Theme: Water
Water, landscapes and ecosystems: Contributing to human development for Asia

1. Rationale
From the ‘Water Tower’ of Asia (i.e. the Himalayas–Hindu Kush, Kunlun Shan, Pamir and Tien Shan mountain ranges), to the sea, water sustains the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that regulate flows and water quality, while providing ecosystem services and a base for economic development, and supporting the livelihoods of millions. Downstream, deltas and estuaries connect terrestrial water systems to the sea, where river sediments and pollutants determine the morphology of the coasts and quality of marine waters that are critical for fisheries.

Greater understanding and effective management of river basins and their ecosystems is needed for closer knowledge for sustainable management and planning of water resources. The issues of social equity and gender must be recognized and addressed when water supply, water allocation, and sanitation are managed. In addition, cultural and ethnic differences must be considered in designing appropriate water management and services. The basins and terrestrial ecosystems must be managed as one inter-dependent system to manage risk and build resilience to cope with future changes in climate and reduce the impacts of disasters.

Considering the crucial importance of safe, clean water for the health and life not only of ecosystems but of people, and the disproportionate impacts of unsafe water on already poor and marginalised groups, human (rights) dimensions of water systems merits consideration.

We invite concept notes for organizing a regional event which addresses the inter-dependency of ecological and social systems that provide the basic building blocks of social fabric whether they are rural or urban dwellers.

Each concept note must support the objectives of one or multiple of existing international conventions and agreements that are relevant to SDGs-Sustainable Development Goals; CBD-Conventional on Biological Diversity; (CBD); Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); UNFCCC-Framework Convention on Climate Change; UNCCD - Convention to Combat Desertification and the Land Degradation Neutrality target; Ramsar Convention; the Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030; and Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2020. They can also refer to relevant human rights conventions, such as the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or others, that States (Parties) need to consider when developing policies and systems that affect the safety and rights of their people.

2. Description
We invite submission of concept notes for regional events that will address possibilities for enhancing integration of water and society in managing and developing finite water resources under changing world and climate in Asia at multiple levels; and explore potential collaboration and partnership among different sectors and stakeholders. The format of
events can revolve around, but not limited to, being as interactive and innovative as possible with the outcome of increasing the practical knowledge and strategic actions for better management and planning of water and society interaction.

The events are encouraged to use interactive exercises like drawing, painting or gaming to invite active engagement of participants such as storytelling, Ignite sessions, Pecha Kucha or image visualization, Samoan Circle, Jigsaw session, Talent show, Debate, and Role playing that can be utilized together with social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn) for disseminating the news both pre- and post-event.

This year’s **thematic call** will be one of a kind, in that, it has been combined with the disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction/policy, gender equality and rights-based approach in the following areas:

1) **Nature-based Solutions (NbS) for rural and urban landscapes**: This theme provides case studies for evidence that NbS as practical approaches or as approaches that mimic natural processes, positively contribute to improved management of water and land resources, while maintaining the integrity of ecosystems. Focusing on NbS as an action-oriented approach, which builds on the practical applicability for restoring socio-ecological system and services, and how these approaches can be used with respect to water security in both rural and urban settings in Asia, while contributing to resources rehabilitation. The theme should also have overlap with NbS for cascading water-related risks. This overlap should help us better understand cascading water-related risks in context and inform decision-making on policy and financial mechanisms through which nature-based solutions can be tested and applied, in order to achieve more equitable, resilient and sustainable outcomes in disaster risk reduction.

2) **Multifunctional rural and urban landscapes**: This theme will address water and food security, resilience to climate change and human well-being with a focus on challenges and opportunities in restoring degraded rural and urban landscapes in Asia. This must directly contribute to the reinstatement of socio-ecological systems and services leading to enhanced water and food security for all.

3) **Achieving urban and rural watershed resilience to future climates**: The theme will address issues on how a coordinated, watershed-scale plan can be adopted to optimize investments for multiple benefits of improved climate resilience of urban and rural watersheds, and contribute to reducing socioeconomic vulnerabilities of marginalized individuals and communities. This will showcase spatial tools to support engagement and negotiation between communities, stakeholders and investors. It will also explore the roles of industry and the public in contributing to ecosystem and watershed management in rural and urban settings, including the expansive roles of the private sector in driving innovation, public policy, technology, business models, partnerships and financing/funding of solutions. They also need to integrate the role of vulnerable communities in using agroecological practices and sustainable water management.

4) **Governance and ecosystem-based water management**: This theme will focus on practical implementation and results-based outcomes on the ground in addressing the challenge of functional ecosystems-based water management. It will cover three main
pillars: 1) well-crafted policies, 2) scalable and resilient practices, and 3) sound theory and innovation. This theme will also explore how policies incentivize implementation at local, national and regional scales, and additional needs to catalyse critical change.

3. Expected results

Ensuring impact in our research and engagement is of prime interest and importance to the overarching goal of the SCF2 and Water Research Cluster. Thus, we are looking for events that may focus on one or multiple outcomes as follows:

- **Contributing to current and future agendas** involves seeing potential changes in formal and informal policy agendas at different scales, ranging from community to international level, as well as increased awareness and changed attitudes, perceptions and norms, across scales.

- **Enhancing capacities and engagement** lead to strengthened institutional capacity, empowered stakeholders, new networks and coalitions, as well as improved, more holistic and inclusive decision-making and planning processes, for different stakeholders, across scales.

- **Improving decisions and supporting decision-making** processes, practices, strategies and planning among a range of actors in government, non-government and private sector institutions, to work towards the outcomes we seek.

The event can further contribute to the following goals:

- **Fostering new collaborations** and networks among participants, granted organizations and their “boundary partners”

- **Building from the collaborative nature** of water-related field to exchange and scale what works as informed by evidence from evaluation and monitoring

- **Sourcing new ideas and opportunities** for development of research projects, practical solutions or strategic actions, for example, from the participants and granted organizations or agencies, and forging relationships and partnerships across multiple sectors

- **Providing successful practices and actionable management strategies and demonstrating our ability** to deliver societal value and impact.

- **Pursuing integrated solutions** that improve protection of both environment and people, and/or (at least) avoid systems and policies that harm human rights

4. Theme-specific criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the cross-cutting theme committees using the following criteria:

- **Relevance**: Is the topic of relevance, importance, value, and/or interest to the Water Research Cluster and cutting-edge themes (i.e. Disaster Risk Reduction, Gender, and Urban)

- Proposals are required to have **at least two partners** which are from different countries. Proposals must show a strong **Asia regional focus** relating to the proposed topic

- **Strong communications**: specific plans or strategies to develop outreach activities (e.g. research proposals, series of events) and products (e.g. impact story, pamphlets,
- Address aspects of **human rights and gender equality**, such as how to ensure access to safe water for marginalized segments of populations such as women in poorer, rural or urban communities.