

CUTS CRC Activity Report

July-December 2016

ONGOING PROJECTS

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).

The project will involve organising country level deliberations in seven selected South and Southeast Asian countries (viz. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and will culminate in a two-day conclave in Kolkata to bring all relevant stakeholders together.

Advocacy & Networking

- The First Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting of the project was held on September 23, 2016. During the PAC Meeting the four main pillars of the project; Energy Cooperation, Maritime and Inland Waterways Connectivity, Trade and Investment and Bay of Bengal Business Forum was discussed and finalised.
- The final Summit was held at Kolkata on December 14-15, 2016 which was attended by more than 300 participants. The purpose was to advance the strategic goal of expanding viable commercial links between India, the countries of South and Southeast Asia, and the US a part of the US vision of an Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC). The conference focussed on three key policy areas: Energy Cooperation; Trade & Investment; Maritime and Inland Waterways Connectivity; and Bay of Bengal Business Forum.

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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.

Advocacy & Networking

- The first seed committee meeting was organised at Kolkata on September 10, 2016 where four catalytic projects were discussed.
- The second seed committee meeting was organised at Kolkata on November 08, 2016. The aim was to further analyse the catalytic project on solar rooftop and vet the other three catalytic projects (viz. Solar Pumpset, Green Building and EcoTourism). During the first seed community meeting, the community members suggested to dovetail the project on solar rooftop with other sectors viz. education, healthcare and commercial buildings.
- The Third Seed Committee Meeting in Kolkata will be organised by Mid- February, 2017.

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 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.

Advocacy & Networking

- A regional dialogue workshop was organised at New Delhi on July 29, 2016. This workshop aimed to disseminate key advocacy messages on issues related to food, water and energy security in South Asia and discuss opportunities and challenges of regional/sub-regional cooperation for sustainable agricultural practices, agricultural value chains, water resource management, and scope for intra-regional trade and investment opportunities in the energy sector in South Asia.



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.



Advocacy & Networking

- CUTS organised a consultation meeting on 'Border *Haats* and their Socio-Economic Impact' at Guwahati on October 26, 2016. The principle objective of this project is to understand and estimate the impact of border *haats* on poverty reduction through income and employment generation with specific emphasis on gender implications through a study of the four existing *haats* (two each in Tripura-Chittagong and Meghalaya-Rangpur/Sylhet) at the India-Bangladesh border. The event shared its findings and policy recommendations that emerged from the study with relevant stakeholders (public and private sectors) with a view to come up with a forward looking policy and action agenda.

Study on Trade and Transit Facilitation among the BBIN

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.

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.

Advocacy & Networking

- A Stakeholders' meeting was held at Agartala, Tripura on September 07, 2016. V G Jenner, Special Secretary & Director, Industry and Commerce Department, Government of Tripura was the chief guest.

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).

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.

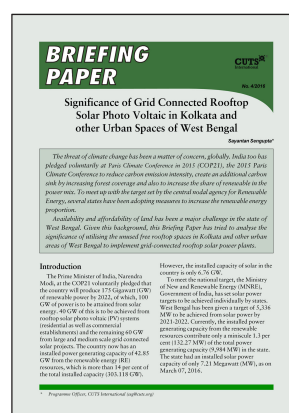
PUBLICATIONS

Significance of Grid Connected Rooftop Solar Photo Voltaic in Kolkata and other Urban Spaces of West Bengal

This Briefing Paper has tried to analyse the significance of utilising the unused free rooftop spaces in Kolkata and other urban areas of West Bengal to implement grid-connected rooftop solar power plants.

www.cuts-citee.org/SDIP/pdf/Briefing-Paper-Significance_of_Grid_Connected_Rooftop_Solar_Photo_Voltaic_in_Kolkata.pdf

[Significance_of_Grid_Connected_Rooftop_Solar_Photo_Voltaic_in_Kolkata.pdf](http://www.cuts-citee.org/SDIP/pdf/Briefing-Paper-Significance_of_Grid_Connected_Rooftop_Solar_Photo_Voltaic_in_Kolkata.pdf)



REPRESENTATION

- Prithviraj Nath and Sayoni Chaudhuri attended a conference organised by Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I) entitled, *BBIN Business Forum* on July 14, 2016.
- Udai S Mehta, Sayantan Sengupta and Arkapal Sil attended the Energy Climate Synergy, 2016 at Kolkata on August 25, 2016.
- Keya Ghosh and Sayantan Sengupta participated at the TERI-MNRE workshop on 'Expediting Solar Development in West Bengal for the Eastern Region and North Eastern Region', at Kolkata, West Bengal on October 25, 2016. Ghosh made a presentation on the agenda of 'Consumer Perspective on Renewable Energy'.
- Pradeep S Mehta and Sayantan Sengupta participated at the SARI/EI Think Tank Forum (TTF) India Workshop for South Asia Regional Energy Co-operation. Mehta delivered a key speech on 'Engagement with Parliamentarians for consensus building and policy initiatives' at the session: Discussions on engagement and presentation of concepts for TTF.

