

CUTS CRC Activity Report

July-September, 2023

ONGOING PROJECTS



Support for Women Journalists in Countering Misinformation and Disinformation in the Indo-Pacific Region

The 'Digital Age' has enabled access to diverse sources of knowledge at a mouse click. However, it has also created unprecedented challenges and structural changes in the news industry. In the absence of any gatekeeping entity, journalists and media educators everywhere are grappling with a deluge of speculative and sensational content in news-making, which is further amplified by echo chambers and trust networks. In such a situation, verification/ fact-checking platforms are the need of the hour to navigate the distorted and fear-mongering information which is circulated on traditional media, and social media platforms.

Given this background, CUTS International with support from the US Consulate, Kolkata implemented a project entitled "Support for Women Journalists in Countering Misinformation and Disinformation in the Indo-Pacific Region". Under this project, a series of webinars and capacity-building workshops will be organised in six locations for a media literacy drive with a focus on the capacity-building of local media house representatives. The project aims to train media practitioners and journalists from local media houses to discern and respond to deceptive, biased, or false news and to combat disinformation across borders.

In the series of capacity-building workshops, the third training workshop was organised in Siliguri, West Bengal on August 17, 2023. More than 20 media professionals attended the workshop. The capacity-building session focused on themes like information literacy, countering online trolling & workplace harassment, debunking print and visual disinformation/ misinformation, innovative Storytelling using Modern Techniques and Tools, etc.



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Also at Jaipur, Delhi and Chittorgarh (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland); and Washington DC (USA).



Fig: Media Literacy capacity-building workshop for empowering journalists in Siliguri, West Bengal on August 17, 2023





Defense News Conclave: Stories of U.S.-India Defense Partnership

With support from the U.S. Consulate Kolkata, CUTS International is implementing a project entitled “Defense News Conclave: Stories of U.S.-India Defense Partnership”. Under this project, CUTS will organise a series of workshops for training 100-120 informed journalists, storytellers, media professionals, social media influencers, and community leaders from India, on the recent developments in U.S.-India defense cooperation through inking bilateral agreements, conducting joint military exercises, defense procurement, etc.

This project ultimately aims to create a group of informed stakeholders (journalists from India in particular) who would strengthen the information-sharing circuit related to the importance of a robust U.S.–India defense partnership, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.

In a series of workshops, the first workshop was organised in Kolkata on August 04, 2023. There were about 65-70 participants from various stakeholder categories like – journalists, think tanks, professors, ex-defense personnel etc. In continuation, the second workshop was organised in Jaipur on September 20, 2023. In this workshop, around 60-65 participants attended from various stakeholder groups, like – Ex-army personnel, journalists, students etc.



Fig: Defense News Conclave – Stories on U.S. –India Defense and Security Partnership event in Kolkata, West Bengal on August 04, 2023



Fig: Defense News Conclave – Stories on U.S. –India Defense and Security Partnership event in Jaipur, Rajasthan on September 20, 2023



Cyber Safe East India – Workshops on Cyber Security for E-Businesses (Phase – III)

With support from the U.S Consulate Kolkata, CUTS International is implementing a project entitled “Cyber Safe East India – Workshops on Cyber Security for E-Businesses (Phase – III)”. Under this project, CUTS will organise a series of capacity-building workshops in four different North-East states of India, namely Agartala (Tripura), Aizawl (Mizoram), Imphal (Manipur), and Kohima (Nagaland). For the training workshops, CUTS will engage the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Patna, as a cyber-security training partner and involve local organisations for maximum dissemination.

The project aims to identify the cyber-security needs of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) based on the understanding of their usage of digital technology; assess challenges faced by them; design appropriate strategies to help them; capacitate them to effectively use cyber-security tools and showcase best practices so that they can safely navigate the cyberspace.

The first capacity-building workshop under the Phase III project was organised at Agartala, Tripura on September 22, 2023. A group of around 70 stakeholders, consisting of 70% women from diverse entrepreneurial backgrounds, participated in the training workshop. Also, this workshop received media coverage from media houses in different North Eastern states.



Fig: Cyber Security Capacity Building Workshop for MSMEs and Women entrepreneurs in Agartala, Tripura on September 22, 2023



Capacity Building of women (students and entrepreneurs) on cyber security

CUTS International is implementing a project entitled “Capacity Building of Women on cyber security in select districts of West Bengal” with support from the US Consulate Kolkata. These capacity-building workshops on cyber security will be organised in six selected districts of West Bengal, namely - Purulia, Jhargram, Howrah, Siliguri, South 24 Parganas, and North 24 Parganas.

The project aims at building capacities of adult women on various cyber security threats and equip them with the required knowledge on available technologies, and good practices to help them reduce their vulnerabilities to cyber-attacks.

In this context, the first capacity-building workshop was organised at Bagmundi, Purulia on August 26, 2023, in collaboration with Deepalaya. Around 60-65 female students participated in the training workshop. In continuation, the second workshop was organised at Binpur, Jhargram on September 09, 2023, in collaboration with Deepalaya and the third workshop was organised at Amta, Howrah on September 15, 2023, in collaboration with Agragati. In both these workshops 55-60 female students participated from different age groups.



Fig: Cyber Security training workshop at Binpur, Jhargram on September 09, 2023



Fig: Cyber Security training workshop at Amta, Howrah on September 15, 2023



Understanding political economy challenges, informal trade processes and logistical bottlenecks along priority regional corridors and border crossings

CUTS International is implementing a project entitled ‘Support Firms for Trip Diaries and Stakeholder Consultations (SFTDC)’ with support from the World Bank Group. Under this project, CUTS engaged Unnayan Shamannay from Bangladesh and the Nepal Economic Forum from Nepal as country partners.

The key objective of this study is to assess the procedural and logistical bottleneck in cross-border trade and evaluate the current landscape for the operationalisation of the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal.

Under this study, a field survey was conducted in Bangladesh from July 16 to 20, 2023, to collect data related to the Kathmandu – Kakarvitta – Panitanki – Phulbari – Banglabandha – Chattogram and Kolkata – Petrapole – Benapole – Akahura - Agartala corridor.



- Sumanta Biswas attended the Eastern Railway Zonal Railway User Consultative Committee meeting organised at Sealdah station on September 13, 2023.
- Mihir Shekhar Bhonsale participated in the Global Trade and Innovation Policy Alliance (GTIPA) Summit in Berlin, Germany, from September 13-16, 2023. The 2023 GTIPA Summit brought together high-level expert panels on technology and innovation policy to discuss the keys to subnational innovation competitiveness in Europe and South America, optimal ways to stimulate life sciences innovation, how digital technologies can drive decarbonisation, and the possibilities for reimaging value chains in the global trading system.
- Bijaya Roy participated in a virtual meeting organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) with the members of the CII Northeast Sub Committee on Exports. She also made a presentation on how the trade and connectivity between NEI and Bangladesh can be enhanced by leveraging the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) as well as other connectivity initiatives.
- Sumanta Biswas and Bipul Chattopadhyay attended the Indo-Pacific Economic Conclave organised by The Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kolkata on September 28-29, 2023.