



# Report of the BRIDGE in the Ganges- Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) River Basins Regional Water Governance Workshop

22 – 25 November 2016, Bangkok, Thailand





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# 1 Workshop Background

## 1.1 The BRIDGE GBM project

The BRIDGE GBM or 'Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) for the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) River Basins' is a project funded by The Asia Foundation and facilitated by IUCN. The main goal of the project is to **strengthen civil society engagement in water resource management and trans-boundary cooperation in the GBM basins**. To achieve this goal, the project is facilitating the development of two principal outputs:

1. A regional CSO vision for cooperative transboundary water resource management in GBM;
2. A roadmap for sustainable transboundary inland navigation and fisheries management between Bangladesh and India.

[Click](#) for more information about the BRIDGE GBM project.

## 1.2 Purpose and objectives of the workshop

The four-day Regional Water Governance Workshop was facilitated by IUCN from 22-25 November 2016 in Bangkok (Thailand) and was attended by representatives from CSOs working in the Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra basins.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to:

- serve as a networking and experience-sharing platform for CSOs at the regional level;
- provide technical knowledge on globally accepted legal principles and institutional mechanisms applicable in the context of shared water resource management;
- discuss the role of gender in water governance and opportunities to mainstream gender and women's leadership in water and basin planning;
- identify a goal (vision), outcomes and intervention strategies (activities) for the development of a CSO vision for cooperative water governance in the GBM.

This workshop was the first among a series of capacity building and dialogue events to be facilitated by the project.

## 1.3 Organisation of the workshop

The four day workshop was divided into six sessions, each with specific objectives. (Please see Annex 1 for the agenda.)

Session 1 introduced participants to the BRIDGE GBM project and the rationale for 'cooperation' in the context of trans-boundary water resource management. Existing activities and programmes in the GBM countries were discussed during Session 2. In Session 3, technical presentations were given on the principles of international water law,

and the legal and institutional framework that could support cooperative, hydro-diplomacy approaches. Session 4 provided space for sharing experiences and approaches to mainstream gender in water governance. Session 5 was devoted to a role play exercise, aimed at developing participants' negotiation skills through the application of knowledge acquired during the technical sessions. Session 6 initiated the development of the CSO vision.

The workshop's lead trainer was Dr Alejandro Iza (Head of the IUCN Environmental Law Programme, in Bonn, Germany). He gave technical presentations on the legal and institutional aspects linked to the governance of shared waters.

From Oxfam, Ms Socheata Sim (Mekong Water Governance Project Manager) and Ms Mixap Bounthavivanh (Capacity Building and Networking Coordinator, Mekong Regional Water Governance Program) provided support in the design and delivery of the gender session.

Ms Sonam Choden (Department of Forests and Park Services, Royal Government of Bhutan) and Mr Shawahiq Siddiqui (Partner, Indian Environment Law Organisation) were invited to the workshop as resource persons. They shared their perspectives on water governance in Bhutan and the current legal and policy landscape and status of water cooperation in South Asia.

#### **1.4 Participants' profile**

The workshop was attended by representatives from 17 different CSOs from five different countries (six from India, five from Nepal, two each from Bhutan, Bangladesh and China) and one government representative from the Department of Forests and Park Services, Royal Government of Bhutan.

The participants represented a broad range of expertise. Many of the CSOs represented were working at the community level on trans-boundary water resource management issues, such as flood management, climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods strategies. More information can be found in Section 2.2.1 of this report as well as in the participants' list attached as Annex 2.

## **2 Proceedings of the Workshop**

The sections below summarize the presentations and discussions held at the workshop. For the sake of clarity, the outcomes from different sessions have been re-organized under relevant themes.

### **2.1 Welcome and introduction to the workshop**

Mr Raphaël Glémet (Senior Programme Officer, Water and Wetlands, IUCN Asia Regional Office) welcomed participants. He highlighted that workshop is a forum and an opportunity to enrich knowledge, share experiences and develop new ideas for partnerships that could foster cooperative management of water resources in the GBM region.

Improving transboundary water cooperation is becoming a key pillar and focus of IUCN's water programme, both globally and within Asia. Experiences from various projects in the GBM and the Mekong region have helped IUCN to develop a better understanding of the current challenges facing trans-boundary river systems as well as hydro-diplomacy efforts. These experiences have also helped IUCN to design and support multi-level dialogue processes to enhance cooperative frameworks for the governance of trans-boundary systems. It is a priority for IUCN to support countries in planning and developing hydro-diplomacy approaches that take into account trans-boundary river management and support stable, long-lasting and effective dialogue and cooperation among countries.

In this dialogue, the role of Civil Society Organisations is critical. CSOs are the link between local communities and policy makers. Coordinated efforts by CSOs could be a key factor contributing to the change in the current narrative on regional cooperation and shared water resources in the GBM. Despite this potential role, however, the voices of CSOs are often not heard. Limited understanding of the technical and institutional aspects of shared water governance and of strategic approaches is a challenge to constructive engagement. There are very few entry points available for CSO engagement at national and regional level. As a result, the CSO community continues to have relatively little impact on regional water dialogues.

### **2.2 Outcomes of the participants' questionnaire survey**

An online questionnaire was sent to all participants in advance of the workshop, in an effort to develop a better understanding of the CSOs represented at the workshop, their flagship programmes and their challenges and constraints.

The survey indicated that many CSOs are working with partners across the border, particularly on issues such as climate change, flood management, disaster risk reduction and the development and implementation of community-based early warning systems. In addition to the GBM rivers, the survey revealed that CSOs are also working on the Teesta, Gandak and Kosi rivers.

The survey also indicated that the CSOs are engaged with many different stakeholders. Local government and local communities were identified as being the most important, whilst

the private sector was identified as being the least important. In terms of sources of funding, government, international NGOs and foundations were indicated as important. The funding from governments was largely indirect, coming through partnerships and mostly for community and post-disaster relief work.

Key challenges identified were: the limited and short-term project funding; financial problems within the organisation; the reluctance of governments to cooperate with CSOs, particularly on water-related issues; and the low level of exposure, communication and capacity to engage in regional level water dialogue.

Limited government funding and plummeting donor contributions have been undermining the capacities of local CSOs to bring about a positive change. There is a general dearth of high-quality research work to inform and guide the dialogue on cooperative water governance in the GBM. Governments have tended to view financing of research as an avoidable cost rather than an investment.

The shrinking space for CSO advocacy on shared water issues, limited institutional coordination, and the inability to recruit and retain skilled and motivated young people were also identified as important challenges. The debates at the workshop clearly acknowledged that constructive engagement with the government is necessary. It is very difficult to work if a CSO does not have the endorsement of the government.

Private sector funding was identified as important in the current scenario. However, there are reputational risks, as the private sector is perceived as the sector driving environmental change. Private sector funding to CSOs is mostly linked to image building rather than to the creation of positive change on the ground. To influence change and make the private sector more responsible, CSOs need to be strategic in the way in which they network and communicate with this sector. The ability to clearly understand and frame water-related issues and to present a case is an important skill that CSOs will need to achieve this.

Within this context, the survey identified a number of priority issues for inclusion in the CSO vision for good water governance in the GBM basins. These are listed below:

- Capacity building of government authorities, communities and CSOs on water resource management, biodiversity survey and ecological restoration;
- Improved disaster preparedness at both the community and basin level. There is a particular need for management approaches to deal with disasters such as floods and droughts;
- Improved legal and institutional frameworks that incorporate community perspectives;
- Lobbying and advocacy for regional cooperation on shared water resource management;
- Protection of local livelihoods, and promotion of economically and ecologically sustainable alternative livelihoods.

## 2.3 Presentations from participants

Below is the brief introduction to the presentations made by selected organisations. Please see Annex 3 for full presentation abstracts.

**Ms Sonam Choden** (Senior Forestry Officer and Ramsar Focal Point, Department of Forests and Park Services, Royal Government of Bhutan) spoke about the developmental philosophy of Bhutan. This is based on the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which in turn is founded on the four main pillars of good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, the preservation and promotion of culture, and environmental conservation. The presentation also emphasised the need for area-based management and planning processes, based on landscape analysis.

**Mr Ajaya Dixit** (Executive Director, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition-Nepal) gave a presentation entitled, "Complex Mosaic: Trans-boundary Water Governance". This discussed the need to address water challenges by evolving new knowledge and methods that are more responsive and equitable at the local, national and trans-boundary levels. Such an approach should also promote participatory processes in the design and development of water infrastructure, democratization of institutions and decentralization of operation and management, in order to promote stewardship of water.

The presentation by **Mr Sabyasachi Dutta** (Executive Director, Asian Confluence, India) highlighted the efforts made by his organisation to bring together various stakeholders from the region and the significance of such efforts in developing win-win solutions for the management of the shared rivers for regional peace. The River Festival (NADI 2016), organized in July 2016 by Asian Confluence in collaboration with the government, was cited as an example of a bottom-up approach to hydro-diplomacy which sought to garner support from both civil society and local government. The objective was to discuss a shared vision for the region, connected by riverine transport, leading to enhanced regional trade and tourism.

**Dr. Qinghua Cui** (Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, Beijing, China) gave a presentation which highlighted the significance of ethnobotanical knowledge available with local communities and its use in biodiversity conservation planning. The ethnobotanical research facilitated by CBIK has led to many new discoveries. CBIK has also completed an inventory of the aquatic species in two key wetlands, Beihai and Nashihai, located in the Lancang river basin upstream of the Mekong River.

**Ms Arundhati Deka** (Research Associate, SaciWATERs India) discussed the outcomes of the transnational policy dialogue on improved water governance in the Yarlung Zangpo – Brahmaputra – Jamuna river basin, facilitated by SaciWATERs. Some of the major challenges to cooperative water governance identified through this project include: the lack of awareness of rights on trans-boundary water among the CSOs and local communities; incomplete information on government policies; lack of knowledge on international and regional principles that support the role of women; and lack of trust among state and non-state actors.



**Ms Archana Chatterjee** (MFF National Coordinator, India and former E4L Project Manager, IUCN) shared the experiences from the Ecosystems for Life (E4L) project. A Bangladesh-India Initiative which worked to develop a shared vision and understanding of food, livelihood and water security issues. Inland navigation and integrated water resources management were two of the project's principal themes. Some of the key outcomes included the formation of Joint Research Teams, the engagement of multiple actors and development of research-based policy options.

**Mr Jozef Van Der Zanden** (Biodiversity Coordinator, IUCN Bangladesh) presentation highlighted the key factors affecting effective water cooperation in the Brahmaputra region. These are based on the outcomes of The Water Diplomacy: Making Water Cooperation Work (WADI) project that is led by The Hague Institute of Global Justice (THIGJ) and implemented by IUCN in India and Bangladesh. The project has developed and applied the legal and political economy framework to analyse factors affecting water cooperation at multiple levels and understand current and future cooperation scenarios. Overall, the research outcomes indicate that there is an absence of regional level, Track I cooperation among the four Brahmaputra basin countries.

## **2.4 Technical presentations: governance of shared waters**

### **2.4.1 Water cooperation in the GBM basins**

**Dr Alejandro Iza** (Head, IUCN Environmental Law Programme, Bonn, Germany) gave a presentation on the theme of trans-boundary water cooperation. It highlighted the need for cooperation in shared river basins and described the ways in which can be operationalized. In Asia, it is estimated that there are more than 60 transboundary river basins. Sustainable management of these rivers is challenging due to high population density and growth and the stress on natural resources in the current scenario of climate change. Therefore, it is important that countries in the region cooperate for the sustainable management of shared rivers; such an approach will help to ensure an uninterrupted supply of ecosystem services at the basin level. Cooperation can: lead to good neighborly relations; help to avoid conflict; and eventually lead to agreements over the management of shared natural resources. However, for these outcomes to be achieved, cooperation needs to be continuous and in good faith. This includes notifying, consulting and conferring on the basis of adequate information and taking measures to avoid significant harm to neighbors.

**Mr Shawahiq Siddiqui's** (Advocate, Supreme Court of India and Partner, Indian Environment Law Organization, New Delhi) presentation provided an overview of the legal and policy landscape for regional cooperation in the GBM. He noted that South Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world, and the vast developmental and intra-regional trade potential is underutilized. Water cooperation in South Asia, despite its tremendous potential and its benefits, has not been easy or forthcoming. The SAARC platform has remained fairly dormant in pushing any kind of substantive regional agenda forward, contributing to the emergence of a sub-regional agenda within South Asia. Envisioning a regional framework that offers multiple benefits from the development of region's water resources and attempts to set the agenda by way of deliberative enquiry will be a step in right direction.

Following these presentations, participants debated the role of the larger and stronger riparian countries (such as India and China) in breaking the deadlock over the management of shared water resources. However, the discussion also highlighted the need for smaller countries to make offers or suggest a plan that would be of interest to their larger neighbors and could lead to concrete benefit sharing proposals.

The current geopolitical situation in the GBM region is dominated by bilateral agreements, which have led to more problems than solutions. Changing the vision for water management and bringing China and India into the benefit sharing discourse is the way forward.

Both China and India are developing at a fast pace. Their internal water demand has increased manifold and the two countries are very concerned about their own water security. There is a need to think outside the box about ways of engaging and presenting the evidence, in order to resolve the deadlock over water sharing and river basin management.

The discussions highlighted the fact that neither India nor China has ratified the UN Watercourses Convention (UNWC). One of the reasons for this is that they do not agree with the definition of a "watercourse" as provided by UNWC. India has always contested the inclusion of underground water resources in the definition of watercourses.

#### **2.4.2 Legal and institutional aspects**

A technical presentation on the 'Governance of shared water: Legal and institutional aspects' was delivered by Dr Alejandro Iza. It introduced participants to the procedural rules, institutional requirements and dispute resolution mechanisms established under International Water Law (IWL).

Dr Iza explained that existing water governance laws can be categorised into three levels: global, regional and basin level. Laws are based on principles and under International Water Law, there is a series of principles that could inform the content of any treaty, no matter at what level it is negotiated.

Three of the main principles recognised by most global and regional water governance treaties established under IWL are: equitable and reasonable utilisation; no significant harm; and the protection of ecosystems. At a global level, the UNWC is emerging as an important legal instrument for regulating the uses of international watercourses (for purposes other than navigation). Article 2 (a) defines a watercourse as "a system of surface waters and groundwater constituting by virtue of their physical relationship a unitary whole and normally flowing into a common terminus".

Once there is legal framework agreed by the stakeholders/countries, its implementation requires a platform or institutional mechanism. Institutions provide the mechanism for joint management of a basin. If there is a disagreement between countries on the interpretation of any provision, institutions provide a platform and the mechanisms for dispute resolution.

There are different ways to establish platforms; they can be both formal and informal. Institutions become indispensable when States aim at achieving equitable utilization and

sustainable management of a basin. They also support coordination of competitive and concurrent needs among different actors (States and non-State).

## **2.5 Introduction and conceptualization of the benefit sharing approach**

Benefit sharing approaches consider all the possible benefits - the “basket of benefits” - and ways of sharing these in an equitable manner in order to achieve “win - win” situations for all stakeholders. The Columbia River Treaty of 1964 between USA and Canada is an example of a benefit sharing agreement. The treaty provides a framework for equitably sharing the hydroelectric power and flood control benefits resulting from the development of hydropower dams in the upper Columbia River basin.

Benefit sharing and equitable utilization have some common features and rely on the existence of cooperative frameworks. Both promote State participation in resource use and also aim at protecting ecosystems simultaneously. However, it is important to understand that equitable and reasonable utilization is a principle established under International Water Law, whereas benefit sharing is a water management approach.

During the discussion that followed, participants noted that - in order for a benefit sharing approach to work in the GBM - there would first be a need to identify and operationalize a benefit sharing mechanism at the bilateral level, with the aim of creating examples that could be replicated regionally.

Participants further discussed the benefit sharing approaches that smaller countries such as Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal could use when negotiating with bigger neighbors such as India and China. In this regard, inland navigation was cited as an important issue for Nepal, as it could provide direct access to the sea for this land-locked country; however, Nepal has failed to negotiate any arrangement with India in this regard. In addition, the benefits from the treaties signed with India in the past have failed to achieve their full potential. There is a need make sure that the benefits can be shared in a tangible and economically beneficial manner in such scenarios.

On the other hand, India is interested in developing connectivity to its north-eastern states through Bangladesh. The latter could use this as a point when negotiating benefit sharing models.

These discussions clearly identified the need not only to share water, but also, the other resources and benefits linked to water. For example, inland navigation could be the entry point in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) for the development of benefit sharing approaches.

Currently, the benefit sharing arrangement between Bhutan and India is based on selling energy (hydropower) from Bhutan to India. However, there are other factors that go beyond water, such as food security in Bhutan; this could potentially be explored as part of a benefit sharing agreement.

There is need to go back to the fundamentals in the way we treat rivers, the way we develop water resources, and the way we train manpower. The existing bilateral treaties have not

helped in the development of shared rivers or in saving lives by better management of issues such as flooding, which is frequent in the GBM region.

## **2.6 Gender in water governance**

The gender session was co-facilitated by Oxfam and IUCN, and provided an introduction to gender and development concepts as related to water governance. The session also provided an insight into the gender mainstreaming process used in the IUCN Mangroves for the Future (MFF) Programme, a multi-country initiative that deals with shared resource management interests. The aim of the session was to explore participants' knowledge of gender issues and bring them to a similar level of understanding.

During the session, the concepts of gender equality and equity were discussed in detail, both from a human rights perspective as well as from a programme development and implementation perspective. With respect to programme development and implementation, it was agreed that gender equality is achieved through a conscious process of identifying, reflecting and implementing interventions that address gender gaps and overcome gender biases in policy interventions.

The dialogue reflected the differential roles of women and men and the existing areas of inequality that remain across the private and public spheres at all levels (social, political and economic). Experiences shared by MFF and the Oxfam Inclusion Project highlighted the nature of the various gender gaps that occur across different parts of the region. These include differential access to education opportunities between men and women, differential access to information and training opportunities, and differential opportunities to play leadership roles at the community level. The two programmes pointed out that women commonly face barriers within the economy as well as at the household level. There are limited opportunities and representation of women in power and decision-making processes, including institutional mechanisms that are needed to support water governance locally.

## **2.7 Negotiation and role play exercise**

The objective of this exercise was to provide space to understand the implications of the concepts learned during the technical sessions, and their utility when negotiating issues linked to trans-boundary water resource management. The role play exercise was based on imaginary country scenarios, involving three countries and their challenges linked to share water resource management.

The participants were divided into the three country groups and a Technical Advisory Panel. During plenary discussions, there were moments of deadlock among the countries. The TAF, however, played a very constructive role in resolving this and trying to build consensus.

Below is an assessment of the role play exercise:

- Participants applied the principles of cooperation, no harm, equity etc. while negotiating their case. However, nationalistic feelings and historical conflicts overshadowed the need for the development of cooperative approaches, leading to deadlock and delay in consensus building among the country groups.

- Initially, the dialogues were not very strategic and the countries could not think of any trade-offs or strategic partnership opportunities to resolve the deadlock. It could be said that participants behaved in a stereotypical bureaucratic manner.
- However, there was a consensus on the need to overcome differences and resolve conflict to promote regional cooperation while dealing with the issues of energy and food security, climate change adaptation and ecosystem degradation. The need for good quality EIA for sustainable hydropower development was discussed at length.
- There was agreement that UNWC, 1997 could be the tool for fostering regional cooperation to build cooperation and resolve the deadlock.

### 3 CSO Vision for Good Water Governance and Its Integration into Policy

#### 3.1 The CSO vision

The last session of the workshop was aimed at starting work on the CSO vision for good water governance in the GBM region. Below is the consolidated vision statement developed through discussions at the workshop:

*River/freshwater ecosystems in the GBM region are in a healthy state and promoting economic and social development through equitable and reasonable utilization based on consensus and active people's cooperation at local, national and regional level.*

The debates on the vision statement highlighted the need to include words such as freshwater, stakeholder engagement, consensus building and equity. It was suggested the vision statement must inspire peaceful coexistence and promote economic and social development, without compromising the ecological integrity of the GBM region.

It was noted that a vision statement should be aspirational in nature, and that it should be readily understandable and not overly technical. In contrast, the outputs and activities leading to the vision can be more specific.

Based on the debates and discussions at the workshop, the following themes emerged as priorities around which the framework for regional cooperation and good water governance could be developed. These themes provide a clear opportunity for CSO engagement in fostering cooperative regional governance:

- Climate change resilience and adaptation;
- Cooperation on sustainable development of the hydropower sector;
- Development of inland navigation at the trans-boundary level. (This could help foster regional cooperation and the adoption of basin level management approaches.);
- Benefit sharing models based on equity and inclusiveness. (This clearly emerged as an umbrella theme under which all the different cooperation and water management issues could be discussed.)

At the invitation of IUCN, Mr Ajay Dixit gave a presentation on a paper that he co-authored more than a decade ago, entitled “*Water, Power and People: A South Asian Manifesto on the Politics and Knowledge of Water.*” Workshop participants agreed that this could provide a good starting point for the development of the CSO vision. The full paper can be found at: <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1240354.files/The%20South%20Asian%20Water%20Manifesto.pdf>

#### 3.2 Opportunities for CSO engagement in regional water dialogues

The workshop identified priority transboundary issues on which CSOs could engage and foster cooperation in the GBM basins at regional level. Below is a summary of these discussions:

- **Water quality monitoring, development of community based DRR mechanisms and adoption of best water management practices at local and national level:** These were clearly identified as potential issues in which CSOs could become engaged. One example is the community-led, early warning system established in the Ganges basin by the IUCN E4L project, in partnership with the local NGO, NavJagriti, based in Bihar, India. The system is still working successfully and the government has identified this model for replication in other parts of the state;
- **Joint research and management:** This would help to build trust at the civil society level, and support the development of cooperative and joint management approaches at the government level;
- **Conservation of biodiversity and migratory species:** For example, freshwater dolphins could be used as flagship species to advocate the need for ecologically sound management of rivers in the Ganges basin. They could also be used to help convince local communities of the relevance of fishing ban periods and the need to develop alternative livelihood options to support them during such bans;
- **Development of water dependent sectors such as Inland Water Transportation and ecotourism:** There is already interest from the national governments in the BBIN region in improving regional connectivity. Transboundary IWT provides an economic opportunity to engage communities living in the remotest areas and to improve their livelihoods.

Strengthening existing CSO platforms/networks and their engagement in trans-boundary research projects could lead to the creation of an enabling environment for CSO engagement in regional water dialogue. Mapping the opportunities for CSO engagement in shared water resource management in the GBM basin would be a good way forward.

Examples of some existing platforms and events that could be used to advocate for greater regional integration and cooperative river basin management include the following:

- The River Festival facilitated by Asian Confluence provides a multi-stakeholder platform for cross-boundary dialogue;
- The Himalayan Consensus Summit for the economic development of Nepal is a multi-stakeholder event involving members of civil society, government, development institutions and the private sector;
- The International River Symposiums organized by a variety of institutions and platforms, such as the one by the Australian Government, also offer opportunities to promote cooperative river basin management;

- Regional platforms, such as the People's SAARC, the New Delhi Dialogue and the India-ASEAN Dialogue Forum, provide additional opportunities.

## **Annex 1: Agenda**

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**BRIDGE GBM Regional Water Governance Workshop**  
**22-25 November 2016, Bangkok**  
 Ginkanya Ballroom, 5th floor, The Four Wings Hotel, Sukhumvit Road 26

Day 1: 22 November 2016	
8:00 – 8:30	Registration
<b>Session 1: CSO activities in GBM and rationale for cooperation</b>	
08:30 – 09:00	<b>Opening Remarks</b> (10 mins) Presentation on objectives and agenda (20 mins) ( <b>Mr Raphaël Glémet</b> , Senior Programme Officer, Water and Wetlands, NRG IUCN ARO)
09:00 – 09:30	<b>Presentation:</b> BRIDGE GBM project ( <b>Mr Vishwa Sinha</b> , Programme Officer, NRG IUCN ARO)
09:30 – 10:30	<b>Group activity (I):</b> Introduction of participants and activities on water governance in the GBM <i>Who is in the room?</i>
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break and group picture
10:45 – 12:30	<b>Presentation: Rationale for Cooperation</b> <i>Context of shared water governance. Why cooperate?</i> ( <b>Dr. Alejandro Iza</b> , Head, IUCN Environmental Law Programme, Bonn, Germany)
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch Break
<b>Session 2: Shared water governance: approaches and learning's</b>	
13:30 – 15:00	<b>Lessons Learned from Regional and National Water Governance Programmes</b> <i>IUCN water governance programme in GBM:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecosystems for Life (<b>Ms Archan Chaterjee</b>, IUCN India)</li> <li>• Water Diplomacy Project (<b>Mr Van Der Zanedan</b>, IUCN Bangladesh)</li> </ul> <i>Presentations from GBM Countries (10 mins each):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Sonam Choden</b> (Department of Forests and Park Services, Bhutan)</li> <li>• <b>Mr Ajaya Mani Dixit</b> (Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, Nepal)</li> <li>• <b>Mr Sabyasachi Dutta</b> (Asian Confluence, India)</li> <li>• <b>Ms Qinghua CUI</b> (Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, China)</li> <li>• <b>Ms Arundhati Deka</b> (SaciWATERs, India)</li> </ul>
15:00 – 15:15	Coffee Break
15:15 – 17:00	<b>Group work:</b> Identification of policy integration opportunities
19:00 – 21:30	<b>Networking Dinner</b> Indus Restaurant (71 Sukhumvit Soi 26, Bangkok)

Day 2: 23 November 2016	
Session 3: International water laws and conflict resolution	
09:00 – 11:00	<b>Technical presentation: 1/2</b> Governance of shared water: legal and institutional aspects <b>(Dr. Alejandro Iza)</b>
11:00 – 11:15	Coffee Break
11:15-13:00	<b>Technical presentation: 2/2</b> Governance of shared water: legal and institutional aspects <b>(Dr. Alejandro Iza)</b>
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch Break
13:30 – 1:30	Legal Responses to Sub-Regional Water Cooperation in South Asia- The Story so far... <b>Mr Shawahiq Siddiqui</b> (Indian Environment Law Organisation)
14:30 – 16:00	<b>Technical presentation:</b> Introduction and conceptualization of the benefit sharing approach <b>(Dr. Alejandro Iza)</b>
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break
16:30 – 17: 15	<b>Practical exercise:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining the case and the methodology of the practical exercise</li> <li>• Distributing participants into countries and sharing the background material</li> </ul>
Day 3: 24 November 2016	
Session 4: Gender in water governance	
09:00 – 12:30	Gender in Water Governance (Co-facilitated by Oxfam and IUCN) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues, approaches and practical exercises</li> </ul>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break
Session 6: Negotiation and role-play exercise	
13:30 – 15:00	Negotiation role-play exercise facilitated by IUCN <b>Group work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of the conflict scenarios</li> <li>• Preparation of country positions</li> </ul>
15:00 – 16:30	Negotiation role-play exercise facilitated by IUCN <b>Group work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plenary session</li> </ul>
16:30 – 17:00	Debriefing session
Day 4: 25 November 2016	
Session 7: CSO vision and priorities for cooperative water governance in GBM	
09:00 – 09:30	<b>Presentation:</b> Outcomes of BRIDGE GBM Dhaka Consultation (Towards the roadmap for sustainable and integrated management of IWT and fisheries sector, by <b>Mr Vishwa Sinha</b> , IUCN ARO)
09:30 – -12:30	<b>Group work:</b> GBM regional water governance vision: Definition of preliminary Goal Outcomes , Challenges and Opportunities <i>Including Coffee Break</i>

12:30 – 13:30	Lunch Break
13:30 – 16:00	<b>Group work:</b> Intervention strategy and building blocks for the regional vision
16:00 – 16:15	Coffee break
16:15 – 16:30	<b>Presentation</b> on next steps <i>Book dates for upcoming visioning workshop</i>
16:30 – 17:00	Workshop evaluation and feedback

## Annex 2: Participants List

S/n	Title	Participant's Name	Designation and Organization
<b>Bhutan</b>			
1	Ms.	Rebecca Pradhan	Senior Ecologist, Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN), Bhutan
2	Ms.	Sonam Choden	Senior Forestry Officer, Ramsar Focal Point Watershed Management Division, Department of Forests and Park Services, Royal Government of Bhutan
3	Mr.	Tashi Jamtsho	Director, Climate and Energy, WWF Bhutan
<b>Bangladesh</b>			
4	Mr.	M. Mokhlesur Rahman	Executive Director, Center for Natural Resource Studies (CNRS), Dhaka
5	Ms.	Sharmeen Soneya Murshid	Member of the National River Commission (NRCC) and Executive Director Brotee, Dhaka
<b>China</b>			
6	Ms.	Feng Chen	Researcher, Shan Shui Conservation Center, Shan Shui
7	Dr.	Cui Qinghua	Researcher, Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (CBIK)
<b>India</b>			
8	Ms.	Arundhati Deka	Research Associate, SaciWATERS, Hyderabad
9	Mr.	Jitendra Kumar	Secretary, Nav Jagriti, Patna
10	Mr.	Sabyasachi Dutta	Director, Asian Confluence, Shillong
11	Mr.	Shawahiq Siddiqui	Partner, Indian Environment Law Organisation (IELO), New Delhi
12	Mr.	Syed Abdul Aziz Ishaqi Farhan	Deputy Manager, Policy and Planning Domain, Development Alternatives, New Delhi
13	Ms.	Veena Vidyadharan	Policy Analyst and Deputy Head, CITEE, CUTS International, Jaipur
<b>Nepal</b>			
14	Mr.	Ajaya Dixit	Executive Director, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET), Nepal
15	Mr.	Balendu Hamal	Director, Association for Protection of Environment and Culture (APEC)
16	Mr.	Dev Narayan Yadav	Member, Koshi Victim Society

17	Mr.	Dipendra Raj Karki	Director, Abhiyan Nepal
18	Mr.	Robin Ghimire	Director, Union for Culture, Human and Environment Protection (UCHEP)
<b>Staff (IUCN and Oxfam)</b>			
19	Dr.	Alejandro Iza	Head, Environmental Law Programme, Bonn, Germany
20	Ms.	Archana Chaterjee	MFF National Coordinator, IUCN India
21	Ms.	Bounthavivanh Mixap	Inclusion Project, Capacity Building and Networking Coordinator, Oxfam
22	Dr.	Deep Narayan Shah	Programme Officer, IUCN Nepal
23	Ms.	Kulkanya Hiranyasthiti	Secretary, Natural Resources Group, IUCN Asia Regional Office
24	Mr.	Raphaël Glémet	Senior Programme Officer, Water and Wetlands, IUCN Asia Regional Office
25	Ms.	Socheata Sim	Mekong Water Governance Project Manager, Oxfam
26	Mr.	Jozef Van Der Zanden	Coordinator, Biodiversity Conservation, IUCN Bangladesh
27	Mr.	Vishwa Sinha	Programme Officer, IUCN Asia Regional Office
28	Mr.	Zhang Cheng	Programme Manager, IUCN South China

## Annex 3: Presentation Abstracts

**Ms Sonam Choden (Senior Forestry Officer and Ramsar Focal Point, Department of Forests and Park Services, Royal Government of Bhutan)**

### *The Bhutanese water story*

The Bhutanese water story is linked to the developmental philosophy of the country, which is anchored in the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). The GNH is based on the four main pillars of good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, the preservation and promotion of culture, and environmental conservation. The Constitution of Bhutan also states that "every Bhutanese is a trustee of the natural resources and the environment".

With more than 60% of the population still agrarian with high direct dependence on natural resources, it is necessary that effective management plans be implemented to maintain the overall health of the watershed. Understanding the current situation and future challenges, the need for an area based management and planning process based on landscape analysis is emerging as a priority. At present, there are many sectoral development plans and livelihood improvement strategies in place. However, they are not cohesive and sometime in conflict with other sectors within the same watershed. This clearly indicates the need for integration and strategic planning for resource utilization and management. There are ample opportunities to do this and further improve management of water resources in Bhutan. Enhanced coordination, proper valuation, understanding the cumulative effects and implementing the good policies in place can all further help Bhutan to equitably manage its water resources.

**Mr Shawahiq Siddiqui (Advocate, Supreme Court of India and Partner, Indian Environment Law Organization, New Delhi)**

### *Legal responses to sub-regional water cooperation in South Asia - the story so far...*

South Asia continues to remain one of the least integrated regions in the world, with territorial claims and contests marking the region (ex. Kashmir, Arunachal). The vast developmental and intra-regional trade potential in South Asia remains underutilized. The SAARC platform established by the South Asian countries has remained fairly dormant in pushing any kind of substantive regional agenda forward. The recent attempts to achieve regional deals aimed at promoting trade and connectivity such as the Regional Motor Vehicles Agreement have not been successful (turned down by Pakistan in 2014). This led to the emergence of a sub-regional agenda within South Asia, wherein BBIN is considered to have tremendous potential and the political will to promote regional connectivity and trade. However, Bhutan's reconsideration of the BBIN corridor on environmental concerns sends a different signal.

Water cooperation in South Asia, despite its tremendous potential and its benefits, has not been easy or forthcoming. The reasons are varied, from political to technical; however, it can be said that disparate country priorities, nationalistic political agendas, ambitions and geopolitical realities have impacted water relations. The need, therefore, is to adopt a negotiated approach towards the improvement of water relations among the countries. The legal frameworks and the institutions under them need to be revisited, with the objective of ensuring that these frameworks acknowledge and reflect the existing challenges and the

potential for sustainable water resource development. Envisioning a regional framework that offers multiple benefits from the development of region's water resources and attempts to set the agenda by way of deliberative enquiry will be a step in the right direction.

**Mr Ajaya Dixit (Executive Director, Institute for Social and Environmental Transition-Nepal)**

***Complex mosaic: trans-boundary water governance***

The conventional approaches to water management at local and trans-boundary scale are inadequate and insufficient to deal with emerging challenges spawned by changes in climate and other factors. Climate change is likely to affect regional hydrology and consequently floods, droughts, erosion and sedimentation processes. The challenges associated with changing social, political, economic and technological contexts impinge on water demand and use patterns.

Addressing water challenges requires developing new knowledge and methods that are more responsive and equitable at the local, national and trans-boundary levels. To this end, it is necessary to take a holistic approach by considering the entire waterscape, upstream and downstream linkages, uses and users at different levels. Such an approach should also promote participatory processes in the design and development of water infrastructure, democratization of institutions, and decentralization of operation and management in order to promote stewardship of water.

**Mr Sabyasachi Dutta (Executive Director, Asian Confluence, India)**

***Celebrating a common riverine heritage: some sharings from the north-eastern region of India***

Enhanced understanding and collaboration amongst the nation states to garner win-win solutions for the management of shared rivers for all stakeholders is a cornerstone for regional peace, stability and overall prosperity and development of the GBM region. The River Festival (NADI 2016) organized by the Asian Confluence in July 2016, in collaboration with the Government of Meghalaya (India), was a bottom-up hydro-diplomacy effort aimed at garnering support of the civil societies and the local governments of the states of north-east India, to interact with their counterparts in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The festival was also attended by observers from Myanmar and Japan.

The objective was to discuss a shared vision of the region connected by riverine transport, leading to enhanced trade and tourism. Rather than discussing a particular trans-boundary river or a vexing issue, the forum focused on creating a platform which can constructively come up with an agenda of cooperation and joint action leading to win-win solutions. While top policy makers and experts were represented, NADI also brought in aspects related to culture, trade and development of riverine borders to create an atmosphere of joint celebration of trans-boundary rivers.

The debates at the forum helped in building consensus that rivers are not just 'water stocks' that can be extracted and shared. Therefore, there is a need is to move beyond conventional diplomacy and expand interactions among different levels of stakeholders to maintain the environmental security of the region. Governmental institutions should play the role of key

facilitators of people-to-people interactions and creating mechanisms for bringing together the stakeholders of this region beyond the limitations of culture and borders.

**Ms Arundhati Deka (Research Associate, SaciWATERS India)**

***Transnational policy dialogue on improved water governance of Yarlung Zangpo – Brahmaputra – Jamuna river basin***

The Brahmaputra dialogue project began in 2013, bilaterally between India and Bangladesh, and currently is in its third phase. It is a multilateral and multi-stakeholder dialogue platform with China and Bhutan on board. Some of the major challenges to cooperative water governance identified through this project include: the lack of awareness of rights on TBW among the CSOs and local communities; incomplete information on government policies; lack of knowledge on international and regional principles that support the role of women; and lack of trust among the state and non-state actors. Furthermore, although cooperation has been present in the basin bilaterally in the form of MoUs and agreements, the much needed cooperation through multi-lateral agreements is missing, due to reasons like existing stereotypical conflicts between the upstream and downstream nation, and lack of trust and transparency in sharing information.

The aim of this process is to: build capacity of these groups through interactive skill and knowledge building programs at the local and national level; engage state and non-state actors through district, state level and regional meetings; and to collectively develop solutions on transboundary water governance by sharing knowledge and experience through at the regional level CSO meet. The initiative has identified specific groups for intensive engagement across the four riparian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan China and India) - the CSOs working for communities residing in the Brahmaputra basin, community leaders from marginalized communities and women's groups.

The ultimate goal is to establish an institutional framework for the joint management of the river through means such as: building a common knowledge base; enhancing capacity of the stakeholders involved and thus developing inclusivity by creating plurality of views; building trust and confidence among the state and non-state actors and across nations; and generating support and commitment from political leaders. We have succeeded in fostering a willingness among the stakeholders to participate in these dialogues.

**Dr. Qinghua Cui (Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, Beijing China)**

***Biodiversity and conservation in the river basin management work of CBIK***

The Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (CBIK) was established in 1995, in Yunnan province, China, as a non-profit NGO. Its members are mainly from diverse universities and institutions including research professionals from the natural and social sciences, managers and practitioners of biodiversity and cultural diversity conservation, as well as enthusiasts and interested volunteers.

The organisation has been implementing projects on ethnobotany and biodiversity conservation. CBIK-led research has facilitated many discoveries based on a review of local traditional knowledge. Priority areas for CBIK in GBM basin include research on wetland biodiversity (aquatic plants) conservation and management based on ethnobotanical



research. CBIK has set up an online platform to train and communicate with the local people about scientific approaches to the development of a balance between the economy and environment. CBIK has completed an inventory of the aquatic species in two key wetlands, Beihai and Nashihai, situated in the Lancang River basin upstream of the Mekong River.

**Ms Archana Chatterjee (MFF National Coordinator, IUCN India Country Office)**

***The Ecosystems for Life journey: sharing experiences from the project***

IUCN's Ecosystems for Life: A Bangladesh-India Initiative, was a civil society led, multi-stakeholder dialogue process to promote better understanding of the management of natural resources in Bangladesh and India. Ecosystems for Life worked to develop a shared vision and understanding of food, livelihood and water security issues through collaborative research and studies, creation of a knowledge hub, development of research-based policy options and enhancement of the capacity of civil society stakeholders to participate in the management of natural resources.

Ecosystems for Life focussed on five main areas of research: the links between food security and water productivity for poverty alleviation; the impacts of climate change, adaptation methods and mitigating strategies; convergence of inland navigation and integrated water resources management; the links between economic development and environmental security; and improving understanding of ecosystems and habitats, leading to improved conservation of flagship species.

Some of the key outcomes included the formation of Joint Research Teams, involving senior researchers and academics from various national research and academic institutions from the two countries to foster new forms of trans-boundary academic collaboration. This approach brought multiple actors to the table and created an interest in water and the environment. For example, private sector participants in inland navigation and fisher communities in hilsa conservation have brought in different perspectives to the discussions, thus creating both vertical and horizontal linkages. Innovative capacity building programmes, such as 'Water Futures', brought young professionals together from Bangladesh and India. Engagement with senior media professionals, especially journalists from both Bangladesh and India, through workshops helped in creating the need for fact-based reporting on trans-boundary river issues and the development of training materials and media kits for the same.

**Mr Jozef Van Der Zanden (Biodiversity Coordinator, IUCN Bangladesh)**

***Key factors affecting effective water cooperation in the Brahmaputra region***

Water Diplomacy: Making Water Cooperation Work (WADI), is a research project that is led by The Hague Institute of Global Justice (THIGJ) and implemented by IUCN. The project has developed and applied a *legal and political economy framework* to analyse factors affecting water cooperation at multiple levels and understand current and future cooperation in the Brahmaputra basin among the four countries sharing this basin (Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and India).

The legal and political economy framework has been development based on a survey of existing literature, incorporating key factors for effective water cooperation, field data and applying theoretical approaches/methods for Political Economy Analysis. The framework

applies the concept of “Action Situations” (e.g. transboundary water cooperation between India and Bangladesh or E4L as a Track III) in a particular transboundary river basin (unit of analysis). This action situation is central to the framework, as it helps in the analysis of the interactions of Institutions, Actor-Agency role, Outcome-Output-Results (of those interactions) and how it relates and eventually influences the context itself.

The framework has been used to analyse several Action Situations, such as the India-Bangladesh cooperation through the Joint Rivers Commission, Bhutan-Bangladesh and Bhutan-India cooperation on a variety of issues, the E4L project of IUCN and the Brahmaputra Dialogue facilitated by SaciWATERS. Overall, the research outcome indicates that there is no regional level Track I cooperation among the four Brahmaputra basin countries. There exists bilateral cooperation on water; however, this cooperation is influenced by the power relations between the nations in question.

## Annex 4: Participant Evaluation and Feedback

Below is a summary of the feedback and suggestions received from participants who completed the workshop evaluation form. Participants were asked to comment on the organization and facilitation of the workshop and how they would use the specific knowledge and skills acquired during the workshop in the future. The analysis below is based on the 15 responses that was received after the workshop.

### 1. Did the workshop meet its stated objective? (*strongly agree; agree; disagree; strongly disagree*)

Fifty per cent of participants **strongly agreed** and the other fifty per cent **agreed** that all the planned components had been covered, and that the workshop had helped them better understand the challenges linked to trans-boundary water resource management and hydrodiplomacy. Participants also noted that the workshop had provided valuable opportunity to meet new people and share experiences.

Some comments from participants:

- The workshop was the 'emergence (embryo) of a CSO vision in the making;
- Helped build capacities/understanding of the participants on issues of hydrodiplomacy, which is very relevant for CSO work on rivers;
- Country experience of water governance was adequately shared and a common understanding of water governance tools adequately communicated.

### 2. Most liked session(s) and those that needed improvement:

Session 3 (International Water Law and conflict resolution) and Session 6 (negotiation and role-play exercise) were rated as excellent by most. The presentations from Dr Alejandro Iza (IUCN) on IWL and Mr Shawahiq (IELO) on the status of cooperation and policy landscape in the GBM region were liked by most participants. The role-playing exercise was a new experience for many participants and they found it extremely interesting. However, it was felt that more time should have been allotted to this exercise.

There was a mixed response to Session 2 (CSO activities in the GBM) and Session 5 (Gender). Some participants felt that Session 2 had been too long and whereas others felt that this session should have been allocated more time to allow for more sharing of on-the-ground experiences by the participating CSOs. Participants felt that the gender session should have included more examples from South Asia on the learnings to mainstream gender.

### 3. Major learning points:

Participants identified the following as being their major learning points from the workshop:

- Clearer understanding of international water law, conflict resolution mechanisms and negotiation skills helped enhance knowledge of the legal issues involved in sharing water (the trans-boundary perspective);

- The information on the provisions and applications of UNWC and experiences from the Lower Mekong. The examples from around the world on the workings of different water-related treaties and the explanation of global treaties such as UNECE and UNWC, were helpful in improving the understanding of how treaties should be analysed;
- Improved understanding of the concept and distinction between equity and equality;
- Better appreciation of the need for communication and cooperation between governments and CSOs to achieve sustainable trans-boundary water management.

#### **4. Use of knowledge and skills acquired:**

Participants said that they intended to use the knowledge and skills acquired from the workshop to:

- Identify and analyse trans-boundary water governance projects working in the GBM region;
- Support the development and capacity building of a river-level network of community-based organizations;
- Develop capacity building modules to improve the engagement of local communities in dialogue on trans-boundary water issues and also gender mainstreaming for community-based projects;
- Design advocacy awareness campaigns to establish and strengthen river commissions in the GBM and the role they could play in fostering harmonious relationships and continued cooperation among the GBM countries;
- Design a simplified version of the role play to improve coordination and working within the organization.

#### **5. Knowledge and information missing:**

Participants identified the following gaps in the workshop:

- How CSOs' work is currently influencing decision-making in the GBM countries. More time should have been allocated to discussions about the ground-level experiences of CSOs working in the GBM basins;
- Examples of how gender issues could be mainstreamed into water governance policies and programmes;
- Examples of good management approaches tested globally; examples of river commissions which are working successfully; and analysis of what has worked and what has not.

**6. Barriers to achieving the CSO vision for good water governance?** (eg, lack of time, understanding, interest, opportunity to influence, relevance for your current field of work etc).

The lack of opportunities to influence regional water dialogues was identified as a major barrier, as the bureaucracy and political groups do not let CSOs engage in trans-boundary level dialogues and decision-making processes;

However, in recent years, the national governments of the GBM region have become more receptive to the need to protect and conserve rivers and there is a desire to work towards better integration. Many participants indicated that getting government on board is possible due to the current atmosphere of cooperation among the BBIN countries.

**7. Strategies to overcome barriers?**

- Keep the government on board and informed about the project's activities and develop a good communication strategy on the relevance and utility of having a long term vision for the development of the GBM basins which is sustainable and inclusive.
- Build strong alliances and coalitions of CSOs to create effective pressure and discourse on the value of sustainable water resource management.
- Facilitate awareness building campaigns and capacity building of CSOs and local communities to improve their negotiation skills for effective interaction with government at different levels.

**8. How should the BRIDGE GBM project follow-up on this workshop?**

- Design a program on the basis of the feedback from experts on the integrated development of inland navigation and fisheries-based livelihoods.
- Engage the network of CSOs, facilitate information sharing among them, open lines of communication to receive further ideas and be inclusive, participatory. (Participants liked the idea of blogging as a tool to share personal experiences and thoughts. They felt that the [bridgeasiblog.org](http://bridgeasiblog.org) could be a good platform (blog) to encourage people to write and share personal stories related to water.)
- Work to improve mutual understanding and communication among GBM countries on the need for regional cooperation.
- Ensure that the vision developed by the project is widely disseminated and to the right people. Additionally, a strong case must be built which is rooted in science to push for operationalization of the vision.