

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of the South Asia Water Initiative Phase II

Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)

The Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned Oxford Policy Management (OPM) to conduct the evaluation of the South Asia Water Initiative Phase II (SAWI II) multi donor trust fund (MDTF \$31m)).

SAWI aims to increase regional cooperation in the management of the major Himalayan river systems in South Asia to deliver sustainable, fair, and inclusive development and climate resilience. It operates across seven countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Phase II (2013–December 2018) is funded by the DFID (56%), Australia (36%), and Norway (8%). The evaluation was conducted from October 2017 to April 2018.

The objective of this evaluation was to understand the extent to which the SAWI-II MDTF is delivering on its overall aim to increase regional cooperation in the management of the major Himalayan river systems in South Asia to deliver sustainable, fair, and inclusive development, and climate resilience. It also provided learning for future programming on trans-boundary management of international rivers.

The Evaluation found that the SAWI II strategy was underpinned by context, detail and rationale for planned activities. Implemented activities were broadly perceived as appropriate. As the implementing agency, the World Bank effectively mobilised world class expertise in water related sectors and its convening power was evident in its ability to involve key government ministries in SAWI II dialogues. Similarly, in country state and federal level actors could be convened by the Bank (both from government and the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) for dialogue which open up the possibilities of a regional integration. The interventions (such as dialogues, trainings, knowledge products) under the programme have plugged key knowledge gaps on holistic river management and provided new opportunities for stakeholders to engage. Increased face to face engagements have led to trust building. The report concluded that SAWI-II has made important contributions towards building the capacity of technical experts within government and academia. SAWI II has helped to level the playing field on water resources management by strengthening the technical competence of stakeholders. There have been concrete examples of cooperation – A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been signed for the Sundarbans, the Indus, and the Brahmaputra, for collaboration on technical issues.

SAWI-II helped to develop research networks and working relationships across borders and built momentum for future studies. The programme has helped put in place data-sharing platforms which will continue beyond the end of the programme. SAWI-II facilitated the formation of two government Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) units, which were created during the design of World Bank investment projects. SAWI-II's technical studies also informed the design of some programmes funded through national or other donor-funding.

The Evaluation has provided a set of recommendations to DFID for designing a future initiative on transboundary management of international rivers. Here, we present the recommendations for the remaining period of SAWI II initiative and our response with respect to the same:

Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

Evaluation Report Title: Evaluation of the South Asia Water Initiative Phase II (SAWI – II)

Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If “Accepted”, Action plan for Implementation or if “Rejected”, Reason for Rejection
Recommendations for the Remaining period of SAWI II		
1) Track outcomes and shifts in the evolving external context in a modified Results Framework.	Partially accepted	This recommendation is being implemented. Outcomes are being tracked qualitatively. The SAWI team will also continue to track the impact of activities, including in terms of uptake of, for example, models and tools developed under the program. The Results framework cannot be modified at this stage. The Programme is in its closing phase and nearly all funds have been allocated towards activities.
2) Where relevant, include gender experts on task teams, to better incorporate a gender-specific lens into the design, framing, and implementation of SAWI-II activities	Accepted	This recommendation is accepted with the condition that it will be implemented as relevant and appropriate. The programme team is mindful of the gender dimension in the designing, framing and implementation of SAWI II and is undertaking targeted work in this area. Gender experts will be included as and when required.
3) For any forthcoming capacity-building activities, conduct a needs assessment, adopt a TOT model, and draw up a sustainability plan.	Partially accepted	Needs assessment for capacity building activities is being conducted. For example, under the Brahmaputra focus area, a needs assessment is being conducted in order to identify capacity building activities related to disaster risk management. Whether or not a TOT model will be adopted will be decided on a case to case basis. It is being ensured that the capacity built is sustainable. A sustainability plan is also being drawn up.
4) Design additional capacity-building training for senior decision makers within the Government of Afghanistan.	Accepted	The Programme team is discussing training options with the Government of Afghanistan.
5) Conduct additional joint technical training sessions with stakeholders from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan on modelling tools and flood forecasting tools.	Accepted	A joint technical training session with stakeholders from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan is being planned. The programme team expect to deliver this within a year. Joint technical training sessions on flood forecasting and modelling tools will be undertaken in the context of what has already been developed, by whom, and for which areas.

Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

6) Continue efforts to institutionalise processes with respect to dialogues and multi-stakeholder forums	Accepted	We will continue to institutionalise processes with respect to dialogues and multi-stakeholder forums.
7) Share insights from the forthcoming SAWI-II stocktake and this OPM evaluation with partner governments and in-country stakeholders.	Accepted	The SAWI II stocktake will take place towards the last 6 months of 2020. Insights from the Programme will be shared then. The OPM evaluation will be a public document and DFID will share insights with partners as appropriate.