

CUTS CRC Activity Report

October-December, 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 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 on September 30, 2013 and will be concluded on December 31, 2014.

Advocacy & Networking

- An event entitled 'Trade, Transport and Transit Facilitation in South Asia: Imperative of bridging Macro, Meso and Micro Gaps' was organised at Kolkata on October 29-30, 2014. The event shared findings from multiple studies undertaken by CUTS on trade facilitation in South Asia and discussed/deliberated on concrete policy prescriptions. It had participation from relevant stakeholder groups like policymakers, government officials, subject experts, multilateral agencies, academia, private players and media from all across South Asia including Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and India.



An event on 'Trade, Transport and Transit Facilitation in South Asia' at Kolkata on October 29-30, 2014



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- A half day 'Exporters' Meet' was organised in association with Calcutta Customs House Association in Kolkata on November 19, 2014. The focus of the event was to share the study findings from 10 different Land Customs Stations (LCS) with participants and understand their views on two draft agreements, i.e. Motor Vehicles Agreement Act and Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Standard between Bangladesh and India on Cross Border Trade.

Apart from several exporters, this event was well attended by representatives from Federation of Freight Forwarders Association, Calcutta Customs House Association, Export Associations and others. A few of the notable guests in the event were Raju Goswami, Vice President, Calcutta Customs House Association; Sudip Dey, Executive Committee Member, Federation of Freight Forwarders Association in India; Pradip Dey, Secretary, Petrapole Exporters and Importers Welfare Association; Khalek Biswas, Managing Director, Sohana Agro Fresh Pvt. Limited; Ali Haider, Proprietor, Haider Logistics and Ashok Kumar Ghosh, Proprietor, Sarathi Trading Company of Malda.



Trade Exporters Meet
at Kolkata on
October 29-30, 2014

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. 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.

A Terms of Reference for the proposed study on '*Small and Micro Scale Renewable Energy in Eastern South Asia*' was shared with the CITEE Team on November 17, 2014. Sucharita Bhattacharjee met with Subrata Biswas, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of West Bengal & Chairman, West Bengal State Marketing Board on November 12, 2014 to discuss challenges faced by West Bengal in the agricultural sector. Major issues which require immediate interventions were also discussed at length.

CRC SDIP team participated in the '*Change Pathways*' discussion on December 16, 2014 on the basis of an M&E document circulated by Julian Gayfer. Sucharita Bhattacharjee and Prithviraj Nath from CRC, along with CITEE SDIP team visited Guwahati and Bhutan to get updates on the work of CUTS' partners and also discuss specifics of the M&E framework. Presently, Sucharita Bhattacharjee and Sayantan Sengupta are working on the energy and CSO mapping documents.

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 (BIS) in West Bengal, Eastern and North East India. A few such awareness programmes have been conducted in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Bihar.

Four awareness programmes were organised in Patna, Hazipur and Muzaffarpur districts of Bihar in November 2014. The Hallmarking Awareness Programme was held in Magadh Mahila College, Patna on November 26, 2014. On the same day a general consumer awareness programme was conducted at Mainpura Slum Community, Patna. The second general consumer awareness programme was organised at Hazipur and last one was held on 'Education Utilisation of Standards' at the Muzaffarpur Institute of Technology. Two senior officials from BIS used to visit along with the representatives from CUTS.

BIS has formally recognised CRC as the 'BIS Scheme of Recognition of Consumer Organisations' for the state of West Bengal.



BIS Awareness Generation Programme at Hajipur

BIS Awareness Generation Programme at Magadh Mahila College



OUTREACH

- Prithviraj Nath participated in a live FM programme on electricity issues on All India Radio (AIR) entitled '*Mushkil Ashan*' as a representative from Consumer Organisation. This programme focussed on electricity issues and was broadcasted on October 13, 2014. Nath answered queries by common consumers on relevant issues.
- Representatives from '*Maa Sarada Vidyapeeth*', an NGO of Bihar visited CRC on December 02, 2014 and discussed with Prithviraj Nath and team on probable tie-ups with the Centre on thematic programme areas. This was due to a network building exercise initiated by Sumanta Biswas and Sayantan Sengupta of CRC in Bihar.
- Sucharita Bhattacharjee wrote an article in Bengali on *Renewable Energy* which is to be published in the *Panchayati Raj Magazine* in February 2015.

New Town Rajarhat Programme

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

Along with awareness generation among the citizens and responding to queries of citizens and commercial stallholders of New Town, CRC from NKDA Solar City Cell 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).

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. The same was dispatched for printing after incorporating some cartoons drawn by Chandi Lahiri, an eminent cartoonist.

The contract with NKDA for running Solar City cell (2013-14 session) is already over and the office was handed over to NKDA on 29th September 2014. A fresh RFP was floated by NKDA to run the solar city cell for the year 2014-15 and CUTS CRC applied for the same before the last day of contract (October). Although, a request was made to the CEO of NKDA in early December, seeking a formal communication on the bid submitted by CRC, no formal communication was made, till date, on behalf of NKDA. Keya Ghosh had an informal communication with the CEO and there may be some developments in the near future on this.

REPRESENTATIONS



- Aniruddha Pal participated in 'Inauguration of Solar Micro Cold Storage' near Betna village of Nadia District on October 13, 2014.
- Sucharita Bhattacharjee participated in an International Conference on 'Water Filters: A dialogue for Young scholars and professionals' hosted by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIS) on October 27, 2014.
- Nishi Kant Sinha accompanied the BIS team for a monitoring raid at the production facility of a Mineral Water Company (Aquaweb) which was using the ISI Mark without having BIS certification on November 14, 2014. BIS seized the relevant documents which will be produced as evidence for filing a case against them.
- Sucharita Bhattacharjee and Aniruddha Pal attended a Roundtable on Bio-Energy organised by Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management on November 26, 2014.
- Prithviraj Nath attended the 17th Sustainable Development Conference organised by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Islamabad, Pakistan on December 09-11, 2014. He made two presentations: '*Water-Energy-Food Nexus*' and '*Promoting Trade in South Asia with a focus on Women MSME*'.
- Sayantan Sengupta and Sucharita Bhattacharjee attended the 8th Environment Partnership Summit organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce at Kolkata on December 24, 2014.