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Terms of reference (TOR)

Student Grants Fellowship on Post-Graduation Research Paper (Re-Advertisement)

TROSA II: Rivers, Rights and Resilience Project

BACKGROUND: Geographically Bangladesh stands in a very crucial position considering how it lies downstream of the Ganges–Brahmaputra–Meghna basin. Although only 7% of this GBM river basin runs through the country towards the Bay of Bengal, the system gives a total flow of 1110.6 km³ from India to Bangladesh. Being one of the longest river routes in South Asia, this massive river system is blessed with freshwater resources, fertile agricultural land, hydropower potential, rich aquatic supply, and diverse flora and fauna. It works as a lifeline for the entire region, supporting the life and livelihood of nearly 670 million people along with its diverse biodiversity and vibrant ecosystem (Whitehead, 2018). Thus, the basin also significantly contributes to shaping the socioeconomic and cultural architecture of the whole GBM region. Our grassroots communities that earn directly by using the resources of these rivers, including fishers, farmers, and traders, contribute to our economy and provide our food, yet often fall under the poverty line and face many injustices regarding the benefit sharing of these rivers.

Although the rivers are transboundary, management of this river basin has been navigated country-wise. The different geopolitical interests lead to the stress on the GBM basin's freshwater resources which has been intensifying day by day, putting tremendous pressure on the riparian states to ensure their access to those resources. Adding to that, the availability of freshwater resources in the basin is declining, mostly due to climate change. A prediction pointed out that the basin will face a depletion of almost 275 billion cubic meters (BCM) of annual renewable water in the next 20 years (SFG, 201), while the availability of Freshwater will also shrink in many parts of Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2017). So, while freshwater resources are being controlled and declining, the demand for freshwater increases due to the growing population and booming industrialization. It means water will become a major point of conflict within and among the riparian states, including its stakeholders, be it local, national, or regional. It would not be an exaggeration to say that, by all accounts - water, more than any other natural resource—is likely to spark future conflicts in the GBM basin (Chellaney, 2011).

TROSA ran for five years till 2021 and mainly contributed to research and advocacy activities on inclusive water resources governance, community-led river erosion management, responsible sand mining, and inclusive transboundary trades through waterways. Youth and women engagement and leadership development have been a top priority in TROSA's overall work. To date, TROSA has engaged the government to include community concerns in water resource management, the private sector to respect the community's access/control over water resources, CSOs to participate in water governance conflict resolutions, local communities to build resilience towards disasters and participate in water governance, policies, and processes. T2:3R will continue the journey of working with young leaders in the climate and water sector.

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Keeping this aspect in mind, Oxfam in Bangladesh is introducing a Student Fellowship (grants) for **two (02)** students on their post-graduate level research/thesis paper through TROSA Phase 2: Rivers, Rights, and Resilience (T2:3R) project that works to support climate-resilient livelihoods for vulnerable natural resource-dependent communities of the GBM basin.

Project context

TROSA 2: Rivers, Rights and Resilience (T2:3R) project has the aim of developing inclusive river governance across the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin. Supported by SIDA, TROSA has completed its first phase from 2017-2021, aiming to amplify community voice to claim their river rights through joined CSOs and private sectors. The project has entered its second phase in 2023 with more focus on the climate resilience of the riparian community, incorporating the learning and experience on cooperation and collaboration. The program works in strategically selected transboundary sub-basins within the GBM river basin system across Bangladesh, India, and Nepal.

Overall Goal of the project: Improved cooperation in governing shared water resources, strengthening resilience to climate change of riparian communities in the transboundary Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna River basins.

The overall goal of T2:3R will be reached through the achievement of four key Outcomes-

Outcome 1: Strengthened climate-resilient livelihoods of communities living in the transboundary GBM river basins.

Outcome 2: Improved and inclusive management of transboundary river ecosystems and protection of biodiversity across the GBM river basins

Outcome 3: Strengthened leadership of civil society, especially women, Indigenous People, and youth, to influence government and private sector on water governance across and between the transboundary GBM basins.

Outcome 4: Strengthened cooperation, collaboration, and accountability across and between the transboundary GBM river basins.

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP: This fellowship aims to connect with potential young researchers who are passionate about working for the riparian people. River and river management has a greater impact in the country and beyond the border, and T2:3R acknowledges the significance of empathetic future leaders in the front in inevitable water conflicts. However, the bonding of technology and community is crucial to create a resilient and enable climate-just society. The fellowship is a small effort to support the youth who are currently exploring their enthusiasm in the river-related issues.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF FELLOWSHIP:

- To encourage and create awareness on river governance of Bangladesh including South Asian context among youths.
- To amplify young water leadership to advocate for community rights on natural resources.
- To support future professionals for growing knowledge, skillset and network in the water sector.

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PREFERRED THEMES: Applicants are requesting to apply with river relevant topics **but** the most preferable are-

- *Fisheries management of Bangladesh.*
- *Riverine ecosystem and biodiversity.*
- *Climate change and its impacts on riverine people.*
- *River and water management of Bangladesh.*
- *Cross-border relations regarding transboundary rivers.*

ELIGIBILITIES:

- Must be a Bangladeshi national.
- Be currently enrolled in the master's/planning for his/her postgraduate research proposal with academic backgrounds in Fisheries, International Relations, Geography, Environmental Science, Disaster Management, Oceanography, Law, Sociology, Anthropology, or any other relevant subjects.
- Sound understanding of Geo-Political issues related to Bangladesh.
- Well habituated to writing research proposals, reports, and presentations.
- Openness to diverse opinions, respect for the community, and willingness to work on a river context.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE: Applicant must submit the following 5 items as separate documents to be considered for the evaluation process-_____

1. A Research/thesis proposal (**max 1500 words**) based on preferred themes following the provided template. **Find the template at the end of this document.**
2. A CV covering key previous experiences in research works.
3. Provide the name and contact details of at least 2 professional referees.
4. Must be submitted **Nomination Paper/NOC** from Department Head.
5. **DO NOT** apply if you are already enrolled in any other fellowship.

SELECTION PROCESS: The basic criteria for selection are:

- Relevance knowledge of the research work of contemporary issues especially about GBM.
- Significance of the proposed research, including the importance and originality.
- The quality of the proposal in definition, clarity, and scope; what values the work will add to the relevant greater academia, why it is important, and how the reviewers will get to know the conclusions are valid.
- Capabilities and achievements of the applicant and the likelihood that the applicant will accomplish the proposed research; not only should the proposal demonstrate how the applicant has the technical know-how and ability to reach some significant conclusions, but that the conclusion is not preconceived. The proposal should convince the reviewer that there is something genuinely at stake with the applicants' intended area of inquiry and that the research will yield noteworthy results.

RESPONSIBILITIES & DELIVERABLES:

- From scratch to finalize the research paper; fellows will learn about the management of transboundary river ecosystems through different stakeholders.
- Will finalize the research paper reflecting their learnings of T2:3R vision.

Note: T2:3R will be involved as a co-supervisor to ensure the relevance of the research with the project.

BENEFITS:

- Each Fellow will receive a grant of **150,000 BDT** (inclusive of all the costs of his/her fieldwork).
- The final paper will be shared within the Oxfam regional and global platform.
- The fellow will have exposure to a wider regional network for river activism.

Proposal Template:

Sections must be in the proposal	Contents of each section	Maximum Word Limit of each section
Title	The title should be specific, concise, and self-explanatory.	N/A
Background	It includes the context, situation, problems, and literature gaps to introduce the research topic briefly.	Maximum 400 words
Research Questions	There might be 4-5 rationale research questions in bullet format that the study would like to address.	Maximum 200 words
Aims and Objectives	Very precise, explicit, and achievable objectives that the study wants to achieve.	Maximum 200 words
Methods and Techniques	This section should briefly describe the study area (study area map is preferred), conceptual framework, precise methods, sampling techniques, data collection tools, techniques, and analysis process to achieve the objectives.	Maximum 400 words
Expected Outcomes	How would the research findings impact the ground with actionable strategies, policy recommendations, interventions, or any way forward the study would bring up to reflect on the ground? How would the study contribute to the scholarly community?	Maximum 300 words
Reference	APA format is preferable	N/A