

CUTS CRC Activity Report

January-March 2017

ONGOING PROJECTS



Study on Trade and Transit Facilitation among the BBIN Countries

The project is a comprehensive study to look at various macro and micro enabling factors that will help to enable a Motor Vehicles Agreement within and amongst four countries (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal). This would be a three-year study and is being supported by the US State Department. This study will deepen and further the work done under the IBTA II study. The project is expected to commence from July 2016. The Inception Meeting will be organised at Kolkata on February 16-17, 2017.

Activities

- The Inception Meeting was organised at Kolkata on February 16-17, 2017. This objectives of the meeting was to deliberate and fine tune the project design and methodology; create awareness on the objectives, scope of work and methodology of the project; and generate ownership from early on among key stakeholders (viz. policymakers, researchers, private players, chambers, multilateral agencies, civil society organisations, media, etc.) in the region.



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Green Growth and Energy Transformation

CUTS have entered into a contract with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for one year to undertake a project titled '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 Indian context. The idea is to provide technically sound and politically viable policy recommendations.

CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CCIER) and Calcutta Resource Centre (CRC) are to work on the project respectively in the states of Rajasthan and West Bengal. This project tenure is initially for one year but is now extended till October 2017.

Activities

- A Peer Group Consultation Meet was organised on February 22, 2017. In addition to the seed community members, there were participants from industries, media, academic institutions, power distribution companies, solar energy experts, industry associations and many others.
- Prithviraj Nath and Sayantan Sengupta met with some of the key members of the seed community on February 01-05, 2017 to update them about the next phase of action, which aims towards facilitating greater uptake of rooftop solar in education sector of West Bengal and also to get valuable suggestions and inputs from them about executing the project.
- Sayantan Sengupta and Sayandeep Chattopadhy undertook scoping visits in Kolkata, South 24 Parganas and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal during February 06-18, 2017. This was primarily to identify educational institutions, which are interested and also have the potential to implement rooftop solar power plants on their institutions.

Indo-Asia Connectivity for Shared Prosperity

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 has been renamed as "Indo Asia Connectivity for Shared Prosperity."

The project aims to strengthen the connections between US and the South and Southeast Asian countries in the Indo-Pacific region to enhance trade and other forms of connectivity between South and Southeast Asian countries, 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. It aims to contribute positively towards political and commercial convergence on issues surrounding Indo-Pacific connectivity by creating a multi-stakeholder, multi-country platform for exchange, discussions and deliberations amongst key stakeholders (public and private, including the youth in each country).

Activities

- The Centre is organising a final dissemination meeting at Dhaka, Bangladesh in partnership with the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Secretariat on April 11, 2017.



Bangladesh-India Border Haats and their Impacts on Poverty Reduction

CUTS with support from The World Bank undertook a project entitled, 'Impacts of Border *Haats* on Poverty Reduction and Possible Future Benefits from their Replication and Up-Scaling along the India-Bangladesh Border'. Four Border *Haats* are to be studied under the scope of the project, two each along the Meghalaya-Bangladesh and the Tripura-Bangladesh Border.

The purpose of the project is to understand 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.

Activities

- The Video Documentary is under process and will be finalised by Mid May 2017.

Building Capacity of Grassroots Consumers on Energy Conservation

CUTS and West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (WBERC) are jointly implementing a project to build the capacity of the grassroot consumers and increase their awareness about the existing regulations of the state electricity regulatory commission in the districts of Jalpaiguri and South 24 Parganas.

This is aimed towards building the consumer capacity on their rights and responsibilities, educate the consumers about the frequently applicable and used parameters of the Standard of Performance (SoP) regulations of the commission, including the complaint mechanism, new connections, metering and other relevant issues. Focus will also be on building capacity of common consumers on energy conservation and renewable energy systems, especially rooftop solar systems.

Activities

- Sayantan Sengupta and Sayandeep Chattopadhy undertook scoping visits in districts of Jalpaiguri and South 24 Parganas. They met with the Divisional and Regional managers of West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (WBSEDCL) of these two districts and also with other relevant stakeholders.
- Sayantan Sengupta with support from Arnab Ganguly done a mapping of probable partner NGOs for this project. Initially four NGOs have been selected to carry out the work in collaboration with CUTS in these two districts.
- Sayantan Sengupta drafted a quick consumer guide booklet for the electricity consumers and shared the same with WBERC on February 09, 2017. CRC is still awaiting comments/suggestions on the same.
- Sayantan Sengupta also drafted and shared a work plan with the team and after being finalised by Prithviraj Nath had shared the same with WBERC. The same is yet to be finalised from the Commission's end.



Promoting Consumer and Producer Gains from Trade between Bangladesh and Tripura in Specific Agricultural Commodities

CUTS is implementing a project titled, '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 has commenced from April 2016 and is expected to get over by September 2016.

Intra-BBIN Trade via Inland Waterways (IBTIW)

CUTS along with its partners in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal with support from The Asia Foundation, India is implementing the Project Launch Meeting on 'Expanding Tradable Benefits of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganga and Brahmaputra Basins' at Guwahati on October 24, 2016 with the aim 'to contribute to improving institutions for inland waterways governance with particular emphasis on transport connectivity and livelihood in the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) region'.

The project will create an alternative policy discourse between policymakers, civil society, and communities for enabling reform measures and better governance of inland waterways; and share knowledge between governments and civil society on governance of inland waterways. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and validate activities, outputs and desired/expected outcomes of the project and explore possible collaborations with other partners of the Civil Society Fund (CSF) of the South Asia Water Governance Programme (SAWGP).

Activities

- Prithviraj Nath along with Saurabh Kumar visited Bhutan during January 08-15, 2017, to undertake the first phase of the field study in the country.
- Bijaya Roy and Prashant Sharma concluded the field survey in West Bengal in February 2017.

Linkages and Impacts of Cross-Border Informal Trade in Agricultural Inputs in Eastern South Asia

With an objective to understand the dynamics of informal trade in agricultural inputs across the border of India-Bangladesh and India-Nepal, and its impact on livelihoods of farmers, including the gender dimension of those impacts, CUTS International has undertaken a project entitled “Linkages and Impacts of Cross-Border Informal Trade in Agricultural Inputs in Eastern South Asia”, with support from Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The project commenced from July 2016 and will continue till June 2017.

Activities

- The Report of the first survey was shared by the team in January 2017.
- The second round of survey commenced from February 24 and is expected to get over by March 09, 2017. To this end, Arnab Ganguly and Sayandeep Chattopadhy are visiting Coochbehar, Maldah and South Dinajpur districts of West Bengal.
- The Report of the second survey will be done by the end of March 2017 and respectively the final report will be circulated for further comments and finalisation.

- Udai S Mehta, Arnab Ganguly and Sayantan Sengupta met with the Principal and Special Secretary, Department of Power and NES, Government of West Bengal to discuss possible interventions of CUTS in the power sector and probable areas of collaborations.

- Prithviraj Nath and Bijaya Roy attended a conference entitled, *Bengal Business Global Summit* organised by the West Bengal Government on January 21, 2017
- Sayoni Chaudhuri attended a conference organised by Observer Research Foundation in January 2017.
- Prithviraj Nath presented on ‘Economic Issues’ and ‘People to Connectivity through multi-sectoral arrangement’ at the DPG Roundtable on Advancing BBIN Sub-regional Cooperation, organised by Delhi Policy Group. Sayoni Chaudhuri and Bijaya Roy also accompanied him.

ONGOING PROJECTS



OUTREACH



REPRESENTATION

