

CUTS CRC Activity Report

April-June 2014

ONGOING
PROJECT

Enhancing Trade and Regional Economic Integration between India and Bangladesh – Phase II

With support of the US Consulate, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre (CUTS CRC) along with CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Economics (CUTS CITEE) undertook the study to examine the key issues which affect bilateral trade through land routes along the border between the state of West Bengal and Bangladesh and explore trade opportunities that can be realised by addressing such issues.

After completing the Phase I of this project and submitting the final report of the same, CRC undertook the Phase II of the study. The overall objective of the study is to frame policy recommendations for signing and operationalising of the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) and drafting/signing of a Sanitary & Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Agreement between India and Bangladesh, hence to benefit and ease the efforts of traders; and replicating *Border Haats* along the India-Bangladesh border towards leveraging the economic and social benefits accruing out of it. The project commenced on September 30, 2013 and will conclude on October 31, 2014.

Literature Survey of 10 land customs stations (LCSs) and two *Border Haats* were completed in June 2014. A brochure of the project on 'Indo-Bangla Trade' is being published. Data entry of field study is also started.

CRC organised an Exporters' Meeting in Guwahati on June 22, 2014 with coal exporters to bounce off the findings from 10 LCS' survey to get their opinion on the proposed agreements on Transport and Standards with Bangladesh. They all flagged the importance of transit through Bangladesh leading to development of the North East Region and the possibilities that such a MVA can create to that end. They also requested CUTS to advocate with governments so that Chittagong port can be readily accessed by the North East States. R C Agarwal, President, North Eastern Exporters' Association agreed to share with us some work that they have already done on this issue in collaboration with the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Dhaka.



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Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Government has developed 'Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio' targeting the South Asian economy to promote water, food and energy security by enhancing the cooperation on and access to the trans-boundary resource base and knowledge sharing. The implementation time for this project is 12 years in three phases of four years each.

CUTS International has been chosen as one of the portfolio partners for carrying forward a defined set of activities in this regard. On the given background and rationale, the overall goal for CUTS is *'enhancing the value of DFAT's SDIP by linking its interventions with key actors and stakeholders through local and regional networks through policy research and advocacy.'* CRC jointly with CITEE team adopted the following objectives in the context of SDIP:

- To have a thorough understanding of issues related to SDIP and the stakeholders' perceptions on the same;
- To strengthen the networking capacity and engagement in more advocacies and dialogues; and
- To engage in policy research, media and civil society organisation (CSO) mapping.

CRC organised two days long workshop with its eight strategic partners across the region at Kathmandu on May 15-16, 2014. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- develop a shared understanding of SDIP objectives, preconditions and domains of change among the strategic partners;
- know each partner and its developmental approach;
- build understanding on partnership approach; and
- discuss CUTS activity plan with strategic partners.

The workshop commenced with a welcome note by Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS. The objectives along with agenda of the workshop were shared by Bipul Chatterjee, Deputy Executive Director, CUTS. Ryan Thew, of DFAT briefed about SDIP's goal and objectives. The workshop successfully met its objectives and was able to develop a fairly good understanding on the overall partnership approach.



New Town Rajarhat Programme

Keya Ghosh of CRC has been selected as one of the Solar City multi stakeholder Committee members of New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA). The other members of the committee are S P Gon Chaudhuri, Renewable Energy Expert, President of N B institute for Rural Technology (NBIRT), Adviser of Department of Power & Non-Conventional Energy Sources (NES), and Sushobhan Bhattacharya, Director in Charge, West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency (WBREDA). Being a member of the Committee, the Centre is helping NKDA to finalise the master plan. CUTS is running the Solar City Cell at NKDA during October 03, 2013 to help NKDA in the process of making New Town a solar city. Two staffs of CRC were deputed to run the office on a regular basis and send daily activities report to CRC.

CRC along with NKDA released a tender for the 100x5 KW canal top solar power plant on May 17, 2014. A questionnaire for basic understanding on the installed Solar PV Power plants is prepared for distribution. A brochure is also prepared for the Solar City and gets approved by WBERDA.

REPRESENTATIONS



- Keya Ghosh, Prithviraj Nath, Sucharita Bhattacharjee and Aniruddha Pal attended “A Symposium on Corporate Social Responsibility” at the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry office on April 03, 2014.
- Prithviraj Nath and Sumanta Biswas attended the Export Association Meeting on Coal Export in Guwahati on June 23, 2014.