

CUTS CRC Activity Report

July-September 2017

ONGOING PROJECTS



Reduce NTBs in Agricultural Trade between Bangladesh-India

CUTS International with the support from Chemonics International is implementing a project in India and Bangladesh that aims at understanding various non-tariff barriers (NTBs) that deter trade in select agricultural commodities between India and Bangladesh.

The project also aims at facilitating bilateral dialogue between relevant policymakers in both countries and chalk out an effective action plan to remove such barriers. To this end, Calcutta Resource Centre will be undertaking a field survey in select North Eastern States in India coupled with an analysis of the various regulations pertaining to import of vegetables from Bangladesh.



Advocacy & Networking

- CUTS along with Unnayan Shamnnay, Bangladesh organised an Advocacy Dialogue to Reduce NTBs in Agricultural Trade between Bangladesh-India at Dhaka, Bangladesh on August 08, 2017 and at New Delhi, India on August 17, 2017. The objectives of these two events were to establish cross-border bilateral partnerships to address NTBs for a specific set of agricultural commodities, such as potato, green chilli, tomato and brinjal (eggplant), and create a framework for continued bilateral dialogues to address NTBs. The aim was to bring together relevant regulators, government agencies, private players, researchers and experts to address NTBs in trade of these identified four products, in particular, and for agricultural commodities, in general.

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International

**CUTS Calcutta
Resource Centre**

99/5/9A, Dr. Amiya Bose
Sarani, 3rd Floor
Bulkygunge Place
Kolkata 700019
Ph: +91.33.40683154
Telefax: +91.33.24604987
E-mail: calcutta@cuts.org
Website: www.cuts-international.org/CRC



Green Growth & Energy Transformation

CUTS has 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. The project is presently in its second phase and the overall theme is "Solar for Education". The overall objective of this phase is to identify the key factors and policy recommendations that are essential for popularising solar among educational institutions. An informal multi-stakeholder platform called the Seed Community was formed with subject experts, and representatives from solar equipment manufacturers, solar project developers, media, and civil society organisations (CSOs).



Advocacy & Networking

- A consultation meeting entitled *Forum for Finance* was held with select financial institutions, organisations which are into skill training and entrepreneurship development, solar project developers, corporate houses, CSOs and seed community members in Kolkata on July 24, 2017. The objective of the meeting was to deliberate and come up with recommendations to facilitate easier access to finance to promote rooftop solar solution among educational institutions in West Bengal. The consultation also aimed at understanding the implications of greater uptake of rooftop solar on the skill ecosystem in West Bengal.
- A consultation meeting entitled *Forum for Policy* was held with select key policymakers, regulators, financial institutions, solar project developers, CSOs and seed community members in Kolkata on September 06, 2017. The objective of the meeting was to deliberate and come up with recommendations to facilitate greater uptake of grid-connected rooftop solar among educational institutions in West Bengal. Representatives from key policymaking bodies viz. West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency (WBREDA); West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (WBERC); and Reserve Bank of India participated in the Forum.





Road Safety: Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017

The project aims to generate awareness about the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2017 and its key highlights among all stakeholders including common public and making a strong base for urgent enactment of the Bill in India, so as to address the burning issues of common road users related to road safety through strong advocacy.

Recognising the need of bringing amendments in the present Act, CUTS conceived and designed the Road Safety Advocacy (RoSA) Project in partnership with Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP). The project is being implemented at the national level by CART which has been organising a number of regional advocacy dialogues across India. In West Bengal one such regional advocacy dialogue was organised in August 2017.



Advocacy & Networking

- The Regional Advocacy Meeting on Road Safety Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Bill 2017 was organised at Kolkata, West Bengal on August 30, 2017. The one point agenda of the meeting was to discuss changes made in the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill and advocate for the early passage of the Bill as it has been passed in Lok Sabha on April 10, 2017 and was expected to be passed in Rajya Sabha. More than 75 participants from non-government organisations (NGOs) of Kolkata and representatives from states – Jharkhand, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi, Assam, Tripura and Orissa; media representatives; officials of stakeholder departments; and road safety experts participated in the meeting.

Building Capacity of Grassroots Consumers on Energy Conservation

CUTS and WBERC are jointly implementing a project to build the capacity of the grassroots 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.



Advocacy & Networking

- Till August 31, 2017, 118 meetings were conducted in the two districts of South 24 Parganas and Jalpaiguri districts. However, no activities under the project could be undertaken in September owing to factors like floods and festive season in West Bengal. Activities under the project will resume from November 2017.
- CRC has prepared a consolidated list of all complains received from consumers during the consumer interface meetings conducted so far. It was submitted to WBERC to help them undertake informed interventions.
- CRC is developing a **Quick Guide** for the electricity consumers at grassroots and will be distributing it during November 2017.

Creating an Enabling and Inclusive Policy and Political Economy Discourse for Trade, Transport and Transit Facilitation

The project is a comprehensive study to look at various macro and micro enabling factors that will help to enable a Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) within and amongst five countries (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Myanmar). This would be a three-year study and is being supported by the US State Department and DfID. This study will deepen and further the work done under the IBTA II study.

Under the project, CUTS will undertake extensive field study across 11 trade corridors among these countries to understand the infrastructural and political economy challenges that can adversely affect effective implementation of the MVA and to identify probable policy interventions to overcome the challenges. To facilitate effective implementation of the project, CUTS International have partnered Policy Advocacy Groups/CSOs in each of the five countries.

Based on the recommendations, CUTS will be organising a series of stakeholder consultations in the select countries along corridors.

Advocacy & Networking

- Field survey for the corridors stretch Kolkata-Raxaul-Kathmandu, Panitanki-Siliguri, Siliguri-Phuentsholing-Gelephu-Guwahati-Samdrup Jongkhar, Kolkata-Raxaul-Kathmandu, Kathmandu-Kakarvitta, Gorakhpur-Sunauli-Bhairahawa-Kathmandu, Dhaka-Jessore-Benapole-Petrapole and Imphal-Moreh was undertaken during July-September 2017. In addition, surveys were also undertaken in Myanmar during the same period.

Institutional and legislative Assessment of Road Safety in States

ONGOING PROJECTS



CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CART) is implementing a three-month assignment that entails institutional and legislative assessment on Road Safety in select states in India. CRC is partnering CART for implementing the work in West Bengal.

Advocacy & Networking

- A focussed group discussion was organised on July 08, 2017 with representatives from the Judiciary, CSO, Department of Traffic, independent lawyers etc. to discuss key issues pertaining to the legislative provisions pertaining to road safety.

REPRESENTATION



- Arnab Ganguly attended the Eighth edition of Energy Conclave organised by The Confederation of Indian Industry on August 17, 2017.
- Arnab Ganguly and Sayantan Sengupta attended the Tenth edition of Energy Conclave organised by The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry on August 24, 2017.
- Roshan Iyer attended a workshop on 'India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Relationship: Way Towards a Stronger ASEAN-India Partnership' organised by ASEAN India Centre at Research and Information System for Developing Countries, New Delhi; and Indian Studies Centre Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok in collaboration with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata on September 07, 2017.
- Roshan Iyer attended the China Symposia Series on 'India and China as Rising Powers in the World Order: Influences of History and Culture' organised by Institute of Chinese Studies, Ananta Centre and School of International Relations and Strategic Studies (SIRSS), Jadavpur University on September 14, 2017.
- Pradeep S Mehta, Sanjay Kumar Mangla and Subhanil Banerjee attended The North East Connectivity Summit organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Kohima, Nagaland during September 22-23, 2017 where CUTS was a knowledge partner. They spoke on various aspects related to the need for greater connectivity with North East India.
- Arnab Ganguly attended the Consumer Outreach Programme for consumers organised by The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and Deepalaya (Consumer Advocacy Group working in Kolkata) at Barasat, Kolkata on September 14, 2017.