

CUTS CRC Activity Report

April-June 2016

ONGOING PROJECTS

Green Growth and Energy Transformation

CUTS have entered into a contract with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for one year to undertake a project entitled 'Green Growth and Energy Transformation (Grow-GET)'. The project aims to create a platform for interaction and engagement between various stakeholders (policymakers, think tanks, subject experts, industry, media, academia, consumers, etc.) and create a knowledge base on issues pertaining to energy security and green growth in the Indian context. The idea is to provide technically sound and politically viable policy recommendations. CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS CCIER) and Calcutta Resource Centre (CRC) are to work on the project respectively in the states of Rajasthan and West Bengal.



Advocacy & Networking

- CRC organised a Roundtable conference at Kolkata with key stakeholders of the state on June 18, 2016.
- Prithviraj Nath and Sayantan Sengupta met with several key stakeholders of West Bengal during June 01-13, 2016 to brief them about the project objectives and explain the individual cooperation and contribution expected from each of them.
- Sayantan Sengupta participated in several meetings with key stakeholders in Kolkata on June 16-17, 2016.

Bureau of Indian Standards

CUTS with support from Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has been organising numbers of Consumers Awareness programmes on ISI mark and Jewellery Hallmark to protect consumer interests since last two years in different states of Eastern and North Eastern India. CUTS team has been discussing with the BIS officials about conducting more awareness programmes in the rest of territory.



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Bangladesh-India *Border Haats* and their Impacts on Poverty Reduction

CUTS with the support of The World Bank has undertaken a project entitled, 'Bangladesh-India *Border Haats* and their Impacts on Poverty Reduction'. Under the scope of this project, four *Border Haats* are being studied, two each along the Meghalaya-Bangladesh border and the Tripura-Bangladesh Border. The purpose of the project is to understand the impacts of existing *Border Haats* on poverty reduction through income, informal trade, gender implications, and economic, social and political feasibility and employment generation. The project will also estimate the level of efficiency of the existing *Border Haats* and understand their long-term sustainability if there are no trade restrictions along the India-Bangladesh border. The project commenced from September 2015 and is slated to be completed by August 2016.



Advocacy & Networking

- Sumanta Biswas and Sayandeep Chattopadhyay visited Srinagar and Kamlasagar *Border Haats* on April 25-26, 2016 respectively. This was in order to video document a few of the identified case studies.
- The CRC project team shared separate draft reports for each of the *Border Haats* of vendors and vendees of the Indian side with Mohini Dutt of World Bank. After getting consecutive comments on reports from her, the same has been finalised by the team and shared with her for further review and comments.
- The CRC team finalised the data obtained from the *Haats* from both India and Bangladesh and shared the same with Mohini Dutt in the prescribed data entry format.
- Sayandeep Chattopadhyay scrutinised the data obtained from the Bangladesh side of the *Border Haats*.
- Sayandeep Chattopadhyay shared the report of the Kalaichar *Border Haat* with the project team in June 2016.

Emerging Market Summit to Promote Trade Connectivity

CUTS in partnership with the East-West Centre (EWC) is implementing a project entitled, 'Emerging Markets Summit to Promote Trade Connectivity' which is being supported by The US Consulate. The project aims to strengthen connections between US and the South and Southeast Asian countries in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance trade and other forms of connectivity between these, particularly between BBIN and BIMSTEC, while including other critical players such as Australia, Japan, South Korea in the discourse.

The project goal is to bring together compelling evidence, rationale and expertise towards enhancing trade, investment, knowledge-sharing and people-to-people linkages between South and Southeast Asian countries of the Indo-Pacific region, come up with concrete policy recommendations to that end and foster organic networks to facilitate that.

The project will involve organising country level deliberations in seven selected South and Southeast Asian countries (viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand) and will culminate in a two-day conclave in Kolkata to bring all relevant stakeholders together. The project is to be executed within 11 months from the commencement of grant period.

Advocacy & Networking

- The collaborators meet was conducted in which strategy for the whole of the project was finalised.

Promoting Consumer and Producer Gains from Trade

CUTS is implementing a project entitled, 'Promoting Consumer and Producer Gains from Trade between Bangladesh and Tripura in Specific Agri-Horticultural Commodities' with support from The Asia Foundation (TAF). The project aims at identifying specific agricultural/horticultural commodities (which can be imported from Bangladesh to Tripura) that are high in demand across borders and stand to generate substantial consumer and producer gains across borders if trade in such items is facilitated.

The project also looks at generation of knowledge and understanding on the legal and regulatory framework for facilitating cross-border trade in such commodities, identification of solutions to promote market access for the identified agricultural commodities across borders, ultimately leading to consumer and producer gains and undertaking of appropriate advocacy through public-private dialogues to build understanding and consensus on the need to facilitate market access on the identified commodities and the consumer and producer gains that will be generated. The project commenced from April 2016 and is expected to get over by September 2016.

Advocacy & Networking

- Prithviraj Nath drafted and shared the proposed methodology for the project implementation with TAF.
- A field survey to gauge the supply-demand gap of the four selected horticulture products in the state of Tripura is now being conducted by a partner organisation. A door-to-door survey for 400 end-consumers of these products is being done and expected to be completed by mid-July 2016. Sumanta Biswas drafted the questionnaire for the same and is also keeping a track on its progress.
- The Jaipur project team has completed the literature review in consultation with the CRC project team.

ONGOING PROJECTS

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.

Advocacy & Networking

- A sub-regional policy dialogue meet on Agri-value chain and regional integration was organised at Guwahati, Assam on June 25, 2016. There were participants from various states of India as well as from Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- A media workshop on regional cooperation with special focus on developing the Agri Value chain was also organised following the Policy dialogue meet.

Trade and Transit Facilitation among the BBIN

The project is a comprehensive study to look at various macro and micro enabling factors that will help to enable a motor vehicle agreement within and amongst the four countries (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal). This is a three-year study supported by the US State Department and will deepen and further the work done under the IBTA II study. The project is expected to commence from July 2016.

REPRESENTATION



- Sumanta Biswas and Sayandeep Chattopadhyay attended a conference on facilitating bi-lateral trade between the North Eastern states of India (particularly Mizoram) and Bangladesh at Akhaura ICP, Bangladesh on April 28, 2016.

OUTREACH

- It has been brought to light that certain changes in the website would be made to make the whole CRC website more informative for donors as well as the general consumers.
- The Capability Statement of CRC was updated and sent to Publications in May 2015. The same is expected to be uploaded on the website after finalisation from the Publications department.