

CUTS CRC Activity Report

July-September 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 & Environment (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 and drafting/signing of a SPS Agreement between India and Bangladesh, hence to benefit and ease the efforts of the 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 be concluded on October 31, 2014.

Advocacy & Networking

- The field work is complete and the analysis of the data collected from 10 border points has been done. Further fine tuning of the analysis is ongoing. Meetings were organised with Onion exporters (Nashik) and Raw Cotton exporters (Mumbai) on September 10 & 12, 2014, respectively. Both meetings went off well with good amount of participation from exporters' associations and media, followed by intense discussions.
- A major international conference on trade facilitation entitled 'Trade, Transport and Transit Facilitation in South: *Asia-Imperative of Bridging Macro-Meso-Micro Gaps*' will be held at the Lalit Great Eastern Hotel, Kolkata on October 29-30, 2014. This event will share findings from multiple CUTS' studies on trade facilitation in South Asia and discuss and deliberate on concrete policy prescriptions. The event will have participation from relevant stakeholders from all across South Asia including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India.



← Meeting at Mumbai



Meeting at Nashik →



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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 adopted the following objectives in the context of SDIP:

- To have a thorough understanding of issues related to SDIP and 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 CSO mapping.

Scoping visits to the three river basins were done by the CRC-SDIP team. They visited parts of North Bengal, Assam, Bhutan and Bangladesh to conduct the Diagnostic Study with the help of CUTS' strategic partners. Data sheets for West Bengal, Assam and Bhutan were prepared and shared with the CUTS-SDIP team. Team members participated in the Annual Dialogue of SDIP Portfolio Partners in Kathmandu on August 21-22, 2014. SDIP-CRC team actively took part in finalising the work plan for SDIP's first phase which has now been uploaded on the SDIP Project page and also shared with DFAT.

New Town Rajarhat Programme

CUTS is a member of the key stakeholder committee and also helping New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) run the Solar City Cell in New Town. Additionally CUTS is providing assistance and expert opinion in terms of further developing specific plans, projects and regulations. CUTS has been running the Solar City Cell at NKDA on October 03, 2013. Two professionals from CRC were deputed to run the Cell.

Along with awareness generation and responding to queries of the citizens and commercial stallholders of New Town, CRC also helped NKDA to prepare the tender document for the 5X100 kWp canal top Photo Voltaic solar power plant which was to be implemented besides the Eco Park (published on May 17, 2014). The implementation of the project has already been started.

Solar City cell also prepared concept notes of cumulative 58 kWp solar power plants on the rooftop of two market buildings and that of the NKDA office building. Tender document for the NKDA office building was also prepared by the Cell and the tender was also floated.

A questionnaire for basic understanding on the installed Solar PV Power plants was prepared for distribution. Solar City Cell was also helping NKDA for procurement of three "Mahindra Reva" for the use of Solar City project. A booklet was also prepared for the Solar City.

Bureau of Indian Standards Programme

CUTS has been organising awareness programmes on Consumer Safety, ISI marks and Hall marking in association with the Bureau of Indian Standards in West Bengal and North East India. A few such awareness programmes have been conducted in West Bengal, Tripura and Assam.

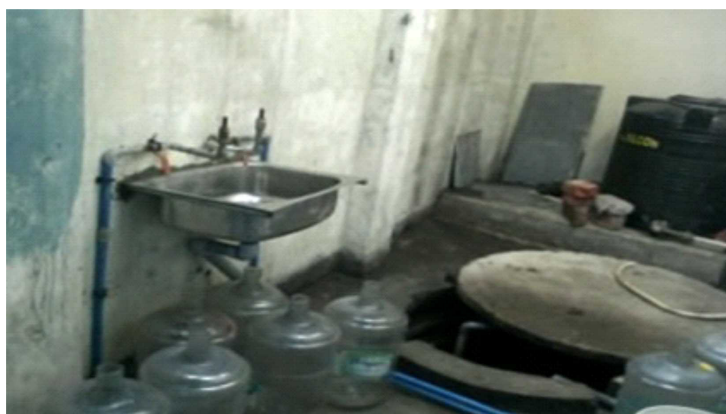
An awareness generation meeting was held in Hridaypur, North 24 Parganas on August 25, 2014. Another four meetings were conducted in Malda districts in collaboration with CUTS' district partner Chanchal Janakalyan Samity, Malda on September 20-21, 2014. They were very successful with average participation of 50-70 common consumers and interactive sessions. BIS officials requested CRC to take up another 30 awareness generation programmes in Assam, Jharkhand and West Bengal during October, November and December.

CUTS is a member of the Regional Publicity Committee of BIS and will soon be empanelled officially with BIS. CUTS team has been discussing with the BIS officials about conducting more awareness programmes in Eastern and North East India and long-term collaboration between CUTS and BIS.

REPRESENTATIONS



- Sucharita Bhattacharjee and Sayantan Sengupta attended the Seventh Annual Environment and Energy Conclave, an international forum for Climate Change mitigation and business response organised by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industries at ITC Kolkata on August 29-30, 2014. The theme of the Conclave for 2014 was 'Sustainable Resource Management'.
- Nishi Kant Sinha accompanied the BIS team for a monitoring raid at the production facility of a Mineral water making Company (Droplet) which was using the logo of ISI Mark without having BIS certification. BIS seized the relevant documents which will be produced as evidence for filing a case against them.



BIS Raid

- Sayantan Sengupta and Sucharita Bhattacharjee attended a Stakeholder Consultation meeting with the Airports Authority of India on September 10, 2014.



Transboundary Cooperation in the Energy Sector

This event was organised by CUTS International with support from Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), India office on August 07-08, 2014. The main focus of this event was to understand the current status of energy needs and deficit in each of South Asian countries and the present status of energy trade between them. The potential for future trade and possible triggers and barriers was also a key point of discussion during the event.

This conference was well attended by 50 participants from varied nationalities (Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India) representing government, NGOs, academic and educational institutions and industry representatives etc.

Screening of *KATIYABAAZ*

CUTS in collaboration with Globalization Films Pvt. Ltd. organised a documentary screening of '*Katiyabaaaz*' at Kolkata on August 21, 2014 on issues related to power theft with the purpose of generating mass awareness, assess energy sector policies and build up a common consensus against electricity issues such as power theft.

Film screening was a huge success with more than 100 participants from government departments, academia, utilities, media, common consumers, etc. The discussion session after the event was very interesting. This event generated a lot of interest and there are possibilities of its screenings with utilities. Many media articles were published on the same.



KATIYABAAZ Screening at NANDAN III

Prithviraj Nath participated in a live FM programme on electricity issues on All India Radio (AIR) titled "*Mushkil Ashan*" as a representative from consumer organisation on September 21, 2014. It was a phone-in programme focussing on electricity issues during the upcoming festive season.