operation and maintenance are taken into consideration. Policy impetus to support tourism development through IW is needed
- Concerns of local communities related to fisheries and other livelihood sector associated with IW should be taken into consideration through inclusive policy discourse