

Meeting of Partners 23-24 January 2014, Kolkata

Minutes

The joint team meeting on developing a Media Resource Pack and Media Module on trans-boundary water resources, with a focus on the Ganga, Brahmaputra, Meghna basins (which is a part of a bigger project titled, *Ecosystems for Life*) was held on 23 and 24 January, 2014 in Kolkata (Hotel Indismart, Salt Lake) .

The meeting was attended by Istiak Sobhan, PC, IUCN Bangladesh, AJM Zobaidur Rahman Soeb, communications officer, IUCN Bangladesh, Sushmita Mandal , E4L dialogue coordinator, IUCN India, Mohammad Al Masum Molla, research associate, Development Media Ltd, Nazrul Islam, team leader, Development Media Ltd. From Calcutta Research Group(hereafter CRG) Rajat Roy, Ranabir Samaddar, Milan Dutta , Biswajit Roy and Madhurilata Basu took part in the meeting .

After a brief introduction about the current project of IUCN, a round of self introduction followed. It became clear that the need to have a resource pack for the mediapersons was realized by an expert committee and thereby this current project was conceived. **Day 1** saw participants agreeing and disagreeing on a lot of issues. But they finally reached a consensus, as to what would be the content of the Media Resource Pack. Keeping in mind, that most of the documents pertaining to trans-boundary rivers between India and Bangladesh are seldom made public, the participants questioned if media at all question the non-availability of valid/right information. Though it was agreed that media reporting is episodic in nature, but to give them a sound understanding of the issues of trans-boundary rivers, ecology, sustainable livelihood etc., a resource pack must contain the following:

1. Basic Information
 - a. History of the trans-boundary Rivers (BD-Ind)
 - b. Description of 54 joint rivers including maps
 - c. Population in the basin (GBM)
 - d. MAT data
 - e. River training
 - f. Inland Navigation
2. Ground realities
 - a. Livelihood of the people, borders, river & forest resources, local trade, fishing by the rivers
 - b. River erosion, river island (char), migration and trafficking
 - c. Impact of development projects
 - d. Agriculture/irrigation
 - e. Disasters (flood and others)
 - f. Social movements
3. Law/treaties and best practices
 - a. Agreements/treaties between BD-Ind
 - b. Negotiation
 - c. JRC
 - d. History of JRC meetings

- e. Successful treaties/best practices (Mekong River Commission)
 - f. International Laws, conventions, protocols, treaties
 - g. National Laws
4. Media Perspective
 - a. Media audit (good stories/bad stories)
 - b. Reports from local authorities/NGOs
 - c. Cultural impact
 - d. Cultural resources (films –documentaries, literature, folktales and music, handicrafts etc.)
 5. Case studies (Reflecting several levels of conflict)
 6. Policy implications
 7. List of resource persons/organizations and glossary

Mr Rahman also suggested that photographs or video/audio clippings be used while reporting ground realities. This was accepted by all.

While making plans about the field visit, with regard to ‘how’ and ‘where’ to collect and collate the necessary information at different levels/layers of society, it was realized that the situation in India was complex and the diverse nature would prevent a single line of action from being adopted by both Indian and Bangladeshi participants. But still, the following elements were thought to be important while making reports/write-ups for the Resource Pack:

- Mapping of existing knowledge
- Field Work (Local media resources, community)
- Case study method
- Interviews (Interviewing relevant experts including states, policy makers, political leaders, officials, editors, senior journalists, affected people, relevant organization/civil society etc.)
- The analysis of Stakeholders
- Meetings
- Photo documentation/audio-visual documentation (If possible)

It was also felt that the field worker has to be adequately informed of the items under no. 2 of the content (ground realities) and the modes by which information could be gathered.

Though a rough plan of field work was discussed during the meeting, the final plan was decided to be developed later, through deliberations between the participants of CRG and Development Media.

It was further decided that for this current project/endeavour, Mohammad Al Masum Molla and Nazrul Islam of Development Media Ltd., and Rajat Roy and Madhurilata Basu of CRG would be the ones to be contacted(focal points). A tentative timeline was also planned during the meeting. The entire process was broken down into the following steps:

Meeting minutes to be shared: 27 Jan 2014 (Madhurilata and Masum)

Field visit: Feb + March (Plans to be shared by 31 Jan)

Exchange of drafts: 20-25 April

Finalization of the report/meeting: 28 – 30 April 2014

Consultation Meeting: Mid July 2014 (venue to be decided later). Due to the Lok Sabha elections the consultation meeting was scheduled in July.

Another important decision taken during the meeting was to publish the outcomes of this research collective along with some basic information, write-ups, interviews etc., in Axomiya and Bengali.

Day 2 started with the screening of a small documentary of various works done by IUCN. After lot of deliberations and debates, a tentative structure of the workshop could be framed. Since the aim of the resource pack and also of this current endeavour is to sensitize media persons or to make them more aware or enable them to report more scientifically and objectively, it was decided that the workshop should aim at targeting the following persons:

- Journalists having 03-05 years of experience to be targeted
- Local journalists (correspondents, newspaper owners)
- District correspondents
- City based journalists (print, electronic, alternative media etc.)

After rounds of debate, the need to have gatekeepers or editors during the workshop was also felt. It was thought of inviting editors (few) as resource persons during the workshop. A rough estimation of the total number of participants was also made. The total number of participants from Bangladesh were decided to be 25 (20 participants and 5 resource persons), while the number for India was decided to be 35 (30 participants and 5 resource persons).

The workshop was decided to be spread over three days.

A tentative structure of the workshop was also decided on. The plan is as follows:

- Pre-workshop activities
 1. Selecting and Inviting participants?
 2. Inviting write ups from the targeted participants (district correspondents , journalists, photographers and others) . This would be done with the aim to assess the gaps (if any) present in their reports (be it lack of correct information or dearth of scientific reporting etc) or in our (the researchers' / mediapersons') understanding of the ground reality.
 3. The journalists could also submit write-ups dealing with the following points:
 - a. What kind of reports you file related to river and river related issues?
 - b. What kind of response/feedback/media visibility your reports enjoy?
 - c. What kind of problems you face while reporting on river related issues?
 - d. What more you require equipping yourself for effective reporting?
- Workshop -The structure of the workshop will be participatory?

Day 01

- Introduction – 1 hr
- Key lecture/s – mapping the issues/how to look at the rivers issues

- Participatory sessions – participants feedback/interaction/group works
- Film screening followed by discussion

Day 02

- Issue based lectures/ panel discussions
- Group works/discussion
- Group presentation/ plenary
- Film screening followed by discussion
- Inviting reporting ideas on area specific and issue and questions from the groups

Day 03

- Presentation on ideas and key questions
- Lessons from the workshop

A mutual agreement between the participants was reached according to which the structure of the workshop was decided to be developed in synchronization with the advancement of the research endeavour/project. Accordingly, the Development Media Ltd and CRG would be working together to develop the module. A tentative timeline for structuring the workshop module was also decided upon:

Timeline:

Framing of the workshop module: 2nd week of April 2014

Draft submission: 30 April 2014

Final submission after review: 2nd week of May 2014

The meeting ended with Sushmita Mandal thanking the participants for their suggestions and for making it a success.