

CUTS CRC Activity Report

January-March 2026

ONGOING PROJECTS



Cyber Security Capacity Building Programme for MSMEs in India

CUTS International has recognised the unique challenges MSMEs face in the digital space and aims to provide targeted support to help them navigate the complexities of the digital economy. In response to these challenges, CUTS International has joined an initiative undertaken by The Asia Foundation (TAF) entitled 'the APAC Cybersecurity Fund', with support from Google.org.

The initiative aims to increase MSMEs' cybersecurity resilience by providing comprehensive training, raising awareness, and promoting the adoption of cyber-resilient practices. The project will be implemented in 10 states of India, including Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Nagaland, and Tripura, to train more than 20,000 MSMEs.

In this quarter, nine cybersecurity capacity-building programs were organised, and all workshops were held in West Bengal. The West Bengal workshops took place in Nabagram, Anantapur, Palsanda in Murshidabad, Birbhum, Gorubathan, Matigara in Jalpaiguri, Amta in Howrah, and Duttaphulia in Nadia. All had hundred-plus participants, with remarkable women's participation, except Anantapur, which had 86 participants. The nine workshops had over 1200 participants.



**Nabagram, Murshidabad
on January 14, 2026**



**Palsanda, Murshidabad
on February 16, 2026**



Amta, Howrah on March 27, 2026



Duttaphulia, Nadia on March 31, 2026

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Sustainable Commodity Finance of Deforestation-risk Commodities Imported by India

CUTS International has doubted the lack of integration of deforestation-risk considerations within India's financial sector, including limited awareness, weak due diligence, and inadequate regulatory and institutional frameworks linking financial flows to environmental impacts. In response to these shortcomings, CUTS International has joined an initiative undertaken by Fair Finance Asia (FFA).

The project aims to promote sustainable financing for commodities at risk of deforestation in India by strengthening the integration of environmental considerations into the financial sector. It seeks to understand how financial institutions and regulators address nature-related risks, particularly those linked to deforestation in commodity value chains. Through research, awareness-raising, and stakeholder engagement, the project aims to highlight the links between financial flows and environmental degradation.

It also aims to improve due diligence, transparency, and regulatory frameworks, encouraging financial institutions to adopt responsible lending and investment practices that support sustainable production, protect natural resources, and align with India's broader climate and development goals.

In this quarter, the CUTS CRC team prepared its second policy brief entitled *"Strengthening ESG and BRSR Disclosure Frameworks to Capture Nature, Biodiversity and Deforestation Risks in India's Corporate Reporting System."*

The team also successfully conducted the second policy dialogue on *"Strengthening Disclosures for Nature-Positive Finance in India: Issues and Challenges"* in collaboration with the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I) in Kolkata on March 19, 2026. The policy dialogue was attended by 20 experts representing diverse sectors, including sustainable finance, academia, and industry, as well as a broad range of stakeholders.



Kolkata on March 19, 2026



Rivers, Rights and Resilience (RRR)

CUTS International is undertaking a study entitled 'Rivers, Rights and Resilience' with the support of CUTS Geneva. This study aims to reduce poverty and the marginalisation of vulnerable river basin communities by increasing access to and control over riverine water resources on which their livelihoods depend.

This intervention's objective is to strengthen the resilience of riparian communities in the transboundary Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna River basins to climate change and environmental and natural disasters.

As part of this study, six capacity-building programmes were organised for registered homestay owners in Kalimpong, West Bengal, from February 20 to 25, 2026. These training programmes were designed to strengthen the knowledge and skills of local homestay owners, with a special focus on sustainable tourism practices, responsible hospitality management, and environmentally conscious business operations. Through these programmes, approximately 180 homestay owners were trained and sensitised on various aspects of sustainable tourism, including waste management, resource conservation, guest management, local cultural promotion, and community-based tourism approaches.

In addition to the training programmes, an exposure visit was organised under the project titled "Community Exposure Visit for Learning Homestay Tourism and Agro-based Practices in the Meghalaya and Teesta Basins." This exposure visit served as an important platform for cross-learning and knowledge exchange among women entrepreneurs from different regions.

As part of this initiative, a group of women entrepreneurs from Assam visited Kalimpong to gain first-hand experience of successful homestay operations and agro-based livelihood practices adopted in the region. During the visit, a cultural exchange programme was also organised at Gorubathan, Kalimpong, from March 19-21, 2026, where participants shared local traditions, experiences, and community-based development practices.



Homestay Owners' Capacity-Building Programmes in Kalimpong, West Bengal



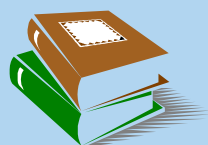
- Sohom Banerjee presented a research paper entitled '*Leveraging UX Honeycomb Framework to Investigate YouTube App's User Experience (UX): Results from Mining User Reviews*' at the 16th International Conference 2026, organised by Gitarattan International Business School on January 10-11, 2026.
- Sumanta Biswas and Sohom Banerjee attended the Nonprofit AI Jam organised by Karya and OpenAI at ICT. He also attended the Metro Railway Users' Consultative Committee at Taj Bengal, Kolkata, on January 21, 2026.
- Sohom Banerjee presented a research paper titled '*AI in Construction Safety: A Multilevel Predictive Model for Accident Prevention in India's Construction Industry*' at the 4th International Conference on EMI, AI, Cybersecurity, and Emerging Technologies in Business and Management, hosted by Asia University, Taichung, Taiwan, on March 20, 2026.
- Pratyush Banerjee and Ritaja Dey attended the 15th Edition of National Shipping & Logistics Conclave 2026, organised by The Bengal Chamber of Commerce, on February 25, 2026.
- Sohom Banerjee participated as a speaker at a roundtable on the QUAD and the Indo-Pacific organised by the U.S. Consulate in Kolkata on February 26, 2026. He also completed the webinar and assessment on "*Advancing Paperless Solutions on Proof of Origin, Invoice and Phytosanitary Certificate*" conducted by the United Nations ESCAP on March 26, 2026. Link to the certificate: <https://certificate.tiid.org/eCertificates/Details/5fe09b1b-5200-4fb6-aba2-dbbcf86ea4a8>
- Sohom Banerjee, Pratyush Banerjee and Ayan Bhattacharjee attended Re Looking BIMSTEC 2025, 'Facilitating Cross Border Paperless Trade', organised by Sister Nivedita University on March 20, 2026.

NEWS FLASH



- The Strategic Role of the Northeast in India's AI Journey
Sohom Banerjee, Northeast News, January 15, 2026
<https://nenews.in/opinion/the-strategic-role-of-the-northeast-in-indias-ai-journey/39493/>
- Dark Patterns
Indian Management, AIMA, January 2026
<http://www.aima.in/management-perspectives/dark-patterns> www.aima.in/management-perspectives/dark-patterns
- Governing Artificial Intelligence from Technological Breakthrough to Global Regulations and Market Power
Sohom Banerjee, India Blooms News Service, February 22, 2026
<http://www.bloomsbury.com/in/governing-artificial-intelligence-ai-9789369522262/>
www.bloomsbury.com/in/governing-artificial-intelligence-ai-9789369522262/
- A Narrow Strait, A Global Shock: What Hormuz Reveals About India's Energy Security
Sohom Banerjee and Sanchita Chatterjee, India's World, March 16, 2026
<https://indiasworld.in/a-narrow-strait-a-global-shock-what-hormuz-reveals-about-indias-energy-security/>
- From Strategic Dialogue to Economic Statecraft: *Quad's Structural Role in the Indo-Pacific*
Pradeep S Mehta and Sohom Banerjee, The Economic Times, March 03, 2026
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/from-strategic-dialogue-to-economic-statecraft-quads-structural-role-in-indo-pacific/articleshow/128959416.cms>
- Sohom Banerjee provided media bytes to *LiveMint*:
<https://www.livemint.com/industry/google-market-access-initiative-startups-india-data-localization-ai-sovereignty-11768978087806.html>
<https://www.livemint.com/industry/google-market-access-initiative-startups-india-data-localization-ai-sovereignty-11768978087806.html>
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<http://www.livemint.com/companies/amazon-smartbiz-india-d2c-storefronts-11769413496486.html>
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PUBLICATIONS



- Access to Offshore Betting Websites after the Online Gaming Ban: *A Survey-Based Analysis (Tamil Nadu)*
Sohom Banerjee and Pratyush Banerjee, January 2026
<https://cuts-ccier.org/pdf/research-report-access-to-offshore-betting-websites-after-the-online-gaming-ban-tamil-nadu.pdf>
- Access to Offshore Betting Websites after the Online Gaming Ban: *A Survey-Based Analysis (Maharashtra)*
Sohom Banerjee and Pratyush Banerjee, February 2026
<https://cuts-ccier.org/pdf/research-report-access-to-offshore-betting-websites-after-the-online-gaming-ban-maharashtra.pdf>
- Behavioural Reallocation after the Online Gaming Ban: *A Multi-State Survey-Based Analysis*
Sohom Banerjee and Pratyush Banerjee, March 2026
<https://cuts-ccier.org/pdf/behavioural-reallocation-after-the-online-gaming-ban-a-multi-state-survey-based-analysis.pdf>
- Comments on DPIIT Working Paper on Generative Artificial Intelligence and Copyright' (Part I) Sohom Banerjee
<https://cuts-ccier.org/pdf/comments-on-the-dpiit-working-paper-on-generative-artificial-intelligence-and-copyright-part-1.pdf>