



## National Policy Dialogue (Nepal)

on

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

by

*Dr. Saurabh Kumar (sbk@cuts.org)*

**CUTS**®  
International

## About CUTS

CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) began its journey in 1983 in Rajasthan, from a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper *Gram Gadar* (Village Revolution)

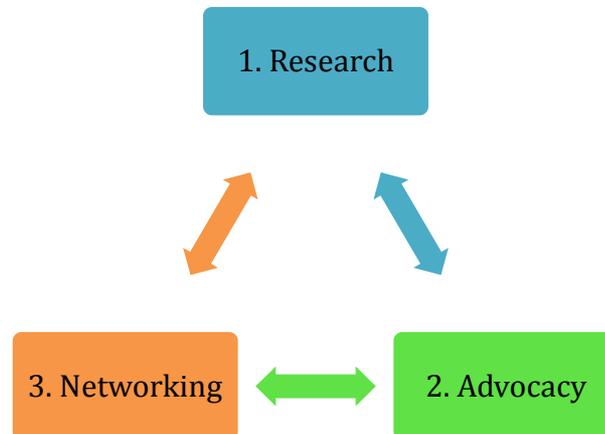
A non-profit, non-governmental organisation with its headquarter in Jaipur, India, centres in Kolkata, Chittorgarh and New Delhi in India and five overseas centres: Geneva (Switzerland), Hanoi (Vietnam), Nairobi (Kenya), Accra (Ghana) and Lusaka (Zambia)

The organisation has evolved from litigation work on consumer protection to an internationally reputed think-tank. The organisation is presently working on issues related to international trade & development, competition, investment & economic regulation, public policy and consumer protection & good governance

### CUTS Mission

“Consumer Sovereignty in the Framework of Social Justice, Economic Equality and Environmental Balance, Within and Across Borders”

### Modelled on evidence-based policy research & advocacy



## About the project

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

**Duration:** September 2016- September 2017

**Supported by:** The Asia Foundation

**Project Area:** Ganga and Brahmaputra basins in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, West Bengal) and Nepal

**Partners:** Unnayan Shamannay (Bangladesh), Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (Bhutan), CUTS (India), South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (Nepal)

**Goal:** to contribute in 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

### Objectives:

- to create an alternative policy discourse for enabling reform measures between policy-makers, civil society, and communities
- share knowledge on policies, laws, and regulations enabling or impeding governance of inland waterways along the Ganges and Brahmaputra

### Methodology:

Field-based research and participatory policy dialogues at sub-national, national, basin and regional level

## Infrastructure Development and Policy Push in India

- Declaration of 106 new National Waterways (NW), in addition to five existing NWs and implementation of the National Waterways Act, 2016 and *Jal Marg Vikas* Project
- Construction of multi-modal terminals at Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Sahibganj (Jharkhand) and Haldia (West Bengal) only on NW-1
- Three more multi-modal terminals on NW-1 will be built at Ghazipur (Uttar Pradesh), Kalughat (West Bengal) and Triveni (Uttar Pradesh)
- Five new Roll on-Roll off (Ro-Ro) crossings and development of ferry services at different locations (Varanasi, Patna, Bhagalpur, Munger, and Kolkata/Haldia on NW-1 and several other such facilities at other NWs)
- Signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and with a number of private companies, public sector undertakings, port-authorities, state governments and other stakeholders
- MoU between IWAI and Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCI) for logistic hubs with rail connectivity
- Development of waterways including dredging , night navigation etc. and set up a state-of-the art River Information System
- Two new vessel building and repairing facilities in North India and revision of Old Vessel Act

## **New Developments at Regional Level**

- MoU between India and Bangladesh on development of fairway from Sirajganj to Daikhawa and Ashuganj to Zakiganj on Indo-Bangladesh protocol route
- MoU between Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships of India and the Department of Shipping, Bangladesh concerning cooperation on Aids to Navigation
- MoU between Bangladesh and India on Passenger and Cruise Vessels on Coastal and Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) routes
- MoU between India and Bangladesh for use of Chittagong and Mongla ports
- MoU between Bangladesh and Bhutan for the use of Chittagong and Mongla ports by Bhutan for inland water connectivity
- Intensified activities on the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project by creation of India Ports Global Private Limited

## Possible Way Forward

- Trade (other than bulk cargo) through waterways holds promise provided the navigability aspects of river movement besides adequate port facilities, equipment and barges are ascertained
- Construction of an integrated port and inland water transport terminal at sea port and IWT-Highway, IWT-Railway transshipment terminals can help ensure seamless freight movement
- Comparative case studies of two modes of transportation, keeping IWT as one, can be an effective tool to generate interests in the minds of private players to invest in developing the IWT infrastructure, setting up manufacturing clusters, multimodal logistic hubs, and provided associated services along the rivers of strategic importance
- River development for navigation, particularly on the NW-1 will also feed freight into Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport corridor between India and Myanmar for connectivity with Indian's North East, and Nepal among others
- Identifying particular stretches in the region with trade potential and concomitant development of infrastructure
- Scenario building exercises with commercially promising waterways in the region to look at commercial viability vis-a-vis political saleability and environmental sustainability
- Provide policy support towards engagement of unorganised sector involved in waterways transport and trade (Permits/ infrastructure etc.) so that development is more inclusive
- More inclusive policy discourse involving all stakeholder groups, different departments within state and between state and centre

## Expected Outcomes of the Project

- Deeper and clear understanding of the current policy discourse and institutions of policies, laws and regulations governing the management of inland waterways in the BBIN countries
- Capture the interaction and implications of inland waterway institutions on gender dynamics and women livelihood
- Deliberation and gauging receptiveness on the findings of research and creation of an inclusive alternative policy discourse at the sub-national, national, basin, and regional level
- Bring in the lower and upper riparian basin-level concerns into the policy discourse and create an enabling environment for advocating on management of inland waterways
- Dissemination of knowledge among policy makers and CSOs as well as creation of a regional discourse for deliberations on the need for cooperation for enabling reform measures among the BBIN countries for better management of inland waterways
- **Major questions:**
  - How prepared are the governance institutions in Nepal to sustainably and effectively govern and harness the rivers on potentially possible waterway routes? Can development of waterways in India benefit Nepal for trade and transit either through multi-modal connectivity or even for cross-border tourism, if yes, what are the issues that need to be addressed?
  - Do we have sufficient clarity and discourse around the interactions between commercial viability (for navigation and trade), grassroots concerns and environmental sustainability of waterways? What institutions and platforms could be engaged and empowered to this end?

**Thank you!**

