

Call for story proposals for the project “Science Communication for Water Diplomacy in the Brahmaputra” Story grants on the politics, socio-economy and ecology of the transboundary Brahmaputra river basin

IIT Guwahati, with support from The Third Pole, is offering grants to journalists based in Bangladesh, Bhutan, China and India to support in-depth stories on the ecology and the socio-economy of the transboundary Brahmaputra River basin, with a focus on regional cooperation and on vulnerable communities, aimed at helping policymakers and such communities to make better decisions.

Application Deadline: September 10, 2020

Overview

The Brahmaputra River – called Yarlung Zangbo in China and Jamuna in Bangladesh – and its tributaries are essential lifelines to the people living in this basin in four countries. The four riparian countries – China, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh – of the Brahmaputra River Basin are at different stages of economic development which gives rise to diverse interests, needs and issues. The rivers are crucial sources of irrigation and hydropower and form inland waterways; they are also serious sources of floods and erosion. The rivers can be sources of friction or cooperation between national governments.

Major changes have come and are coming to this region that was relatively remote till recent years. Hydropower remains a controversial topic within and between countries, while the entire basin is suffering various effects of climate change. Communities living in the basin – especially the women in these communities – are affected most directly, though the economic, ecological and geopolitical effects go far beyond. The concerns for the basin are more around joint utilization of the water resources so that the benefit accrued can also be equal. But misleading or negative narratives focusing particularly on conflicts, disasters etc. hinder cooperation in the basin. One of the primary challenges has been the lack of joint collection and assessment, dissemination of, and access to knowledge and information about the basin, either from the water scientists, donor agencies or policy makers. This project seeks to change the narratives through water diplomacy, in the form of providing multiple sources of authentic information. The research findings will be the foundation of water diplomacy, which in turn will also help in building the capacity of concerned stakeholders.

Call for proposals

We are inviting proposals for story grants in line with the theme of the initiative ‘Science communication for water diplomacy in the Brahmaputra’. We have a particular interest in regional cooperation in the basin and how it can be fostered through encouraging diplomatic initiatives at different levels (between media and scientists, in this initiative). We would be interested in documentation of local initiatives on water diplomacy as well. We are also interested in understanding the impact of changes in the basin on women and other marginalized groups (including youth, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities) and their ability to adapt. The multimedia stories/video grants would assist in bringing

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together researchers and media personnel with communities who live in the basin and are dependent on the natural resources of the basin for their livelihoods.

We encourage stories that report on potential solutions and address how national, sub-national and local governments, academics, civil society and vulnerable communities are responding to challenges and can respond better. We are also highly interested in stories that utilise relevant data to illustrate the issue in a compelling and easy-to-understand way. We are also interested in collaborative stories, with similar theme across countries to generate understanding on the same phenomenon across different geographical and political context of the river basin. We would also encourage gender to be a cross cutting theme across the stories. We would also encourage stories that would have a connection to the decision/policy making level. We would like to encourage proposal for stories that otherwise find it difficult to see the light of the day.

We are looking for stories with the potential to inform policy decisions by addressing domestic or transboundary political, economic and environmental concerns.

Five story grants will be provided. This is being done in partnership with DGIS - IHE Delft Programmatic Cooperation (DUPC).

Who should apply:

Journalists (online, print, television, radio) who have a track record of reporting on international relations, political economy, human rights, climate change, deforestation, water, natural resources management and similar issues. We encourage applications from freelancers and staff from all types of media – international, national, local and community based. We also encourage the active participation of women journalists and preference will also be given to the journalists who live and work in the basin.

Grantees have to publish or broadcast their stories in their affiliated media. IIT Guwahati, IHE Delft, The Third Pole, and its sister websites shall have the right to edit, publish, broadcast and distribute these stories freely, once they have been published/broadcast in the original media outlet. Freelance reporters should demonstrate a plan for publication and provide a letter of interest from an editor.

We expect to award grants averaging 1 lakh INR depending on the proposal and reporting format. We will consider larger awards for in-depth stories using innovative or investigative approaches. Applicants should provide a detailed budget with justification for the amount requested using the template provided.

We expect that stories will be produced with equipment the applicant already has access to (including cameras, lighting, tripods, laptops etc.) and will not consider budgets that include procurement of new equipment.

We also encourage the use of multimedia and new or unique media platforms to present and share the stories. Applicants with ideas for long-form and multimedia narratives should include plans and budget for accompanying multimedia elements (i.e. video, photos) and distribution channels in their pitch.

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Stories can be produced in English or local languages, or both. Applicants who intend to write or produce stories in local languages need to include an English translation. Please include the cost for translation in the budget, if necessary.

Expected story lengths:

Text-based stories: 2,000 to 2,500 words

Photo stories: 10-20 images with descriptive captions and a 200-400 word introduction

Multimedia package: Text between 1,000 and 1,500 words with 2-4 minute video and/or graphics, photos and maps

Any applicant who wishes to do a long-form text or multimedia story for an online publication should say so in the application, justifying the need for a long-form story.

Broadcast: Video piece around 4-6 minutes in length with a 30-second clip suitable for a news bulletin, and a short roughly 200-word introduction

Audio report/podcast: Feature of up to 20 minutes in length with short text to summarise the audio.

Selection criteria

Applicants should consider the following points when devising their story proposals:

Timing: We expect the proposed story or stories to be published by the first quarter of 2021 tentatively (there might be delays caused by the pandemic).

Relevance: Does the proposal meet the criteria and objectives? Why does this story matter and to whom? Are the main idea, context and overall value to the target audience clearly defined?

Angle: If other media outlets have covered the story, does your proposal bring new insights into the topic or offer a fresh angle?

Impact: Does the proposal have a compelling narrative or investigative element that will inform and engage, draw attention, trigger debate and urge action?

Innovative storytelling: The use of creative approaches and data visualisation will be considered a plus.

Feasibility. Can the story be realistically completed within the given time frame? Is the budget realistic?

Diversity: We will take gender and geographical distribution into account when selecting the grantees in addition to the criteria above

Transboundary proposals: Joint proposals by journalists from more than one basin country will be given preference.

How to apply

Applicants should copy-paste the form below into an MS Word file, complete it, and mail to scwd.iitg@gmail.com as an attachment. Also attach:

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A letter from the editor in the official letterhead, confirming that your report will be published/broadcast. Freelancers should attach a letter from the editor of the media outlet in which they plan to publish/broadcast;

Your resume/CV;

Two samples of your reporting. If the samples are too heavy to attach, attach a separate MS Word file with links to the samples.

Remember the application deadline: 10th September 2020

Application form

Full Name:
Address:
Gender:
Email:
Skype:
Phone Number:
WhatsApp Number (if different):
Media Outlet Name (freelancers should give the name of the outlet where they propose to publish/broadcast):
Media Outlet Website:
Editor's Name (freelancers should give the name of the editor of the outlet where they propose to publish/broadcast):
Editor's Email:
Biography (Maximum 500 words):
Story Idea (Maximum 500 – 1000 words):
Justification for long form story (optional):

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Budget (Detail as much as you can, and justify if applying for additional amount):

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