

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

National Policy Dialogue

Organised by

South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE)

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Background Note

For a landlocked country, developing inland water transport (IWT) is prescribed as the best possible way to gain access to sea. Nepal, which has more than 6000 rivers with cumulative length of 45,000 km could be in a place to use the river systems to be connected to international waters. Unfortunately, navigation in Nepal is limited to country boats used in few stretches of the rivers to enable river crossings. Lack of institutional and physical infrastructure regarding water transport has left inland navigation untapped sector in Nepal.

Along with opening up a new economic avenue, having well-equipped inland waterways could be invaluable for swifter and easier trade for Nepal. Moreover, it could provide impetus to seamless regional connectivity — especially in the eastern region of South Asia, which is recognized as a sub-region on its own Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN). Unlike landlocked Nepal and Bhutan, Bangladesh and India have a functional inland water transport system. Nepal could possibly reap the benefits by getting linked through water with these countries through Ganges River Basin (GRB).

Against this backdrop, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) is undertaking diagnostic study to assess the situation of water transport system in Nepal under *Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins (IW) Project*. The study includes institutional analysis on the management of policies, laws and regulations with respect to the management of inland waterways in Nepal. The project aims to contribute to improving institutions (i.e. policies, laws, and regulations) for the governance of inland waterways in the BBIN region from the point of view of transport connectivity and livelihood of those directly connected to targeted waterways.

The objective of this **National Policy Dialogue** meeting is to share findings gathered from literature review and diagnostic field survey conducted at locations in the Koshi and Gandak River basins in Nepal. The report has incorporated the comments and suggestions presented by the stakeholders and experts during series of meetings and consultations held in last quarter. The meeting is supposed to help in recommending a suitable policy discourse for developing inland waterways in Nepal that grants maximum benefits to the local livelihood with a macro objective of improving connecting between countries in eastern South Asia.

This project is being implemented in partnership with CUTS International (India); Unnayan Shamannay (Bangladesh) and Royal Society for Protection of Nature (Bhutan).