

Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

International consultancy for the development of a think piece on:

Policy and Institutional Framework for Operationalising Multi-level Cooperation and Benefit Sharing Agreements in the Meghna River Basin

Duration of Consultancy: 10 May 2021 – 25 Sept 2021

Deadline for the submission of EOI: **Wednesday, 05 May 2021, 9 pm South East Asia (Bangkok) Time**

(1) Background:

The Meghna River Basin is shared by Bangladesh and India. The total area drained by the basin is 82,000 km², of which 47,000 km² (57% of the total area) is located in India and 35,000 km² (43% of the total area) is in Bangladesh.

The Meghna River Basin is one of the most biodiverse and culturally rich basins in Asia and more than 50 million people in Bangladesh and India depend on the ecosystem services provided by the basin, including indigenous communities such as the Khasi, Garo and Jaintia.

Due to increasing population and developmental pressure, as well as climate change, the sustainability of the ecosystem services and community livelihoods in the Meghna Basin are threatened. Studies on the Indian side of basin point to a decline in summer rainfall (Das 2004, Mirza et al.1998) and increased variability in rainfall patterns, intensity and distribution. In addition, the agricultural systems in the Surma sub-basin and the delta are expected to suffer from an increased frequency of droughts and floods.

Despite the socio-ecological significance of the basin and the number of threats it is facing, there is an absence of a clear framework to support the development of integrated basin-wide approaches to jointly address the impacts of development and climate change on people and ecology.

The Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), established in 1972, is the only formal transboundary mechanism to coordinate Bangladesh-India joint efforts on river management. The objective of the JRC is to maximise the benefits derived from all of the common river systems shared by the two countries (Article 4, JRC Statutes), including the Meghna River Basin. However, a review of the meetings of the JRC indicates a traditional focus on the Ganges and Brahmaputra.

In last few years, the focus has been shifting to the transboundary tributaries of Meghna Basin, with Bangladesh and India initiating dialogues on a number of cooperation agreements related to trade, navigation and water sharing on Feni, Khowai, Gumti, Manu and Muhuri Rivers. In 2019, Bangladesh and India signed a water-sharing MoU on the transboundary Feni River, the first such agreement between the South Asian neighbours in more than two decades.

However, the review of ongoing dialogues indicates a sectoral focus, mostly looking at sharing of volumes of water or joint activities to improve the navigability of the shared rivers. This sectoral approach is a hindrance to the development of a basin-wide integrated management framework to address the current and future socio-ecological challenges in the Meghna River Basin.

To broaden the scope of the dialogue from water sharing to benefit sharing and integrated management of the shared river basins, IUCN is facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues and joint research in the Meghna River Basin, under the BRIDGE GBM project, and funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) through Oxfam's Transboundary Rivers of South Asia (TROSA) project. The dialogues have helped in developing a better understanding of the basin's water governance issues and challenges, as well as opportunities for benefit sharing in the Meghna Basin. For more information on project activities please visit the BRIDGE GBM project page [here](#).

As a next step, IUCN is seeking support from expert consultants to write a think piece (or discussion paper) proposing a basin-wide policy and institutional framework for operationalising multi-level cooperation and benefit sharing agreements in the Meghna River Basin.

The guidance provided in the think piece will be translated into awareness-raising assets to be promoted among policymakers, and at relevant national and international events. The consultant will also prepare drafts of at least two briefs on selected themes (based on the think piece) articulating the application of proposed framework.

(2) Specific objectives of consultancy:

(2.1) Develop a 15-20 page think piece (discussion paper with infographics) which will:

- Build upon the national/provincial policies and planning processes, such as North East Vision 2020 and Look East Policy of India, and Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100;
- Strengthen ongoing cooperation opportunities between Bangladesh and India in the Meghna River Basin, such as navigation and flood management;
- Contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, as well as create social, economic and environmental benefits, whereby healthy and connected ecosystems contribute to improved food and water security, resilient livelihoods and promote mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- Be consistent with and utilize the principles of international water law (UNWC, 1997), benefit sharing, IWRM and strongly integrate gender and inclusion;
- Build on existing science and evidence on the role of nature in addressing societal challenges, based on the principles of ecosystem conservation and guidance as understood under the CBD, as well as other compatible visions such as the IUCN Nature-based Solutions Global Standard;
- Contribute to international commitments of Bangladesh and India, under the SDGs, CBD and UNFCCC;
- Include infographics illustrating the concepts and principles discussed

(2.2) Develop at least two short briefs summarizing key messages and concepts from the think piece.

- These pieces should not be longer than four pages each with infographics articulating the messages.
- The specific themes, purpose and audience for these will be identified in consultation with the Meghna Advisory Group and the IUCN Secretariat and aim to highlight opportunities for cooperation.

The target audience for all deliverables is decision-makers, implementers and stakeholders who are interested in having an authoritative reference on water governance and transboundary cooperation issues in the Meghna River Basin. Therefore, the language utilised in these documents should be practical and easily understandable, avoiding an academic writing style. All citations and references must be provided using the Harvard citation format.

All written pieces under this consultancy will undergo feedback with the IUCN Secretariat and the Meghna Advisory Group. The final version of the documents will be published on the IUCN website.

(3) Tasks and deliverables of the consultancy:

- Desktop review of relevant news and research reports on the Meghna River Basin as well as BRIDGE GBM project dialogues and research reports;
- Participation in the national stakeholder meetings (Bangladesh and India) and the Meghna Knowledge Forum (22-24 June 2021) to collect data and inputs for drafting the report;
- Online and on site (if possible) consultation with subject matter experts and IUCN partners working in the Meghna River Basin in India and Bangladesh (at least six meetings) to gather inputs from the ground;

- Draft a conceptual framework and structure for the think piece and two briefs, and revising based on feedback from the IUCN Secretariat and Meghna Advisory Group;
- Present the final draft of the think piece and two briefs at the Meghna Advisory Group Meeting planned in early September 2021, and finalize for online publication.

(4) Contract duration and timeline

Table: deliverables and timelines

Deliverables	Timeline
Desktop review of relevant news and reports available online, as well BRIDGE GBM project dialogue and joint research reports.	10 May to 20 June 2021
Participate in the National Stakeholder Meetings (two half-day meetings, Bangladesh and India) and collect inputs for drafting the think piece (virtual participation)	Between 15-20 May 2021
Participate in the Meghna Knowledge Forum and collect data and inputs (virtual participation)	22-24 June 2021
Share a first draft conceptual framework and structure for the think piece	15 July 2021
Share a first draft of the two briefs on the identified themes	5 August 2021
Share revised full draft of the think piece and two briefs after incorporating inputs received from MAG and IUCN Secretariat	20 August 2021
Present the draft at Meghna Advisory Group Meeting	End of August 2021 or 1 st Week of September
Final, publication-ready, drafts of think piece and two briefs	25 September 2021

(5) Desired experience and qualifications

The consultancy is open to **institutions/ or team of individuals** with the following expertise:

- Interdisciplinary expertise including geopolitical, environmental, social and policy dimensions of shared water governance with knowledge on benefit sharing in shared water basins, and international water laws and policies;
- Published high-level work on policy and institutions linked to shared water governance, benefit sharing and natural resource management;
- Ability to navigate amongst different approaches to arrive at balanced approaches that consider and integrate ecosystem and human needs and are aligned with the national priorities and regional geopolitics linked to water;
- Comparable (related) assignments in shared river basin is an advantage;
- Demonstrated writing, analytical and reporting skills;
- Excellent English language skills.

(6) Consultancy fees

The maximum available budget to carry out this consultancy is Euro 20,000.

**Estimated number of man days for the delivery of outputs is between 45-50 days (eight hours for one day).*

EOI Format; Annex 1

Please send your expression of interest in the desired format to the following:

- To: Mr. Vishwa Ranjan Sinha (Program Officer, Water and Wetland, South Asia, IUCN Asia Regional Office, Bangkok) Vishwaranjan.sinha@iucn.org
- cc: Ms. Archana Chatterjee (National Coordinator, IUCN India) archana.chatterjee@iucn.org and Dr. Khalid Hossain (Programme Coordinator, IUCN Bangladesh) khalid.hossain@iucn.org

Format for the Expression of Interest (below)

Name of institution	
Postal and Email Address	
Technical proposal articulating:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How the consultant will approach the think piece, including a preliminary conceptual framework indicating the main sections with brief description of each section. - List 10 proposed sources of information - Indicate number of days expected for each task and deliverable. 	
<i>Max 4 pages.</i>	
Summary introduction to previous work highlighting relevant expertise (max 300 words)	
References (including web links) to previous work and published papers	
Name and email addresses of the core team (max 3), along with a 50 word summary (for each member) indicating qualifications and skills. Please also attach Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the team lead.	

Proposed budget and details of expected expenditure, such as number of days, daily rates of staff etc in the format suggested below.

Budget Line	Description	Unit	No. of units	Cost per unit	Budget in local currency
1.1					
1.2					
1.3					
1.4					
Total					