

CUTS CRC Activity Report

January-March 2016

ONGOING
PROJECTS

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

With support of 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. The overall objective of the study is 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.

CRC undertook the Phase II of the study. The project commenced from September 30, 2013. The final report of the project has been published and circulated.

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, their impacts on 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.

The first phase of the field survey involving all the four Border *Haats* have been completed by the CRC team. Data have been collected through questionnaire based surveys involving both personal interviews and focus group discussions. A few case studies and interviews have also been documented through videography.

Prithviraj Nath met Mohini Datt of World Bank and discussed the activities that have been completed so far in the four *Haats*, two each at Tripura and Meghalaya.

Sumanta Biswas and Sayantan Sengupta completed the Data Entry for vendors and vendees of Balat Border *Haat* and Prithviraj Nath shared the same with World Bank

Sayantan Sengupta drafted anecdotes from the four Border *Haats* and shared the same with CRC team.

CUTS 
International
CUTS Calcutta
Resource Centre
3, Suren Tagore Road,
2nd Floor
Kolkata 700019
Ph: +91.33.24604985
Talefax: +91.33.24604987
E-mail: calcutta@cuts.org
Website: www.cuts-international.org/CRC

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 is SDIP by linking its interventions with key actors and stakeholders through local and regional networks through policy research and advocacy.

CRC team members are actively involved in implementing the project activities in the river basins of Ganges and Brahmaputra. The detailed perception survey has been completed in the districts of Murshidabad and North Bengal (comprising of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Coochbehar districts) in West Bengal by the team. The Centre is also undertaking a study entitled 'Deployment of Small Scale Renewable Energy in Eastern South Asia: *The Present Status, Success stories and possibilities of Knowledge Exchange between Countries in South Asia*', under the project.

- Prithviraj Nath and Sayantan Sengupta attended the Strategic Partner's Activity Workshop at New Delhi from January 29-30, 2016.
- Sayantan Sengupta and Sumanta Biswas undertook a field study on local community involvement and the existing business models of the Small, Mini and Micro Hydro Power Plants in Sikkim in February 2016.
- A list of civil society organisations of Kolkata, working in the SDIP domains, was prepared and shared by Sayantan Sengupta with the SDIP team on February 15, 2016.
- Sayantan Sengupta has prepared an activity matrix for the CRC team under the scope of this project and shared the same with the team.
- Sayantan Sengupta drafted a Briefing Paper entitled, '*Significance of Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Photo Voltaic in Urban Spaces of West Bengal*' and shared the same with SDIP team for suggestions and comments.
- Several one-to-one meetings were conducted with key stakeholders, working in the RE domain, in Kolkata during March 14-18, 2016. Prithviraj Nath and Sayantan Sengupta met several current as well as ex-regulators (from WBERC), policymakers (Power Department and WBREDA), DISCOM officials (from WBSEDCL and CESC) and private players in Kolkata.

Reducing Barriers to Food Trade in India

CUTS with support from 'The Asia Foundation' has undertaken a project entitled, 'Reducing Barriers to Food Trade in India'. The purpose of this project is to identify product and port specific Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) to import of select agricultural food and processed food items from a select group of countries to India. High potential India's export products in similar category are also being looked at to assess NTMs imposed by partner countries. The objective is to help provide policy makers/government officials and other relevant stakeholders with a practical set of recommendations to remove/harmonise identified NTMs at their respective levels. The final draft report of the Agartala, Panitanki & Petrapole has been shared with project team.

Green Growth and Energy Security

CUTS with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) has undertaken a project entitled 'Seed Community in West Bengal for Green Growth and Energy Security'. 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 Indian context. The idea is to provide technically sound and politically viable policy recommendations. CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS CCIER) and CRC are to work on the project respectively in the states of Rajasthan and West Bengal. This project is initially for one year but is expected to be extended for some more years.

Prithviraj Nath, Sayantan Sengupta, Udai S Mehta and Sumanta Biswas visited Kolkata and met several stakeholders in the city to discuss about the existing regulatory environment in the state which is expected to facilitate greater uptake of renewable energy in the region.

REPRESENTATIONS



- Sayantan Sengupta and Sayandeep Chottopadhyay attend the 'Launch of Roadmap on Low-Carbon and Climate Resilient Kolkata' at The Council Chamber of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) on January 08, 2016.
- Sumanta Biswas & Sayandeep Chottopadhyay attended an event entitled, 'Consumer Connect: Empowering Consumers' organised jointly by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of West Bengal and the Assocham at The Oberoi Grand, Kolkata on January 28, 2016.
- Keya Ghosh and Sayantan Sengupta attended the WBERC Sub Group Committee Meeting on SOP & Consumer Awareness on February 29, 2016.
- Prithviraj Nath and Sayantan Sengupta attended the WBERC expert committee meeting on March 04, 2016. Nath also made a brief presentation on the status of the proposed project with WBERC entitled, '*Improving access, knowledge and capacity of grassroots consumers on conventional and non-conventional electricity*' in front of the committee.
- Sayantan Sengupta attended a seminar on '*What India can learn from the history of environmental progress?*' organised by Jadavpur University in collaboration with the Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCC&I) on March 04, 2016.
- Prithviraj Nath participated as a panellist in the panel discussion on '*Power since Paris*', organised by BCC&I in Kolkata on April 01, 2016.
- Sumanta Biswas & Sayandeep Chottopadhyay attended the consultative International workshop on '*Proximity to Connectivity: India and its Himalayan Neighbours*', organised by the Observer Research Foundation at Kolkata on March 29-30, 2016.