

Consultation Workshop on

Policy Dialogue for Improved Water Governance of Brahmaputra Basin: Phase 3

Dhaka, Bangladesh
4th June, 2016

The Brahmaputra River Basin in South Asia is home to 130 million people and is one of the most critical transboundary river systems. However, the absence of integrated management of water resources and lack of coordination among the riparian states poses a considerable threat to the future development plans within the basin. It was realised that there is a strong need for dialogue and discussion across multiple stakeholders (government, civil society organizations, funding agencies, academia, scientific community and media) to encourage integrated and coordinated basin management. The project titled “Transboundary Policy Dialogue for Improved Water Governance in Brahmaputra River” is an initiative by SaciWATERs which aims to create a platform for the discussion of the issues, challenges, and opportunities towards improved co-management of the river basin. The project was started by a group of researchers from India and Bangladesh in 2013 as a bilateral dialogue initiative between India and Bangladesh which later became a multilateral dialogue with the involvement of China and Bhutan. The project which is currently in its third phase (2015-2017), aims to develop a basin level institutional framework for strengthening the co-management of the Brahmaputra Basin.

Keeping in view the aim of the project, South Asia Consortium for Interdisciplinary Water Resources Studies (SaciWATERs), India and Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), Bangladesh jointly organised the Consultation Workshop on Policy Dialogue for Improved Water Governance of Brahmaputra Basin: Phase - III on 4th June 2016 in Dhaka. The workshop was also attended by some Track 1.5 diplomats like Dr. Zafar Ahmed Khan, Senior Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, Bangladesh.



The workshop was divided into three broad themes and implemented with three Technical Sessions as identified below:

- Theme-I knowledge sharing** – review of international trans-boundary protocols, case studies of trans-boundary basin level institutions
- Theme-II Economic opportunities** – Identifying basin wide economic opportunities to address poverty, food and energy security
- Theme-III Disaster management** – Identifying opportunities to co-manage the river for disaster management

“Through several workshops like this, we can come up with some solution to reach a consensus to manage the river”
-Mr. Md. Jahangir Kabir, BWDB

The review of international transboundary protocols, helped in sharing of experiences and process of going into a treaty. The



multi-stakeholder dialogues like this would assist in the identification of basin wide economic opportunities for addressing poverty, food and energy security within the basin. Output of these multi-stakeholder dialogues would also help in the development of efficient and effective strategies for better disaster management. Overall, dissemination of knowledge and

good practices across the region would eventually help in better decision making.

Key Highlights of the Workshop:

- A lot of individual efforts are being carried out in the region for basin management because of which there is a huge gap in the knowledge system. For regional cooperation, it is very to jointly produce and share knowledge among all the riparian countries.
- Knowledge sharing can start through inert avenues like navigation and silt management which in the long run would improve other aspects of basin management also.
- While considering the economic opportunities in the region, it is important to look at them from



the point of view of the environment also. For example, it is very important to give emphasis to both the environmental flow of the river and ecology of the whole region for sustainable basin management.

- All the talks around the Brahmaputra basin are concentrated around the quantity of water. It is imperative that equal attention should be paid to the quality of water also.
- Further the participants emphasized that all the activities (like workshops and consultation meetings etc.) should be done at regional level.
- Significance of involvement of China was also highlighted in the workshop. It is important that more workshops and consultation meetings should be conducted in China to make them aware of the problems faced by the downstream countries.

“With 8% catchment area in Bangladesh and a population of 82 million to sustain, it is very important for Bangladesh to get cooperation from upper riparian countries”
- Mr. Md. Sarafat Hossain Khan, WARPO