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Water diplomacy has emerged as an approach that enables and often provides an opportunity to evaluate ways that can contribute to finding solutions for joint management of shared freshwater resources. While formal diplomacy (state-to-state) is often recognized as the only substantial negotiation. However, such diplomatic initiatives and policy making is disconnected from the ground reality. People to people diplomacy at the civil society or academic level is rapidly evolving and is being considered as a game-changer in a multi-polar world.

The **Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra-Jamuna basin**, located in South Asia, is a transboundary river basin that has often been subjected to geopolitical issues with disputes associated with territory and water infrastructure. The river originates in the Tibet Autonomous Region in China, then flows through Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India, and finally through Bangladesh to join Bay of Bengal. While there is no immediate threat to water

security in the basin, changing climate and rainfall patterns with rising development needs can pose a threat to water availability.

Absence of media from diplomatic initiatives have often led to the voices of the masses not being considered while making decisions of national or international significance and has also sometimes led to misinformation in the reports published by media due to lack of communication in itself

between the several layers of stakeholders.

The initiative "Science Communication for Water Diplomacy in the Brahmaputra" attempted to merge this gap by engaging with the media in different forms - from understanding the kind of reporting that is being conducted for the basin, for the last decade, to generating platforms for the media to express their concerns to the scientific community.

WORKSHOP OVERVIEW



The science-media water diplomacy initiative on Brahmaputra was initiated in 2020, while it's nearing the end, the team wants to ensure sustained relationship among the stakeholders through organizing this physical dissemination workshop. Through the dissemination workshop, the organizers would like to propagate the information that has been generated through the course of this initiative. It would discuss the outcome of the scoping research with multiple stakeholders – media, academics, and civil society organizations – to not just capacitate them to encourage better communication but also to initiate a dialogue regarding the changes that have been already observed regarding media's reporting on issues of water and climate change for the basin.

This workshop will, for the first-time, bring media and academic community into one platform, physically, and strives to strengthen the trust and confidence between these two communities. The workshop would also discuss the issues plaguing the basin for decades, like floods and erosion in the lower Brahmaputra basin. It would bring varied perspectives from multiple stakeholders, bringing in knowledge from the ground via media and civil society organisations and discuss the relevant policies present for disaster risk reduction. Journalists have a crucial role to play in creating inspirational and transformative narratives relating to the world's complex water conflicts, and it's time that we engage them meaningfully through region specific initiatives.

To facilitate a cross-learning initiative, we are also considering the Mekong River Basin and the Nile River Basin, which already has a formal mechanism of basin-level engagement in place. It would provide us with an opportunity to engage with the stakeholders of the Mekong and Nile River Basins for fruitful exchange of dialogue.

Objectives

- To discuss the existing conversation in the media on Brahmaputra, and deliberate if there is a need to change the narrative around the basin.
- To facilitate cross-learning between the stakeholders representing the Brahmaputra River Basin and Mekong River Basin.
- To establish dialogue between science, academia and policymakers to transform water conflicts into cooperation.

Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened understanding of the Brahmaputra River Basin through dissemination of knowledge generated in the project.
- Possible way forward to strengthen the science-media communication through collaborative initiatives.
- Strengthened network of stakeholders working on the Brahmaputra Basin and Mekong Basin.

AGENDA



09:15 **Registration with Tea and Coffee**

09:30 **Welcome address**

Co-hosts
Mukand Singh Babel
Anamika Barua

09:40 **Opening Remarks**

Folkert de Jager (First Secretary,
Embassy of the Netherlands in Bangladesh)

09:45 **Science Communication for Water Diplomacy in the Brahmaputra**

Overview of the project and key outputs (with Brief Discussion).
Anamika Barua (Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati)

10:15 **Media reporting on conflicts and cooperation: what does it mean for the Brahmaputra Basin?**

Research output – newspaper media analysis (2010–2020)
Sumit Vij (University of Geneva)

10:45 **Tea and coffee (with Lament of the Brahmaputra riverbank)**

11:00 **Role of Media in Water Diplomacy: panel discussion on science-media interlinkages**

Moderator
Joydeep Gupta

Experiences from the Brahmaputra and other River Basins.

Emanuele Fantini (IHE Delft) | Kasturi Das (Media)
Amel Azab (NBCBN) | H.M. Alauddin (Media)
Raphael Glemet (IUCN) | Sushanta Talukdar (Media)
Sahana Ghosh (Media)

12:15 **Lunch (Brahmaputra photo stories)**

13:30 **Experiences and role of media in the Mekong River Basin**

Moderator
Carl Middleton

Apichai Sunchindah (Consultant) | Paritta Wangkiat (Mekong Eye)
Madhurjya Dutta (Mekong Institute)

14:15 **Media and Environment in the Mekong and Chindwin River Basins**

Moderator
Janki Andheria

Rajesh Daniel (Stockholm Environment Institute-Asia)

14:45 **Tea and coffee (with Lament of the Brahmaputra riverbank)**

15:15 **Plenary discussion: Where do we go from here? How do we bridge the gaps between science and media? How do we make water diplomacy media inclusive?**

Moderator
Ganesh Pangare

Partha Jyoti Das | Dibakar Bhattacharjee
Nandita Hazarika | ATM Zakir
Ainun Nishat | Joydeep Gupta
Hongyuan Yu | Tashina Sadeque

16:30 **Tea and coffee with conversations**