

*Background Note*

**Expert Group Meeting**

**Border Haats between India and Bangladesh as a Tool to Reduce Informal Cross  
Border Trade between the Two Countries**

**June 25, 2020**

**(Online meeting through Zoom)**

**1. Objective and Purpose**

There is a need to facilitate long term sustainability and greater scalability of the existing as well as upcoming border haats along India-Bangladesh border. This is because, as evidence suggests, these border haats offer a number of benefits to the local residents – *first*, they provide the much-needed forum to exchange local produce; *second*, they provide a number of alternative livelihood opportunities, and additional income support to the local residents; *third*, they restricts out-migration; and *lastly*, they help reduce informal trade.

In this regard, the event aims to initiate a dialogue to revisit the significance of the border haats in the post COVID-19 world and chalk out strategies on how best to facilitate long term sustainability and greater scalability of the existing as well as upcoming border haats.

The meeting will also serve as a platform to evaluate the activities which have already been undertaken by the project team and also set the forward-looking agenda to complete the remaining activities under this project. This meeting will also discuss the viewpoint papers.

**2. Background and Context**

CUTS International, India and Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh and with support from the Department for International Development (DfID), UK, is implementing a project titled “**Border Haats between India and Bangladesh as a Tool to Reduce Informal Cross Border Trade between the Two Countries**”. More than 600 respondents were surveyed under the study in both India and Bangladesh.

In addition, another set of more than 100 people were reached through focussed group discussions in both India and Bangladesh. Based on the findings of the study, a set of policy recommendations were identified that could facilitate long term sustainability and greater scalability of the border haats along Indo-Bangla borders. However, the recommendations were based on observations and perceptions of how things used to take place before the COVID-19 pandemic kicked in.

Post, the COVID-19 Pandemic, lot of things have changed and new-normal has become the rule. In this regard, there is a need to revisit the recommendations that emerged from the study and deliberate on how those could be tailormade to suit the post COVID new-normal, without compromising the objective of sustaining and upscaling the border haats.

### **3. Deliverables**

The meeting will target to deliver the following:

- Present the key study findings and recommendation that emerged from the study.
- Discussion on future of border haats in the Post Covid-19 world.
- Discussion on policy recommendation (Immediate and Long Term) on how to facilitate long term sustainability and greater scalability of the border haats in the post COVID-19 world.
- Discussion on future activities to be undertaken under the project.

### **4. Expected Outputs & Outcome**

- The meeting will serve as a platform to deliver and fine-tune the research report.
- The meeting will help in contextualising and sharpening the policy recommendations that emerged from the survey.
- The meeting will help develop a way forward of border haat project.