

Title

South Asia Water Governance Programme (SAWGP)

Background

The South Asia Water Governance Programme (SAWGP) delivers better management of the three primary Himalayan rivers (the Ganges, Indus and Brahmaputra) shared by seven countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan). The programme brings these countries together to tackle trans-boundary challenges, such as flooding, water for irrigation, maximising hydropower potential and the impacts of climate change, which are common to all countries sharing these rivers.

Insufficient co-operation between these countries has led to both under investment and highly nationalistic approaches to river development and infrastructure. Consequently, the significant benefits that these rivers could offer to resilient economic growth (e.g. hydropower development) and poverty reduction (e.g. efficient water supply for food and agriculture, flood and drought management) are under-realised. Similarly, the risks associated with the rivers (i.e. flooding and other natural hazards) are not being effectively managed now, and countries are simply not prepared for the flood and drought extremes that are likely to be brought on by future climate change.

More than a billion people rely on these rivers for water and energy. Therefore, delivering river basin development that builds resilient economies and minimises risks is critically important. SAWGP plays an important role in improving relations between countries over use of their shared rivers, and, therefore, in managing tensions over scarce water resources.

Theme

International rivers and water resources management

Local Context

This is a regional programme targeting South Asia, working with and across the seven riparians of this region – i.e. countries through which rivers originating in the Himalayan Hindukush flow. This is a region with challenging geo-politics, and huge numbers of poor people dependent on these rivers for irrigation, and/or clean energy, and/or risk management from flooding.

What is being done

SAWGP supports cross-border engagement by:

- Facilitating new opportunities for constructive and relevant dialogue between the seven countries;
- Producing knowledge and building capacity for a common understanding of the problems and solutions to regional water resources management and climate adaptation;

- Improving the quality of investments in river management.

SAWGP is delivering these outputs through **four components** each implemented by a different entity:

1. South Asia Water Initiative Phase II (SAWI-II) through a World Bank multi-donor trust fund (MDTF)
2. Work on Mount Kailash by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
3. Other activities:
 - a. Running a Civil Society Fund through the Asia Foundation (TAF)
 - b. Building media capacity with the Third Pole Project (TPP)
 - c. Analysing climate change within the Indus basin using the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)
 - d. Providing fleet footed responses such as Chatham House's 2014 survey of water attitudes in the region
4. Independent monitoring and evaluation – to draw out critical lessons on methodology taken to regional cooperation around international rivers being done by IOD PARC.

Expected Results

With the current funding of £23.5 million, SAWGP aims to deliver the following high level results by 2018:

- Three institutional mechanisms with a mandate or additional funds to continue beyond 2017.
- 12 policy processes targeting transboundary challenges are informed by SAWGP activities.
- US\$500 million is secured for investment projects through the World Bank, with an additional US\$300m in 'pipeline' investments.
- Four investment projects with a transboundary impact are proposed or developed with the relevant governments.
- SAWGP partners mobilise US\$20 million from the public or private sectors.

Since starting operation in 2012, SAWGP has established a strong basis for achieving results. Building on previous results, more recently, it has provided technical assistance to improve the design of the US\$650 million World Bank River Management Improvement Project (RMIP) in Bangladesh. It has influenced several national policies including India and Bangladesh's joint management of the Sundarbans, and Nepal's policy on rangeland management which is important for water availability in downstream India.