

CUTS CRC Activity Report

April-June, 2015

ONGOING
PROJECT

Enhancing Trade and Regional Economic Integration between India and Bangladesh (IBTA II)

With support of the US Consulate, CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre (CUTS CRC) along with CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE) undertook the study to examine 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 was to frame policy recommendations for: a) signing and operationalising of the Motor Vehicles Agreement and drafting/signing of a SPS Agreement between India and Bangladesh, hence to benefit and ease the efforts of the traders; and b) 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 concluded on December 31, 2014.

Advocacy & Networking

- Following the inter-ministerial meeting jointly organised by CRC and CITEE, in partnership with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi on March 18, 2015, a final report has been prepared and will be published by CUTS International shortly. Comments and suggestions from experts of regional and national repute like Sandip Kumar, Commissioner of Customs & EP were sought and have been incorporated in this report.

Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP)

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.
- To engage in policy research, media and CSO mapping.

Prithviraj Nath and Sucharita Bhattacharjee contributed towards finalisation of the questionnaire for the Perception Survey. SDIP second phase field visits started in West Bengal in June 2015. Nath, Bhattacharjee and Sumanta Biswas travelled to Murshidabad to meet several government officials, progressive farmers, private entrepreneurs, other stakeholders and conduct household surveys in remote locations. Bhattacharjee and Sayantan Sengupta are presently consolidating recently concluded projects/studies on RE models in South Asia by different organisations to enrich the literature review.

The objective is to tweak the focus of the study as well as revise the field survey plan accordingly by mid-July. Nath along with CITEE team worked towards revising SDIP plan for 2015-16 to incorporate the anticipated budget cut and contributed in preparing SDIP Cover Brief and other relevant documents.



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Bureau of Indian Standards Programme

CRC has been organising awareness programmes on Consumer Safety, ISI marks and Hall marking in association with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) in West Bengal and other Eastern and North Eastern states of India. A few such awareness programmes have been conducted in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Bihar.

CRC organised four general consumer awareness programmes on various standards formulated by BIS in Nadia District of West Bengal on June 15-16, 2015. Huge participation in all the four events (minimum participation being 50-60) made all the events successful.

Sumanta Biswas has submitted a new proposal to BIS, Kolkata for organising more consumer awareness programmes. To this end, letters have been sent to all the regional officers of BIS. A separate proposal has been submitted to BIS Eastern Region office located in Kolkata, regarding promotion of different BIS activities in West Bengal. The proposal has been accepted by BIS and will be discussed in the next Regional Publicity Committee meeting in BIS to be held on July 20, 2015.



Consumer Awareness Programme – Nadia, West Bengal

- Sumanta Biswas attended an Evaluation Programme conducted by BIS, Chennai on April 08, 2015. CUTS' role was to evaluate 'Customer Focused Results' in the whole process. At the end of the evaluation programme, the prestigious Rajiv Gandhi National Quality Award was conferred on UtltaTech Cement (Aditya Birla Group).



- CRC participated in a capacity building workshop on Rooftop SPV Systems in Kolkata, organised by Ashden India on April 07, 2015. Keya Ghosh presented on the related regulations of Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), Central Electricity Authority (CEA) and West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (WBERC).
- Prithviraj Nath participated in Indo-Nepal Dialogue entitled 'Trade Facilitation and Commercial Access through Raxaul-Birgunj: Stakeholders Perspective' organised by CUTS on April 16, 2015 at Birgunj, Nepal, in collaboration with the Consulate General of India, Birgunj



Seminar at Birgunj

- Prithviraj Nath participated in a Dialogue on 'Non-Tariff Barriers in Indo-Bangladesh Trade: Addressing Sanitary-Phytosanitary (SPS) Concerns' organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka, Bangladesh on April 18, 2015.
- Prithviraj Nath and Sayantan Sengupta attended a meeting chaired by Dr. A.N. Biswas, Joint Secretary, Department of Power, Government of West Bengal on May 06, 2015, towards finalising the draft Rooftop Grid Connected Solar Policy for Kolkata, Bidhan Nagar and New Town. Representatives from the Department of Power, DISCOMs (WBSEDCL & CESC Limited), British Deputy High Commission, State Nodal Agency (WBREDA & WBGEDCL) were present in this meeting.
- Prithviraj Nath participated in the SDIP Strategic Partners' Workshop in New Delhi on May 01, 2015. Change pathways and a tentative perception survey schedule were discussed in details with CUTS' strategic partners.
- Sumanta Biswas attended the Sixth Regional Publicity Committee Meeting of BIS on May 20, 2015. Few innovative ideas on the publicity component were put forth by CUTS in this meeting.
- Sucharita Bhattacharjee and Sumanta Biswas attended the 'Rooftop Solar Project Interaction Programme' organised jointly by British High Commission, India and Ashden India Renewable Energy Collective in Kolkata on June 08, 2015. Several councillors of the newly formed Kolkata Municipal Corporation along with representatives from the Department of Power, Government of West Bengal were present in the seminar.