

CUTS CRC Activity Report

July-September 2015

ONGOING PROJECTS

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 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: 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 from September 30, 2013.

An Inter-ministerial meeting was organised by CUTS in March 2015. The final report has been shared with publications for final editing and publishing. The report is expected to be published in November 2015.


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 twelve 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.

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 district of Murshidabad and North Bengal (comprising of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Kochbihar districts) by the team. CRC is presently in the process of collating the data collected from this survey. Also, the Centre is 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. CRC team did the literature survey by consolidating recently concluded projects/studies on RE models in South Asia. Field surveys are to be undertaken in October 2015.

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

Bureau of Indian Standards Programme (BIS)

CUTS 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.

BIS has included CUTS into their Regional Publicity Committee where CRC advises on its publicity strategies and activities. CUTS has also been empanelled with BIS as an organisation working towards consumer empowerment and welfare in the state of West Bengal.

Reducing Barriers to Food Trade in India

CUTS with the support of The Asia Foundation has undertaken a project titled, 'Reducing Barriers to Food Trade in India'. The purpose of this project is to identify products 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. 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 project is slated to be completed by November 2015.

CRC team visited Petrapole and interviewed various stakeholders including the sub Divisional Officer and the Chairman to understand their roles, if any, towards trade facilitation. A stakeholders' meeting was organised at Bongaon on September 16, 2015. Prithviraj Nath and Sumanta Biswas visited Agartala Land Port in September for the field study.

2G/3G Internet Measurements in India

This is a project developed and implemented by Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi in partnership with CUTS International. The goal of this project is to capture consumer perception about the existing quality of mobile internet service offered by various operators across India. For the same, CUTS and IIT, Delhi would be carrying out consumer surveys in Delhi, Rajasthan and West Bengal.

CRC is responsible for covering a comprehensive sample of 300 consumers of mobile internet service from nine districts of West Bengal. This survey exercise is being executed by CRC with the help of its partner organisations across eight different districts of West Bengal. CRC will be collating and sharing the data with CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS CCIER) in the prescribed format in October.

OUTREACH

- Prithviraj Nath visited US to attend the International Visitors' Leadership Program (IVLP) conducted by the US State Department. The theme of the programme was 'Border Trade Issues'. Several representatives from India and Bangladesh attended this programme.
- Sayantan Sengupta and Sucharita Bhattacharjee met Aniruddha Ghosh, Head Finance & Supply Chain, Mlinda Foundation on July 23, 2015 to discuss possible collaboration with Mlinda Foundation in the field of small RE.
- Sumanta Biswas attended the training workshop 'TechCamp India – Driving Dialogue with Digital' at New Delhi, on September 08-09, 2015. The TechCamp India was organised by the US Department of State, the US Embassy in New Delhi and the Observer Research Foundation. The workshop focussed on the need to develop technology as a means of communication.

REPRESENTATION

- Prithviraj Nath and Sumanta Biswas attended the Stakeholder Workshop in Kolkata on finalisation of Protocol for implementation of BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement on July 25, 2015.
- Sayantan Sengupta attended the Annual General Meeting, 2015 of The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I) on September 10, 2015. The Chamber also organised a panel discussion on 'Resurgence in Convergence – An Economic Outlook' at the same event.

EVENTS



- The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and CUTS jointly organised a roundtable meeting on '**Development through Connectivity: How to Strengthen India – ASEAN Trade & Commerce**' at Kolkata on July 17, 2015. Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International, was present at this event as a speaker.
- BCC&I in partnership with CUTS organised the **Environment & Energy Conclave, 2015** at Kolkata on August 28, 2015. The objective of the Annual Environment and Energy Conclave, 2015 organised was to spell out the latest developments in the country, both in policy realm as well as in the investment and operational areas to realise clean and smart power for India. The chief guest of the event was honourable Power Minister of India, Piyush Goyal and the key note address was delivered by Honourable Power Minister of West Bengal, Manish Gupta. The conclave witnessed huge participation from different stakeholders' categories including experts from Energy and Environment sector. CUTS International was the Consumer Connect Partner of BCC&I in this *A Quick Diagnostic of Key Challenges and Opportunities for Water, Energy and Food Security in South Asia* Conclave. A special report 'Mainstreaming Sustainable Development: prepared by CUTS was released at this event.



Release of CUTS' Report at BCC&I Energy Conclave

- CCIER with support from CRC organised a one day seminar on '**Green Growth and Energy Security in India: Political Economy Transformation and Challenges**' at Kolkata on August 29, 2015. Eminent personalities like NS Nigam, Chairman and Managing Director, West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited; R N Sen, Chairman, West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission; A.N. Biswas, Joint Secretary, Department of Power, Government of West Bengal; Ajay Mathur, Director General, Bureau of Energy Efficiency and many others participated in the seminar.



CUTS event was graced by the eminent personalities like Ajay Mathur and Alok Mukherjee