

Brainstorming Meeting
ON
Connectivity and Trade Facilitation in the Bay of Bengal Region
Role of the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement

August 13, 2019, New Delhi

Background Note

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) is one of the most talked about regional cooperation agreements in recent times.

CUTS International, along with its country partners in BBIN countries, conducted an extensive and elaborate project that aims to create an enabling environment and inclusive policy discourse, to facilitate trade, transport and transit connectivity between and among the BBIN group of countries.

As an outcome, it came out with several recommendations, which include an effective public-private dialogue between and among countries of the Bay of Bengal region for highlighting the hurdles that must be overcome to ensure the operationalisation of the BBIN MVA.

The project has made an attempt to estimate gains from acceding to international conventions on transit facilitation; focused on identifying infrastructural, political, policy-related, and social challenges, which result in wastage of time, money, and resources; and thus, suggest possible solutions towards effective implementation of the BBIN MVA.

It highlights the gains that can arise from a facilitative connectivity and trade regime in terms of reduced costs for local producers, greater employment opportunities for local workers, enabling the underprivileged to access new opportunities and bringing economic prosperity to all, including women, in an equitable manner.

One of the major issues that can pose a hurdle to effective implementation of initiatives like the BBIN MVA is that the majority of the stakeholders in rural and remote locations of these countries lack awareness and knowledge about such enabling policies/frameworks and their positive outcomes.

Some groups of stakeholders are even apprehensive about negative consequences of the implementation of such initiatives, as they might lose their current employment, while others have a positive and welcoming approach towards it.

With this as a backdrop, the objective of this meeting is to deliberate on key findings of this project, share insights from various stakeholder groups and chart out specific and prioritised solutions and action agenda to further boost connectivity and trade facilitation in the BBIN sub-region, with a particular emphasis on:

- the participation of the private sector in the implementation of the BBIN MVA;
- inclusion of women and other marginalised and vulnerable communities in understanding its impact; and
- coming out with a forward-looking action agenda for its effective implementation.