

India-Bangladesh Border Haats

Facilitating new dimensions in cross-border trade



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D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India

Tel: +91.141.2282821, Fax: +91.141.2282485

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Abbreviations

BBIN:	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal
BGB:	Border Guard Bangladesh
BHMC:	Border Haat Management Committee
BIS:	Bureau of Indian Standards
BSF:	Border Security Force
BSTI:	Bangladesh Standards Testing Institute
CADC:	Chakma Autonomous District Council
CSO:	Civil Society Organisation
FMCGs:	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
LCS:	Land Customs Stations
MNF:	Mizo National Front
MoU:	Memorandum of Understanding
NTBs:	Non-Tariff Barriers
SAFTA:	South Asian Free Trade Area
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goal
SHG:	Self Help Group
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
UNO:	Upazila Nirbahi Officer

Contributors

Shaheen ul Alam

Shaheen is a Senior Project Coordinator at Unnayan Shamannay. He earned his Master's in Science from the Department of Geography, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. He has intensive experience in project management, negotiation, and networking for more than twenty-five years.

Sumanta Biswas

Sumanta is a Senior Programme Officer at CUTS International and has been associated with the organisation for 16 years. He has been working in field research, advocacy, networking, and overall project management, which has helped him evolve his capacity in several dimensions of growth. He had undertaken several field research assignments on regional trade and connectivity, energy, health, etc.

Indranil Bose

Indranil is an Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at St. Xavier's College, Kolkata. A recipient of National Scholarships and the Jubilee Prize, he was awarded an International Fellowship by Rotary International to participate in a Group Study Exchange Programme in Texas, US, in 1995. He has also participated in various national and international seminars, and his current research areas include political theory, political economy and international relations.

Bipul Chatterjee

Bipul is Executive Director of CUTS International and heads CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment. Before joining CUTS International, he worked at several economic policy think tanks in New Delhi, such as National Council for Applied Economic Research and Institute for Economic Growth. He has more than 20 years of experience on issues related to international trade and development, especially on the political economy of trade and economic policy reforms, particularly pro-poor aspects of reforms

Prashanta Kumar Deb

Prashanta is currently pursuing MA in Applied Economics at the University of Winnipeg. His research interest pertains to macroeconomic issues. He has hands-on experience working with survey data sets, analysing socio-economic issues, gender roles, and public health. He desires to have a forte in analysing policy issues.

Arnab Ganguly

Arnab is an Assistant Policy Analyst at CUTS International, with over 16 years of professional experience in trade facilitation and analysing the impact of various trade policies on grassroots stakeholders. He holds a Masters of Economics, Rabindra Bharati University and Masters of Business Administration (Finance and Marketing) from the University of Calcutta. In various capacities, he has also worked for West Bengal Consultancy Organisation (WEBCON) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He was also involved in preparing the Export Strategy document for Sikkim. End-to-end project management, undertaking action research, data analysis and writing research reports/discussion papers are his area of expertise.

Robart Shuvro Guda

Robart is a Lead Economist at Unnayan Shamannay. He obtained his Master's in Economics at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has expertise in analysing quantitative data. His research interest is on fiscal policy, trade, and regional connectivity.

Mahabub Hasan

Mahabub is a Political Analyst at Unnayan Shamannay. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. His research interests are on public policies, geopolitical issues, and regional connectivity. He is an expert in facilitating training and material development, programme implementation, field coordination, networking, and media communication.

Md. Masudul Hasan

Md. Masudul is a Research Associate at Unnayan Shamannay. He acquired a MSc degree from the Department of Geography and Environment, Jagannath University, Bangladesh. He has expertise in facilitating training, organising dissemination programmes, managing field works, networking, and maintaining communication.

Md. Raisul Islam

Md. Raisul is a Political Analyst. Currently, he is pursuing his Master's in Political Science at Ohio University, United States. His research interest is comparative political behaviour and public opinion. He has expertise in exploring data-driven political decision-making and the public opinion formation processes.

Byezid Limon

Byezid is a Research Officer at Unnayan Shamannay. He received his BBA from the Department of Business Administration, Notre Dame University Bangladesh. His information on management skills, coupled with research output related to media content development, made him exceptional. His expertise also includes reviewing the literature, primary data collection, and qualitative analysis.

Shaswata Mukherjee

Shaswata is a Programme Associate at CUTS International and has been associated with CUTS for two years. He has 14 years of work experience in carrying out administrative and project coordination jobs in different sectors. He has completed his BA in Sociology from IGNOU. He had undertaken field research assignments on the issues of regional trade and connectivity.

Abdullah Nadvi

Abdullah is a Director of Research at Unnayan Shamannay. He gained his Master's degree in Development Studies at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has more than 15 years of experience in research. He has expertise in sector plan development, project evaluation, impact assessment, CBA/PBA/BIA studies, quantitative and qualitative analysis, and study design.

Bijaya Roy

Bijaya is a Senior Research Associate at CUTS International. She has about five years of experience in trade and development, connectivity, regional integration, transboundary water governance and political economy. Her recent and current research focuses on physical, institutional, and people-to-people connectivity in the Bay of Bengal region, emphasising cross-border trade and its impact on regional integration parameters and local economic development. She obtained her Bachelor's in Economics from the University of Calcutta and Master's specialising in Econometrics from the Banaras Hindu University.

Ayan Soofi

Ayan is a Research Officer at Unnayan Shamannay. He received his BA and MA from the University of Dhaka. Specialising in political and economic policy assessment, he is also experienced in quantitative data analysis. His expertise includes report writing, research findings dissemination, material development, and experimentation with data collection tools.

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This publication is the result of an extensive study on operational border haats that have been established along the border between the north-eastern part of India and Bangladesh by the governments of the two countries since 2010. The study has also covered all the locations sanctioned and few locations proposed to establish border haats.

The study, supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the UK, has been carried out by CUTS International in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh.

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- Biswajit Chakrabarty, Director, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), North-East Advisory Council, Guwahati, Assam
- A K Enamul Haque, Professor, Department of Economics, East-West University
- Mahbuba Nasreen, Sociologist, Professor & Director Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies (IDMVS), Dhaka University
- Sudhir Chandra Nath, Head of Business, ACI Ltd
- Nazneen Ahmed, Country Economist, United Nations Development Programme, Bangladesh

- Asjadul Kibria, Plan Editor, The Financial Express, Dhaka
- Ashish Nath, Professor, Department of Economics, Tripura University
- Sujit Chakraborty, Bureau Chief, IANS, Agartala, Tripura
- Biswajit Das, General Secretary Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries of North Bengal (FOCIN), Siliguri, West Bengal
- Ratul Baruah, Content Head (English), MyGov Assam
- Jyotir Moy Chakma, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Government Kamalanagar College, Mizoram
- Monoj Roy, Former Additional Secretary (FTA), Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh
- Tania Haque, Professor, Department of Women and Gender Studies, Dhaka University
- Ruhul Amin Rasel, Senior Reporter Business & Trade Bangladesh, Protidin
- Tarek Mahmud, National Communication Officer, Communication & Public Information Unit, International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Shirin Akhter, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh
- Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation
- Rasik Mohan Chakma, Chief Executive Member, Chakma Autonomous District Council, Kamalanagar
- Prabin Chakma, Liaison Officer, Chakma Autonomous District Council, Kamalanagar, Mizoram
- Swapna Debnath, Additional Director, Department of Industries & Commerce, Government of Tripura
- Swapan Mitra, Manager, Department of Industries and Commerce, Government of Tripura
- K N Syiem, Acting Syiem Bhowal Syiemship, Mawpen Village, East Khasi Hill, Meghalaya
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- Nihar Kanti Chakma, Member of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly
- Isawanda Laloo, Deputy Commissioner, Shillong, Meghalaya
- S C Laloo, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Kalaichar, Meghalaya
- Amanendra Chakma, Assistant Liaison Officer, Chakma Autonomous District Council, Aizawl, Mizoram
- SK Sarkar, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Kamalpur, Dhalai District, Tripura
- Commissioner & Secretary, Government of Mizoram, Commerce & Industries Department
- Additional District Magistrate, Sepahijala District, Bishramganj, Tripura
- Additional District Magistrate & Collector, South Tripura District, Belonia, Tripura
- Tlangti Mawia, District Agriculture officer, Lunglei District, Mizoram
- W Warshong, Director, Department of Commerce & Industries, Government of Meghalaya
- A.H.M Ahsan, Joint Secretary (FTA-1), Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh
- Sazia Taher, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Chagalnaiya, Feni, Bangladesh

- Yeasmin Nahar Ruma, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Sunamganj Sadar, Sunamganj, Bangladesh
- Proggan Chakma, Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer, Barkal, Rangamati, Bangladesh
- Md Mokshed Ali, Chairman, Jahangirnagar Union Parishad, Sunamganj, Bangladesh
- Robiul Islam, Chairman, Radhanagar Union Parishad, Chagalnaiya, Feni, Bangladesh
- Md Kamrul Alam Badol, Chairman, Rajibpur Union Parishad, Rajibpur, Kurigram, Bangladesh
- Md Afrab Uddin, Chairman, Badhaghat Union Parishad, Tahirpur, Sunamganj, Bangladesh
- Md Arifur Rahman, Chairman, Boglabazar Union Parishad, Dowarabazar, Sunamganj, Bangladesh
- Babu Miah, Union Parishad Member, Rajibpur Union Parishad, Rajibpur, Kurigram, Bangladesh
- Pulin Karbari, Local Tribal Leader, Thegamukh, Barkal, Rangamati, Bangladesh

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Project Team
CUTS International

Preface



Bipul Chatterjee

Executive Director
CUST International

Border Haats along the fringes of the Indo-Bangladesh border are rough and ready markets that have been established to enable local residents on both sides of the border to market their ‘local produce’. The idea of Border Haats was conceived by the Governments of India and Bangladesh with the aim of promoting the well-being of these marginalised people.

Border Haats allow the sale of locally produced agricultural and horticultural products, small agriculture and household goods (for example, spices), minor forest products (excluding timber), fresh and dry fish, cottage industry items, wooden furniture, handloom and handicraft items, etc.

Initially, there were four border haats – *two* in the Indian state of Tripura; and another *two* in the Indian state of Meghalaya. Given the success of the existing border haats, the Governments of both India and Bangladesh have decided to open *six* new border haats. These upcoming haats are at different stages of development. Another 73 locations are in the pipeline.

A study was undertaken by CUTS International, India; and Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh across 32 locations (16 locations in India and their mirror locations in Bangladesh), to better understand how border haats have improved or could improve the livelihood prospects of the local residents, particularly women in areas where border haats are either operational, or are expected to be so in the near future.

The study also gathered anecdotal evidence, including case studies, to help understand how border haats could augment participation of women in the existing and upcoming border haats; and whether and how border haats can reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh.

In course of the field survey, the research team interacted with various stakeholders (vendors, vendees, transporters, labourers, officials, opinion leaders, villagers and residents on both sides of the border)

who are directly and/or indirectly dependent on the border haats for their livelihoods. A comprehensive questionnaire survey was conducted, covering more than 600 respondents to gather data on the economic, social and political economy impacts of the haats.

The following major findings have emerged. First, the border haats generated an additional source of income for the vendors, labourers, and support service providers who are directly attached to the haats. The haats have contributed to a reduction in out-migration.

Second, the haats have benefited the consumers by allowing them access to essential goods at competitive prices from the neighbouring country, which otherwise would have proved costly if procured from nearby urban centres.

Third, the haats have been successful in channelising the trade in goods via haats, that were earlier traded via informal channels. This is one of the reasons why government officials and border security personnel have confirmed a decline in informal trade subsequent to the establishment of border haats.

Last but not least, the haats have resulted in buttressing women's involvement in economic activities. Women were found to participate at the haats either as vendors or as vendees. However, women's involvement at the haats were found to be at variance with the socio-economic ethos and religious practices in vogue at particular locations.

Socio-economic benefits apart, Border Haats have also been facilitators of people-to-people connect between the two sides of the border. Our research team captured numerous instances of people who come to the Border Haats with the additional incentive of meeting friends, families and acquaintances from whom they have got separated (sometimes for more than decades) due to political interventions.

Given these manifold advantages, it is pertinent to explore the possibilities of improving the haats to facilitate greater participation of women and other local residents. Steps like repairing the washrooms, deputing female security personnel (on the Bangladesh side), removing the 5Km restriction, and ensuring women's representation in the Border Haat Management Committee could catalyse greater participation at the border haats.

Additionally, the study offers a progressive agenda and suggests ways to upscale the border haats to enable them to play a pivotal role in the creation of cross-border value chains. In this regard, the study presents a list of items, location-wise, to establish cross-border value chains.

Indeed, the absence of “mutual trust”, which is often considered as a barrier to regional integration among countries in South Asia, could well be addressed by the positive role that Border Haats are seen to play in strengthening people-to-people connectivity.

However, the Border Haats were shut down since March last year as a precautionary measure to combat the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has resulted in immense loss for the people inhabiting the surrounding villages. In view of such losses, and the myriad benefits that accrue from these border markets, the need to reopen Border Haats can hardly be exaggerated; of course, with appropriate safeguards and new protocols for participation at the haats.

In conclusion, I thank the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom for supporting this project and Unnayan Shamannay for partnering with us in carrying it out. I want to reiterate that all opinions expressed in the report are solely those of CUTS. I also take this opportunity to thank all my colleagues who carried it through. We look forward to making further contributions to the future policy discourse on this subject.

Executive Summary

India and Bangladesh share an international border that stretches almost 4096 km. Of this, 1,880 km is with north-eastern states of India, namely Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram and the rest is with West Bengal. Currently, four *Border Haats* are in operation. Two are in Tripura (namely, *Kamalasagar-Kasba* and *Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya*) and the other two haats are in Meghalaya (namely, *Balat-Dolora* and *Kalaichar-Baliamari*).

Border haats offer several benefits to the residents – *firstly*, they provide the much-needed forum to exchange their local produce; *secondly*, they have created many alternative livelihood opportunities for both men and women, provided additional income to the stakeholders and, in many ways, restricted out-migration. *Lastly*, they have helped reduce informal trade in these areas.

Based on the success stories from the operational border haats, the countries' governments have decided to set up more border haats along the India-Bangladesh border. Consequently, six additional locations were sanctioned to establish the Haats (namely, *Nolikata-Sayedabad*, *Shibbari-Bhulyapara*, *Ryngku-Baganbari*, *Kamalpur Kurmaghat*, and *Palbasti-Paschim Batuli*). In addition to the existing and sanctioned haats, stakeholders, viz, BSF, various state governments and Members of Parliament, have proposed 73 additional locations for setting up new border haats.

This study was undertaken at locations where border haats are in operation and locations where border haats are expected to come up shortly, i.e. sanctioned and proposed locations. The study aimed at understanding how border haats have impacted the lives and livelihood of the residents, particularly women in locations, where border haats are already operational. Additionally, the study captured the livelihood prospects of the residents, especially women, in the locations where border haats are expected to come up soon.

The study also collected anecdotal evidence, including case studies, to help better understand how to facilitate greater participation of women in the existing and upcoming border haats; and how border haats can reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh.

In this regard, the study captured some interesting findings:

Informal Trade

- Informal trade is predominant in the locations sanctioned and/or proposed for the establishment of border haats. A demand-supply gap in certain products coupled with impediments like lack of transport connectivity with urban centres, the difference in prices of commodities across borders, and the existence of various non-tariff barriers (NTBs) in trade through formal channels are some of the key factors that encourage trade through informal channels.
- There has been an overall decline in the incidence of informal trade in the locations where border haats are operational. The decline in informal trade could be because - *firstly*, the border haats created local employment opportunities which provided an additional source of income to the local people; and *secondly*, the border haats allowed trade in commodities that were earlier traded through informal channels, thereby discouraging trade through uncertain and often risky informal channels.
- Given that the border haats have been instrumental in reducing informal cross-border trade, it is expected that the same could also happen in the sanctioned and proposed locations. However, this would hinge on an appropriate and location-specific selection of products based on appropriate demand-supply analysis. Trade through border haats is increasingly encouraged alongside the simultaneous diminution of informal trade through often risky alternative channels.

Based on discussions with several individuals in each of the locations where border haats are expected to come up, a probable list of commodities to be traded through the upcoming border haats has been suggested in the report. The commodities identified in the study have significant demand in the neighbouring country and are often traded in bulk through informal channels.

Livelihood

- Except for the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat, most vendors across the border haats have reported an increase in income. While some of the vendors have reported a decline, surprisingly, such decline happened despite increased spending by the vendees. This indicates an increase in per capita spending of the vendees, which partly compensated for the decrease in average footfall of vendees compared to 2016.
- The decline in income is associated with strict enforcement of regulations, such as a limit on the number of vendees per haat day, limit on per person per haat day purchase, vendor and vendees within 5 km can only participate in the border haats, by the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

In the case of Kamlasagar, the average income of Indian consumers is on the lower side. The sales of Bangladeshi vendors have thus declined since tourists and large traders from Agartala can no longer participate at the border haat.

- A comparative analysis of the composition of the average annual incomes of the vendors between 2016 and 2019 shows a significant increase in the share of non-haat income in their total incomes. This is because most vendors were found to have their shops in their localities and are engaged in trading activities, which provides significant income support throughout the year.
- There has been an increasing trend towards the sale of non-agricultural products as compared to agri-horticulture products. The reason for such a shift towards non-agricultural products could be attributed to the following factors:
 - ✓ On the Indian side, there are not many locally produced agri-horticulture items (vegetables, fruits, spices, etc.) that are available throughout the year compared to Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), cosmetics & toiletries, plastic and melamine products;
 - ✓ FMCGs, cosmetics & toiletries, plastic and melamine products are more profitable to sell compared to vegetables, fruits, spices; and
 - ✓ FMCGs, cosmetics & toiletries, plastic and melamine products are not perishable and in case there are unsold stocks, the same can be diverted through local outlets or sold on the next haat day.
- The majority of the vendors on the Bangladesh side purchase various FMCG items, cosmetics and toiletries, seasonal fruits and vegetables, tea, betel nut, and whole spices like cumin, cardamom, and ginger. Vendees on the Indian side generally purchase items like vegetables, FMCG products made in Bangladesh, plastic ware & melamine products, toiletries, *gamcha* and *lungi*.
- Some of the vendees purchase items from border haats for sale at their local markets, thus deriving additional income from the border haats. It also emerged that vendees who indulge in reselling have in general higher annual incomes than those who purchase for self-consumption.
- Some of the vendees have reduced their frequency of visits to the haat owing to the unavailability of select products, especially branded products (mostly garments, chocolate and cosmetics) and strict enforcement of restrictions (such as a limit on per person per haat day purchase, restriction on vendees per haat) by BSF and BGB. For example, betel nut trade is predominant at the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat and the haat hardly offers any other product of interest to the vendees.
- Many of the outmigrants have returned to their villages after the establishment of the border haats. They have started working either as vendors, transporters or as labourers at the haats. Incomes from haat are providing additional support to these stakeholders.

- The support service providers in border haats constitute the most economically vulnerable group. They reported an increase in their incomes from haat in the last two years and mentioned that while income from haat is not sufficient to take care of all their needs, it is still essential to support in meeting vital requirements.
- Analysis of the stakeholder's responses reveals that most of the vendors, transporters and labourers can provide better education to their children, access better healthcare facilities, and purchase home appliances (like television and refrigerator), thereby improving the overall quality of their living. However, the support service providers offer a mixed reaction on the issue.
- The vendors and transporters opined that they reinvest the profits earned from their businesses (both haat and non-haat) to enhance their profits further. This is unlike the support service providers who have scanty earnings.
- The 5 km restriction and strict enforcement of regulations leading to a decrease in the footfall of buyers at the haats were considered to be among the reasons why vendors and vendees are dissatisfied with the existing haats. Another reason for dissatisfaction is the lack of basic infrastructure viz, clean washrooms, and drinking water facilities. In addition, since the border haats are open-air markets, they become difficult for people during summer and monsoon.
- Border haats are considered an important platform for establishing people-to-people connectivity across borders. There are instances where relatives have met at the border haats after. Such reunions do not require visas and/or passports otherwise mandatory for travelling across formal immigration points.
- Border haats can play a vital role in establishing cross-border value chains in respect of select commodities. The Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat corroborates this. Raw betel nuts from India make their way to Bangladesh for drying and peeling and are sent back to India for distribution and sales within India. In addition, the border haats can play an important role in shortening and simplifying the supply chain in select agri-horticulture products by allowing farmers to sell their produce directly to the buyers in the neighbouring country and enhance the income of farmers and create additional local livelihoods.
- In the sanctioned and proposed locations, the local residents were hopeful about improving their incomes and livelihood opportunities after establishing border haats. A few people also believe that border haats will improve road connectivity in those remote places. However, some of the respondents mentioned a few security concerns and the possibility of increasing the smuggling of illegal drugs. The locals also expressed apprehension that since the establishment of border haats could lead to a decline in informal trade, people involved in such activities might create impediments towards establishing and operationalising border haats.

Women's Participation

- The average annual income of women vendors from haats has increased in the last two years. Border Haat incomes of women vendors from Bangladesh were found to be more than that of Indian women vendors. Bangladeshi women were found to derive greater incomes from the border haats as compared to non-haat activities. But, the average non-haat income of Indian vendors was found to be higher than the Bangladeshi women vendors. The reason for this are:
 - ✓ On the Indian side, many vendors sell similar items to Bangladeshi customers and hence the average profit earned by individual vendors generally remains low and
 - ✓ Since most of the women vendors also have their local shops, the average number of customers served by the vendors on non-haat days is higher than the haat days.
- While border haats can play a pivotal role in creating employment opportunities for both men and women at the grassroots, women's participation was found to be limited and varied across countries and/or haats within the same country.

A number of socio-cultural and religious constraints impair women's participation at the border haats. The socio-cultural and religious constraints were found to be more stringent among the orthodox Hindu families in Tripura and orthodox Muslim families in Bangladesh.

Such constraints were conspicuous by their absence among tribal families. This explains why Balat witnesses more women participation as vendors, vendees and helpers than the other border haats.

It was observed that though women play an important role in agriculture, their role is considered negligible by the men. Women can hardly make decisions, even in respect of purchases for the household, without the consent of their husbands or family members, let alone the option to visit local haats to sell products. Owing to a lack of financial independence, they are hardly involved in the family's decision-making process.

Lack of separate washrooms for women and non-availability of women personnel among the BGB for security-check of the women vendees have deterred participation of women at the border haats.

Policy Recommendations

Findings from the study reiterate the role of border haats in improving the lives and livelihood of the local communities living in distant villages along the India-Bangladesh border. While the study highlights some benefits accruing to the local communities, it also draws attention to issues that need to be addressed to consolidate and further enhance the socio-economic benefits of the border haats.

In this regard, a three-pronged intervention is recommended – *firstly*, regulatory intervention; *secondly*, removing infrastructural deficits and deficiencies; and *lastly*, creating awareness among the relevant stakeholders.

Regulatory Interventions

There is an urgent need to consider changes in some of the provisions of the MoU on border haats signed between the Governments of India and Bangladesh to enhance business and promote greater participation of people, including women, at the border haats. In this regard, the following are recommended:

- Enhance the upper limit of purchases for vendees, and allow them to purchase more commodities, both in respect of variety and quantity. This will be crucial for the Srinagar-Chhagalainaiya border haat where vendors have reported decreased income from border haats.
- The 5 km restriction should be removed to allow even vendees from nearby urban centres to participate at the haats. This will provide the much-needed boost to incomes and businesses at the border haats.
- There is an urgent need to reconsider the list of commodities allowed to be traded through the border haats. One reason for informal trade is the demand-supply gap for the commodities traded through the informal channels. However, as per government norms, live fish, poultry products and agricultural seeds are not traded through the border haats. However, this cannot restrict trade in these commodities – instead, it results in trade through informal channels so far as these products are concerned.

Therefore, one can put quantitative restrictions on the trade of these items – for example, instead of completely prohibiting trade in Hilsa, one can allow one vendee to purchase one hilsa fish. Since the security personnel fears drug trade through live animals, one can always ask vendors to cut the fish or meat before carrying it outside the haat premises.

- There is a need to introduce a mandatory reservation for women vendors to promote their participation at the haats as vendors and vendees. This will address some of the apprehensions of women in the sanctioned and proposed locations on whether they will be allowed to participate at the haats.
- The border haats would need to allow the sale of local handicraft items. In this regard, the border haat management committee would need to have representatives from local Self Help Group (SHG) Federations. They will be able to identify products manufactured by several women SHGs in the region. For this to happen, the 5 km restriction should once again be done away with. This will widen the beneficial impact of border haats for women in both countries.

Putting in Place Appropriate Infrastructure

- There is an urgent need to ensure that the washrooms at the border haats remain clean and functional with running water facilities. There is also a need to look into gender-sensitive infrastructures, like separate washrooms for women. This has been a significant lacuna of border haats along the Indo-Bangladesh border and a major deterrent to participation by women. In addition, drinking water facilities need to be provided at the haats and shelters should be built for people to rest, especially during summer and monsoon.
- BGB would need to recruit women security personnel to carry out security checks of women vendors and vendors entering and/or leaving the haats.
- One of the reasons why the BSF and BGB personnel are reluctant to allow too many vendees inside the haat premises at the same time is because the haats lack basic security infrastructures like CCTV cameras, scanners, and metal detectors. Governments should provide the necessary equipment to help the BSF/BGB better monitor and effectively manage the haats.

Creating Awareness among the Relevant Stakeholders

- There is a need to generate awareness about border haats among various stakeholders, especially in the sanctioned locations. Such programmes should highlight issues like - the purpose of border haats, their mode of operation and the benefits to the local communities. These will address apprehensions related to the safety of women at the border haats and help the local communities rationalise their expectations from the haats.

Most importantly, it will provide a platform where the existing and prospective vendors, vendors, labourers, and helpers can interact directly with the border haat management committee members.

- In addition, the key informant interviews brought to light a serious lack of clarity regarding several issues among members of the border haat management committees. For example, some asked whether the 5 km restriction is based on aerial estimates and the permissible limit for vendors, i.e., how much worth of goods they can carry inside the haat.

These gaps in understanding lead to differences in rules set by the border haat management committees and the application of such rules. Such discrepancies need to be removed through appropriate capacity building of all haat administrators.

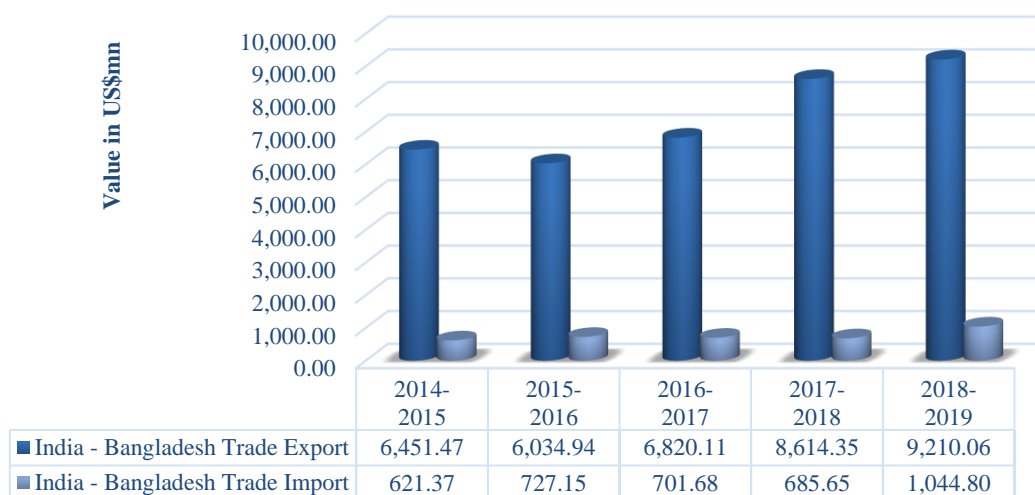
Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview of India-Bangladesh Relationship

Ever since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, the relations between India and Bangladesh have oscillated between periods of cordiality and periods of tension. For the past four decades, India's relation with Bangladesh has been broadly determined by a few factors: Bangladeshi domestic politics and the perception of the Bangladeshi political elites about India; border and water disputes; trade and transit issues; illegal migration; and insurgency and security concerns (Chatterjee, A, 2017).

Figure 1: India-Bangladesh Trade Data



Data source: Department of Commerce Export Import Data Bank

Historically, economic relations between the two countries have also gone through ups and downs. The perception in Dhaka suggests that while Bangladesh has been both on official and unofficial accounts, a major market for Indian products, India has devised some NTBs that have stood in the way of mutually beneficial trade (Chatterjee, A, 2017).

Inspired by India's Act East Policy, India is seen to nurse a keen desire to strengthen relations between the two countries. Accordingly, India and Bangladesh have

India-Bangladesh economic relations have been augmented through several agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). These include Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT); Bilateral Air Services Agreement (BASA) between India and Bangladesh; Bilateral Agreement on the establishment of Joint Economic Commission;

India-Bangladesh Agreement on Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA); India-Bangladesh Agreement for the Regulation of motor vehicle passenger traffic; and the MoU between Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Bangladesh Standards Testing Institute (BSTI).

Key Trade Barriers Faced by Exporters and Importers

Trade between India and Bangladesh has suffered over the years on account of poor regional connectivity. The current state of regional connectivity in the South Asian region is feeble, a fallout of factors like excessive documentation, lack of regulatory and institutional reforms, inefficient customs procedures, frequent internet failure, absence of testing facilities, lack of harmonisation standards, etc.

Infrastructure has always played an essential role in integrating a region, and Eastern-South Asia has recurrently faced inadequate and insufficient infrastructure, signalling obstruction to overall growth and development.

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) region faces massive challenges about transit connectivity, which include inadequate space at land and seaports, inefficient flyovers and bridges, ineffective transport corridors, frequent loading and unloading at border points, dearth of logistic facilities, absence of integrated transit system and lack of harmonisation of trade and technical standards.

Therefore, facilitating trade and transportation-related issues in the region will prove beneficial for the countries in the region. Better infrastructure, transport networks and connectivity across these countries will exponentially improve access to ports for traders in the sub-continent.

In addition to infrastructural hurdles and those related to Time-Cost-Distance, a study by CUTS International (2018A) on challenges to connectivity in the BBIN sub-region Time-Cost-Distance drew attention to several political-economy issues. Some of these included:

- low level of coordination among the border management agencies, which primarily includes lack of communication and data exchange causing a delay in clearance of inward and outward goods;
- truckers complain that labourers often refuse to work unless paid a premium over their regular wages – there have been incidents where Indian labourers halted the work to create an artificial supply scarcity to raise their wages;
- overloading has become a regular practice for transporters and truckers;
- lack of coordination among ministries and departments within the governments of individual countries;
- absence of transparent mechanisms of taxation and information sharing systems as well as the non-existence of efficient transit mechanisms;

- insurgency problems along specific stretches of trade corridors constitute a threat to law and order and therefore a deterrent to the movement of people and cargo across affected areas; and
- localised political issues also create hazards for the movement of cargo – extortion of illegal payments from truck drivers is a recurrent problem.

Such informal payments along the corridors erode the cost competitiveness of the transport companies. These costs are included while computing the prices of commodities and ultimately borne by the end-consumers. Indirectly, these illegal practices make the imported goods costlier in the domestic market.

Need for Greater Integration

The need for better integration between India and Bangladesh can hardly be exaggerated. Considering these adjacent countries' historical and geographical riches, one realises the scope for promoting tourism between the two countries. Tourism can help promote local cuisines, art and culture, with good economic returns.

Additionally, the promotion of sustainable and responsible tourism in the Sundarbans will showcase the uniqueness of the mangroves and help preserve the delicate ecological balance of this biosphere through global attention, exposure, and involvement. This will encourage governments on both sides of the border to frame policies appropriate to sustainable use and preservation of the biospheres of this region.

Reasons behind Informal Trade between India and Bangladesh

Informal trade is not to be considered synonymous with illegal or illicit trade. Of course, banned items like narcotics or explosives are often traded across borders through informal channels. Still, informal trade is a rather generic expression that includes in its fold all trade that occurs outside the bounds of regulatory or formal channels of trade officially enunciated by the state.

The reasons behind the prevalence of informal trade between India and Bangladesh may be found in good measure in the afore-mentioned barriers that often frustrate regular trade. It happens at the borders mainly because such trade or barter has been a natural urge, perhaps a way of life, among people inhabiting adjacent territories.

The previous study by CUTS International (2019) drew attention to the decrease in informal trade due to border haats that institutionalised specific spaces along the Indo-Bangladesh border to meet and exchange their local produce without navigating bureaucratic hurdles and cumbersome documentation procedures.

“Historic ties along the Bangladesh-India border have meant that goods, especially essential agricultural commodities, have always been traded, including informally, even once the hard border was established, fenced and strictly policed. Bootleg informal trade is said to have amounted to 41 percent of Bangladesh’s US\$580mn total imports from India in 2003 overland routes. According to state government officials on the Indian side, informal trade was rampant before the border haats were created.” (The World Bank, 2018).

Border Haats provide the people in remote border locations the institutional space where informal trade will be gradually replaced by formal trade. This will have the additional advantage of stopping the trade of banned items like explosives, firearms, and narcotics.

How Border Haats can be Instrumental to Facilitate Connectivity and Women Empowerment?

The whole idea of border haat trade revolves around providing an enabling environment to people who reside in the vicinity of the Indo-Bangladesh border to engage in trading activities between themselves. This will help the residents on the two sides of the border engage in symbiosis and improve their living conditions and standards.

Of course, trade has existed for a long time between these people inhabiting geographically contiguous areas. Still, an attempt on the part of the governments of Bangladesh and India to institutionalise such trade in a formal mechanism like the border haat is a relatively recent endeavor.

The northeastern states of India and Bangladesh have co-existed as natural neighbours and communities inhabiting these regions have traded freely between themselves in the past. However, political boundaries suppressed this relationship and the institutionalisation of border haat trade signifies the revival of the earlier relationship. Local people need these delinked markets or fora for trade.

One of the perceptible benefits of border haat trade is the opportunity for people on both sides of the border to connect. One encounters numerous instances when people have come to the border haat with the additional incentive to meet up with friends, families, and acquaintances from whom they have distanced (sometimes for more than decades) due to political barriers.

Following a revision of the MOU in April 2017 (an addendum had been signed in 2012), six more haats promised under the agreement are in the pipeline. Both addition and revision have expanded the scope for trade and economic activity in the region (The World Bank, 2018).

Objectives and Relevance

Improvement in trade or bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India will matter little if people on the ground do not stand to benefit. Therefore, the project aims to improve the livelihood prospects of people, particularly women, living near the border areas of India and Bangladesh through the establishment of border haats as tools to reduce informal cross-border trade in different commodities.

The objectives of the project are to collect gender-inclusive evidence, including case studies to study the prospects of establishing border haats as a tool to reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh; and create awareness and generate consensus on the prospects of establishing border haats/border-markets as a tool to reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh.

A Snapshot of the Report

The Report has been divided into several chapters.

The **first** or introductory chapter begins with an overview of the Indo-Bangladesh relationship and trade. It outlines the key trade barriers faced by exporters-importers in the two countries while trading through formal channels and its impact on consumers. This leads to an understanding of the reasons behind informal trade between India and Bangladesh and the appreciation of Border Haats as a much-needed institutional space for local inhabitants at the borders to trade in essential and local commodities.

Border Haats are also perceived as tools to increase people-to-people connectivity, reduce informal trade and facilitate women empowerment. The introduction also clarifies the objectives and relevance of the present study and offers a snapshot of the report's scheme.

The **second** chapter takes up a Review of Literature and captures experiences of Border Markets from other countries of the world and their perceived benefits. It highlights the prevalence of informal trade in different border areas across the globe. It draws attention to how such informal trade creates livelihood opportunities for several sections, particularly the poor and the marginalised.

In several cases, such trade has witnessed the predominance of women and led to women's empowerment. Such cases of informal trade are related to the Border Haats established along the Indo-Bangladesh border, which institutionalise and facilitate trade between people inhabiting remote border locations and creates livelihood opportunities for the rural folk and contribute to women empowerment. In the case of Border Haats, one also gets to understand the people-to-people connectivity that is buttressed.

The **third** chapter deals with the research methodology. The locations of the existing and sanctioned haats are indicated along with the rationale of the selection of proposed haats. Details pertaining to the samples drawn in terms of size and composition are also indicated.

The **fourth** chapter depicts a brief history of Border Haats and draws attention to recent developments. The operational aspects of border haats, alongside an overview of various provisions and restrictions pertaining to Border Haats and commodities traded in the haats are also highlighted.

The roles of various stakeholders in managing haat operations are clarified and the Constitution of Border Haat Management Committees, their roles and responsibilities are outlined. In all this, the importance of Border Haats for people residing in the border areas is highlighted.

The **fifth**, **sixth** and **seventh** chapters outline Border Haats on Informal trade, Livelihood and Gender, respectively.

The Report concludes with an overview of policy recommendations and suggestions for better implementation and functioning of such instruments as Border Haats, which seek to formalise trade at the grassroots.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In a previous study undertaken by CUTS International on Border Haats between India and Bangladesh, attention was drawn to the fact that informal trade was rampant before the establishment of Border Haats in Meghalaya and Tripura. Our survey team gathered that affluent landlords in Bangladesh regularly procured luxury items from across the border, particularly Baluchari sarees and ‘English wine’ (English wine is the local coinage for imported/foreign liquor).

Trucks would play regularly from the Indian side, carrying cattle, particularly from Srinagar. Vendors at Srinagar also recalled the regular flow of biscuits, fish and melamine products from the Bangladesh side to the Indians in Tripura and Meghalaya. But the erection of the fence between the two countries led to a definite curtailment of the volume of informal trade and the number of people involved in such activities. The study also concluded that Border Haats have been instrumental to this reduction. The study highlighted the case of the Kalaichar Haat in Meghalaya.

Prior to the commencement of this haat, trade between the Indians and the Bangladeshis flourished through the well-known channel of Mankachar, situated at a distance of 15-20 Kms from Kalaichar. The goods that used to flow through Mankachar included cows, wine, local tobacco products like *Biri* (locally made cigarettes), spices like *Jeera* (Cumin), sarees and garments, sugar and tea.

The goods that travel to India from Bangladesh include biscuits and bakery items, local fruit and vegetables, and fish. After establishing the Kalaichar BH, the volume of goods that used to flow to Mankachar has substantially decreased. The case of Dalu further reinforced the conclusion.

Dalu is another long-established channel of informal trade between the two countries. But unlike in the case of Mankachar, there is no border haat in the proximity of Dalu, which is why informal trade through Dalu continues to flourish. In fact, BSF personnel of Meghalaya confirmed that no official step was taken to decrease the flow of informal trade through Mankachar. That happened as a natural consequence of the establishment of the BH at Kalaichar.

Therefore, it is logical to surmise that trade is a natural urge among people who are not self-sufficient. When this need is recognised through the institutionalisation of formal channels, informal channels either reconcile themselves to a much-reduced scope or they die a natural death altogether.

The trade that used to flourish informally has decreased substantially with the establishment of border haats. Smuggling of forbidden items like drugs and opium has also come down by about 60-70 per cent. To combat this problem, in particular, BSF personnel contend that border check posts in vulnerable places ought to be manned by local police personnel equipped with metal detectors and sniffer dogs.

The places through which informal trade continues include Sonamura, Radhanagar, Kathulia, Harbatoli and Chitabari in Tripura, but what needs to be emphasised is that smuggling has reduced noticeably in respect of all essential commodities. The institutionalisation of trade through formal channels like border haats alongside the diminution of informal channels also guarantees that trade of unwelcome commodities like drugs and explosives will be substantially diminished if not be eradicated.

What needs to be borne in mind is that informal trade is not necessarily, nor is it limited to trade in illegal and forbidden items and goods. Peberdy, S.A. (2000) draws attention to the small and medium entrepreneurs involved in cross-border trade between South Africa and Mozambique. They highlight the kinds and volumes of goods they carry across the border and clarify that the term 'informal' for describing this trade may be misleading.

This is because it obscures the multiple linkages between the formal and informal sectors in both countries. It also assumes a degree of illegality and non-regulation that are not always present. The authors draw attention to the domination of women in the cross-border trade between South Africa and Mozambique.

The goods traded between South Africa and Mozambique suggests formal sector patterns of trade. They also support South Africa's manufacturing sector sectors that the government promotes: textiles, food products, electronics and electrical goods, and the agricultural sector.

The goods that travel from South Africa to Mozambique include clothes, encompassing the whole range of women's wear and menswear from underwear to jackets and coats and shoes ranging from boots, shoes and trainers to sandals and slippers. Also popular are household goods ranging from cutlery to saucepans, from plastic bowls to china plates and dinner sets, from containers to cooler bags. These items are mainly sold in the markets and streets of Maputo but are also sold to individuals and shops.

Some traders carry large items of furniture, including mattresses, beds, tables and chairs. Plastic chairs and tables are easy to carry because they are light and in demand, particularly in bars and restaurants. The range and volume of goods that flow from Mozambique to South Africa are incomparably less. Most commonly carried goods appear to be charcoal and 'Mozambican bread'.

Fish and shellfish are also popular items of cross-border trade. Capulanas (a traditional cloth found in Mozambique), cashews and vegetables specific to Mozambique are also carried across the border.

The study brings to light that some traders may pass through local border crossing points without papers. Yet, it draws attention to the fact that most cross-border traders, whether from South Africa or Mozambique, travel with visas that require an outlay of money as well as supporting documents. Their relationship with Customs and Excise regulatory frameworks is more complicated and fits the more classical interpretations of the informal sector.

The study concludes that although most traders are habitually paying bribes to customs officials at the borders, a significant proportion would be willing to pay complete duties if they were set at an affordable rate. Under the circumstances, the South African State appears to locate the informal sector outside the regulatory framework and associates it with illegality.

Although most traders in this study were involved in so-called illegal activity to carry goods across the border without paying full duties, most paid some. They most showed a willingness to formalise their immigration status, whatever direction they were travelling. The Border Haats established between India and Bangladesh also seems to echo this reality: they offered residents in the border areas a much-needed forum to exchange their local produce.

Border haat trade was subsequently consolidated to include not merely the trade of locally produced items but also other commodities and items that gradually assumed the proportions of regular business. This naturally diminished the trade that was otherwise flourishing through 'informal' channels.

Bhattacharjee and Barman (2019) draw attention to some of the advantages of cross-border trade. Border trade is different from trade through air, land or sea ports as the latter requires clearance through customs and generally involves a large volume.

Border trade, in contrast, is "over-land trade" by way of "exchange of commodities" which have been endorsed and enlisted by the two countries based on mutual consent. Border trade also lessens the insecurity and hardships of life in border areas, mainly if it is far away from the marketplaces of the cities/capitals of the concerned countries.

Besides economic implications, border trade unifies people's interest across the border, unlike sea or air borne trade. It strengthens the links among the people living in the bordering areas, which helps in a more significant way to make better border management possible.

In this context, it may be relevant to point out that the previous study by CUTS International (2019) identified people-to-people connectivity as one of the most significant gains from the entire initiative. “Our survey team captured several stories of such bonding and friendship that have not got obliterated by the erection of fences. There are moving instances of person-to-person connect that our survey team came across at the border haats.”

This is reaffirmed by Bhattacharjee and Barman (2019) regarding the Kalaichar border Haat which, according to them, remains an important link for the local people in the border district of South-West Garo Hills of Meghalaya. They observe that the quantity of commodities being transacted in the border haat is directly proportional to the quantity of supply of such commodities in the hands of the vendor of either side of India and Bangladesh. Greater the volume of commodities being supplied, the volume of export or import of commodities stands positive and vice-versa.

Trade is a natural urge among people who reside in geographically contiguous territories and who are not self-sufficient. The importance of geographical peculiarities and specific local conditions can therefore not be exaggerated.

This is highlighted, among other things, by Schoenberger and Turner (2008) in their study on Vietnam-China border trade. The authors show how individuals of highland minority and majority Kinh ethnicities negotiate the political reality of an international border in highly pragmatic ways as they augment their livelihoods by trading commodities with inhabitants in southwest China.

The study concludes that border access is mediated by a complex and multifaceted set of social and structural components, including state policy and ethnically-embedded social relations and specific geographic variables that, in turn, are engendering disparate economic opportunities.

Residents of districts adjoining the border have access to small crossing points called ‘open entrances’. There are often few taxes on imports as the quantities moved by individual traders are considered minimal. There is an open entrance at every point along the border with an ‘Office of Border Defence’, making 11 such open entrances in Lao Cai province.

Indeed, open entrances are typically characterised by a sizeable army outpost —the Office of Border Defence — located about 5 to 10 km from the border. A smaller outpost called the ‘Border Control Station’ is often just a small hut located at the physical border.

Here, members of the Office of Border Defence inspect permits and collect crossing fees. Such permits made available to residents serve as a more desired alternative to passports and other bureaucratic hurdles. Only people classified as border residents can cross at an

open entrance with a permit; no other Vietnamese citizen can use these crossings even if they hold a passport.

Border residents thus enjoy the most favourable conditions for accessing the border with China in terms of the least bureaucratic formalities and the advantage of having numerous crossing points.

One is reminded of a similar advantage of Border Haats between Bangladesh and India, enabling residents of the two countries in these remote locations to market their respective local produce and meet up without having to navigate through bureaucratic and administrative hurdles and often cumbersome formalities.

Among the many small-scale trade movements, two commodities in great demand locally and consistently transported through such avenues are manufactured ribbons and Highlander-style skirts. Colourful braid ribbons are for sale in nearly every market in Lao Cai province. They are used to decorate jackets produced and worn by Hmong women (mainly in Bac Ha and Si MaCai) and are sewn on Yao women's jackets. They are also refashioned into various goods by both Kinh and highlanders, such as hats, bags and bracelets, for sale to foreign and domestic tourists.

The study by Schoenberger and Turner (2008), while mapping access along a remote portion of the Vietnam-China border, reveals the ability of border residents to craft out for themselves livelihoods involving cross-border trade. What is also interesting about the study is that it brings to light how a range of traders negotiate these engagement spaces.

By highlighting the fundamental importance of a range of dynamic mechanisms occurring in this space for the lives of those who depend on cross-border trade in the northern highlands of Vietnam — it stresses the role of such elements as cultural, financial, social and physical capital, combined with spatiality and ethnicity, interwoven with legal mechanisms of access, to allow certain actors to negotiate and seize upon specific trading opportunities while restraining the inclusion of others.

Only when such a multitude of elements are carefully considered and analysed in their complexity can we gain a nuanced understanding of how border livelihoods are made and maintained. Only such informed consideration of the multiple facets of people inhabiting remote border regions will provide policy makers with the right inputs for prudent choices and intelligent policy decisions.

Recognising the vital importance of specific local geographical conditions and peculiarities, Chalfin proposes substituting the concept of society with the concept of a 'socio-geographic region' (Chalfin, B, 2001).

The border zone of north-east Ghana, a tri-juncture spanning Ghana, Togo and Burkina Faso, is characterised by the extreme mobility of persons and commodities on the one hand and extreme state surveillance on the other. Numerous layers of state personnel – police, border guards, customs agents and security personnel like army officers – occupy this site to regulate trade.

A new kind of *modus operandi* is adopted by state agents posted at the border. Border zone traders are found to defy restrictions imposed by the state at the border in often predictable ways and the process invites sanctions. Such sanctions are seen to exist alongside regular forms of collaboration with representative officials of the state.

In a polity where the circulation of state agents is commonplace, state and bureaucratic officials become dependent on residents to learn the trading conventions of a particular area, irrespective of whether they conform to the norms enunciated in official policy prescriptions.

Chalfin's study interestingly points out that the entire notion of the 'informal' sector gets nuanced in situations where the border as a territorial and administrative expression of state sovereignty comes into being.

The case of border zone trade demonstrates that these tendencies new forms of control and acquiescence exercised in tandem by state and society. Like other border zone phenomena, such a scenario clearly raises questions about where the state formally ends and anti-state domains begin.

A similar scenario of local checkpoint politics is discernible in Elsing's study (Elsing, S, 2018) of cross-border trade between the neighbouring provinces of Loei in Thailand and Sayaboury in the Lao PDR. Most of the border between these provinces is marked by a narrow river.

While a Friendship Bridge regulates large-scale international trade, an extensive amount of informal, small-scale trade occurs through smaller checkpoints and other parts of the river. Trade along these sites is not only highly organised, most of it also happens under the gaze of border officials.

As depicted in the study on trade among Ghana, Togo and Burkina Faso in the study by Chalfin, Elsing's study examines the material and power dealings and reciprocity that is common at local checkpoints between the different actors involved in the facilitation and restriction of trade.

Between Loei and Sayaboury, trade is regulated according to a spectrum of licitness or legality that is constantly negotiated and renegotiated between traders and officials.

Negotiations rely on the social relations between these actors and involve practices of gift-giving and bribery, which blur the boundaries between reciprocity and corruption. By focusing on the interactions between state and non-state actors, this article sheds light on how checkpoint politics configure the informal economy.

State actors referred to include Thai paramilitary Rangers, the Thai Volunteer Border Militia and local village headmen. These actors represent the state and its sovereign authority but are saddled with the express responsibility of monitoring cross-border trade according to rules highlighted by official policies.

But these state representatives were also socially embedded in the local culture of the border area. Most of them hailed from Loei or one of the adjacent border provinces, spoke the local Lao dialect, and maintained social relationships with non-state actors at their duty station. These actors' social embeddedness proved to be a crucial determinant of checkpoint politics and regulated trading activities.

Elsing highlights exciting aspects of cross-border trade in the Thai-Lao border province. Due to the different sizes of villages located along the three checkpoints and their proximity to the bridge, the checkpoints differed in the number of people crossing the border checkpoints. On market days, the busiest checkpoint was used by several hundred people. The checkpoint that only opened on Saturdays was the quietest. With only a small dirt path leading from the road down to the pier, it was used by fewer than 100 Lao villagers.

The Rangers or checkpoint officials had been posted to ensure people took to crossing for the local customary use and personal consumption. Border officials, in practice, were tolerating the transportation of more significant amounts of goods across the checkpoint than merely for personal consumption.

At one of the checkpoints, the sole responsibility of the labourers who worked alongside the boat operators was packing, carrying, lifting and loading wholesale goods from the shops at the checkpoint into the boats. On the Lao side, another group of labourers unloaded the goods and used motorbikes to deliver them to shops.

And all such 'informal' activities constituted a regular feature of the cross-border trade in the region, established as firmly as 'formal' trade through practices like bribery and offering of gifts.

Rippa shows in his study (Rippa, A, 2018) on cross-border trade between Xinjiang in China and Pakistan that a significant part of China-Pakistan cross-border trade falls within the category of 'shadow economy' or what is commonly understood as informal trade.

Since most Pakistani traders in Xinjiang cannot ship containers through the Khunjerab Pass, they prefer to carry the goods purchased in China with them on their daily bus trips to Sost, Pakistan, to avoid customs duties. Though falling beyond the scope of the regulatory regime, this form of border economy is far from informal. Instead, it is based on a network of contacts on both sides of the border and made possible by the area's particular institutional and infrastructural setting.

The peculiarity of geographical conditions comes into play about cross-Karakoram trade. Harsh terrain, rough weather, and security concerns fundamentally limit economic engagement across the Khunjerab Pass. Under the circumstances, cross-border trade in the region has taken what Rippa calls “suitcase trade”.

For most traders in the remote border region, their businesses' costs and small-scale nature do not permit them to deal with such large quantities, and they thus resort to rather unconventional ways of transporting their goods. Most, in particular, make use of what has been called shuttle trade, in which professional couriers purchase goods of limited value and sell them in local markets across the border.

Shuttle traders regularly travel between Xinjiang and Pakistan, taking small quantities of goods with them on their daily bus trips and thereby evading taxes that do not apply to their luggage when they transport no more than 40Kg of duty-free products. This figure, however, becomes negotiable on a case-to-case basis. This form of informal trade has been called “itinerant,” “informal,” or “people-to-people”.

In the context of the China-Pakistan trade, the “suitcase trade” image seems even more apt to describe the limited scale of such exchanges. This form of trade, well known to authorities in both countries, leads to regular protest outbursts following stricter Chinese authorities' regulations.

Pakistani traders believe that China will, at some point, try to put an end to the suitcase trade. If implemented, new and more severe regulations would radically change the patterns of cross-border trade in the area, with a major impact on the lives of hundreds of traders from Gilgit-Baltistan. They rely on this form of exchange for their livelihood.

While the suitcase trade falls within the category of the shadow economy, it is evident that it is far from being informal. Although outside of the regulatory regime, this border trade is made possible by the peculiar institutional setting of the area, a network of contacts among the traders on the two sides of the border and a series of strategies to take advantage of this border environment.

As for most border economies, the KKH trade is made possible by infrastructure – roads, bridges, tunnels, custom facilities and so on – built and maintained by state authorities. In

the suitcase trade, traders must also rely on the daily Tashkurgan-Sost bus, currently operated by a Pakistani company. However, this infrastructure is far from stable, keeping in mind the vicissitudes of nature: the propensity towards landslides and snowstorms in the region.

There are other legal hazards also: Chinese authorities have, in recent years, recurrently enforced short bans on particular commodities and attempted to restrict the volume and numbers of items that can be carried as luggage on the daily bus to Sost. Time and again, this has highlighted the variable geographical and institutional landscape with which the traders have to cope. To succeed, traders must thus cultivate and nourish relations with all actors involved and learn to deal with state authorities on both sides of the border. Pakistani dealers who speak Mandarin Chinese encounter fewer problems with the border guards in Tashkurgan.

In contrast, good relations with Pakistani authorities in Sost are fundamental for smuggling forbidden items, such as alcoholic beverages, and avoiding time-consuming inspections. This situation bears a striking resemblance with Chalfin's depiction of the regular forms of collusion that cross-border traders indulge in with representative state officials in North-East Ghana (Chalfin, B, 2001).

Border regions are generally remote and relatively underdeveloped. Consciousness in this regard is drawn attention to by Troshin *et al.* (2019) in their study on Russian border regions and the challenges thrown up by them. For all its specifics, due to natural and climatic conditions, geographical location, national and cultural differences, religious characteristics and other factors, some problems of the border regions have similar characteristics.

First of all, it concerns their place and role in ensuring the country's national security. The border region is a specific territorial entity, the attention to which is a crucial component of the policy of every country. Conscious assumption of an imbalance in the development of border regions implies appropriate adjustments in the structure of internal territories. The complexity of solving these problems lies in the individualisation of each border region, choosing the model of its development, and the scheme of the relationship of the periphery with the centre.

Troshin *et al.* suggest due consideration of the structure of the border region's economy and a careful study of its natural and geographical conditions. One may also need to consider population density, specific demographic features like age structure, and socio-cultural aspects.

In this context, one may recall the study on Border Haats by CUTS International (2019), which drew attention to the fact that the Border Haats in Tripura do not record a single

woman participant as vendor, unlike the case of the Meghalaya Haats where there is a perceptible extent of female participation.

The patriarchal nature of households explains this in Tripura and that female members of Bengali Hindu families are more engaged in household activities and not oriented to trade-related activities at border haats. In light of all such peculiarities of border regions, Troshin & et al. comment that it may be prudent to consider a certain degree of autonomy in the economic management of border regions.

The cases mentioned above of cross-border trade in different corners of the world seem to suggest that the informal sector constitutes an important part of the economies of developing countries. Since the 1980s and 1990s, market liberalisation policies would result in informal trade directed towards formal trade in most developing countries. But this has not happened in large parts of Africa.

In fact, for many parts of Africa, the overall effect of market liberalisation has resulted in “a significant expansion of trans-border trade” (Meagher, K, 2003), especially by large numbers of unemployed youth, women and others (CUTS International, 2019). The point is reiterated by Lesser and Moise-Leeman (2009) in their paper on Informal Trade and Trade Facilitation Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated that informal trade accounts for almost 43 percent of official gross domestic product (GDP), thus being almost equivalent to the formal sector.

While this phenomenon may seem to be a blessing for poor households, it can seriously challenge the economic development of African countries in the longer term. Lesser and Moise-Leeman, explored one aspect of the informal economy, namely *informal cross-border trade* in selected sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. They contend that trade facilitation measures have the potential to encourage traders to incline increasingly towards formal trade.

The paper considers measures that help reduce direct and indirect trade transaction costs arising from mandatory import- and export-related procedures; mechanisms that simplify trade-related regulations and requirements for selected low-value transactions; and policies that help enhance compliance levels with existing international trade regulations.

In addition, the study considers several other measures like the provision of effective business support services to be extended to formal traders, which can further encourage firms to formalise their cross-border transactions. The paper does not claim that trade facilitation reform by itself will reduce informal cross-border trade, nor that governments will be able to eliminate its incidence in the region.

Highlighting the salient features of informal cross-border trade across SSA, Lesser and Moise-Leeman observe that such trade mainly concerns individual dealers and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. In Eastern and Southern Africa, informal cross-border trade flows generally consist of relatively small consignments of goods. Many such consignments are transported by vehicle, bicycle, and pushcart, or head and hand.

Informal traders participating in such activities are often not registered. Moreover, informal cross-border trade is characterised by a vital share of female traders and profits from informal trade constitute the sole source of their income and the key to their economic empowerment. Interestingly, almost all goods, agricultural and manufactured, seem to be covered by informal cross-border trade in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Usually, a significant proportion of the monitored informal trade concerns staple food commodities like maize and rice that directly impact regional food security and low-quality consumer goods such as clothes, shoes, and household electronic appliances like television and refrigerator.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, the most formally traded products in 2003 were food and vegetable products, tea and coffee, sugar, non-alcoholic beverages, cement, tobacco and parts of electrical goods. Goods are sometimes bought in the formal sector and then sold in another country's formal or informal sector. Interestingly, many informal traders in this region pass through official border points.

Those who engage in informal cross-border trade are motivated by a combination of factors. First of all, individual traders and businesses that are not registered at all can evade domestic taxes and regulations; in addition, formal firms and entrepreneurs are lured to unofficial trade and resort to illegal practices (such as under-invoicing, misclassification, or incorrect declaration of origin) to derive cost advantages inherent in such transactions.

Informal trade is also likely to occur when important price disparities exist between formally and informally traded goods in the importing country and when transaction costs arising from compliance with regulatory requirements are significant; when the formal entry or exit of certain goods is obstructed; and/or when, due to weak law enforcement, a high degree of corruption and the requirement of — facilitation payments prevail along official border posts.

Finally, cross-border trade (whether formal or informal) is likely to be impacted by the degree of availability of certain goods, the quality of road and transport infrastructure.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

Therefore, one may reiterate that trade is a natural urge among people who are not self-sufficient. When this need is recognised through the institutionalisation of formal channels, informal channels either reconcile themselves to a much-reduced scope or disappear altogether. People residing on the two sides of the Indo-Bangladesh border have shared languages and dialects, lifestyles and food habits, Gods and Goddesses and customs and traditions through history.

They have cultivated adjacent lands, fished at the same ponds and shared their recipes and other resources of the region. They have celebrated festivals and participated in festivities, and reached out to each other in times of distress as neighbours often do.

And after generations of co-existence, a fence ran through their lives, splitting families and friends, relatives and neighbours. People who had lived as one community were given different badges of national identity. Under the changed circumstances, they learnt to negotiate the political reality of an international border in highly pragmatic ways in their quest to augment their livelihoods by trading commodities with inhabitants on the other side of the border.

The institutionalisation of trade through formal channels like border haats will restore these people the much-desired space to keep their symbiosis alive. Establishing such formal channels will diminish informal channels and bring with it the much-desired assurance that trade of unwelcome commodities like drugs and explosives will be diminished if not eradicated.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Implementation Plan

Introduction

Based on the success stories of the existing border haats, the two countries' governments decided to set up more border haats along the India-Bangladesh border. Consequently, *six* additional locations were sanctioned for the establishment of the Haats (PIB 2016).

In addition to the existing and sanctioned haats, proposals have also come from various quarters, including stakeholders, BSF personnel, various State Governments and Members of Parliament, for 73 additional locations where new border haats may be set up.

In this regard, the study sought to gauge how border haats have improved livelihood opportunities of the residents, particularly women in locations where border haats are already operational. Additionally, the study captured the livelihood prospects of the residents, especially women, in the locations where border haats are expected to come up. The study gathered gender-inclusive evidence and case studies to understand how border haats can reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh.

This chapter discusses the overall methodology of the study – the data collection techniques, the sizes and composition of various samples drawn to gather data, and how the project has been implemented. This chapter also details the locations selected for the study and explains the rationale behind such selection.

Methodology

The data collection process could be divided into five steps:

- 1) Selection of and rationale behind locations selected for the survey;
- 2) Defining the target population based on their existing/perceived engagements with the border haats;
- 3) Selection of sampling techniques;
- 4) Determination of sample size; and
- 5) Data collection procedures

Identifying Locations for the Study

The study undertook field surveys in 32 locations (16 locations in India and their mirror locations in Bangladesh) across both countries, ensuring that all three categories were represented: locations where border haats are operational (hereafter referred as “*Operational Border Haats*”); locations where new border haats have been sanctioned (henceforth referred as “*Sanctioned Border Haats*”); and locations establishment of border haats has been proposed (hereafter referred as “*Proposed locations*”).

A. Operational Border Haats

These are the four operational haats studied by CUTS International, India and Unnayan Shamanny, Bangladesh, in 2016 (CUTS 2019). The baseline data was tested during the current survey to understand the various changes that have surfaced in the last two-three years.

This, in turn, was useful in deriving key learnings and identifying factors crucial to the long-term success of the sanctioned and proposed border haats. Since each operational haats has its unique traits, a survey across all four locations was considered necessary. A list of the operational locations has been presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Operational Border Haats Selected for the Survey	
India	Bangladesh
Kalaichar, West Garo Hills District, Meghalaya	Baliamari, Char Rajibpur, Kurigram District
Balat, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya	Lauwaghar, Dalora, SunamganjSadar, Sunamgang District
Kamlasagar, Sipahijala District, Tripura	Kasba, Brahmanbaria District
Srinagar, Sabroom Sub-Divison, South Tripura	PurbaMadhugram, Chhagalnaiya, Feni District, Chittagong Division

B. Sanctioned Border Haats

The governments of India and Bangladesh have sanctioned six additional locations for the establishment of new border haats. Four Border Haats were sanctioned in Meghalaya State and the other two were sanctioned in the Tripura State of India, but all of them are under the Sylhet division in Bangladesh.

The sanctioned Border Haats were selected to gather stakeholders’ perceptions and insights about upcoming border haats in those locations and do an *ex-ante* study to understand future challenges and opportunities. A list of the sanctioned locations has been presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Sanctioned Border Haats Locations Selected for the Survey

India	Bangladesh
Bholaganj, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya	Bholaganj, Companiganj, Sylhet
Nalikata, South West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya	Saydabad, Tahirpur, Sunamganj
Shibbari, South Garo Hills, Meghalaya	Bhulyapara, Durgapur, Netrokona
Ryngku, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya	Bagan Bari, Duara Bazar, Sunamganj
Kamalpur, Dhalai District, Tripura	Kurmaghat, Kamalganj, Moulvibazar District, Sylhet
Palbasti, Ragna District, Tripura	PashchimBatuli, JuriUpazilla, Moulvibazar District, Sylhet

C. Proposed Border Haats

So far, the border haats were operational only in two northeastern states of India, viz, Meghalaya and Tripura, whereas a significant length of the Indo-Bangladesh border is also shared by three other states of India, viz, Assam, Mizoram and West Bengal. Therefore, to ensure a sufficiently representative sample, two locations from each of these three states (i.e., six locations in total) have been selected purposively.

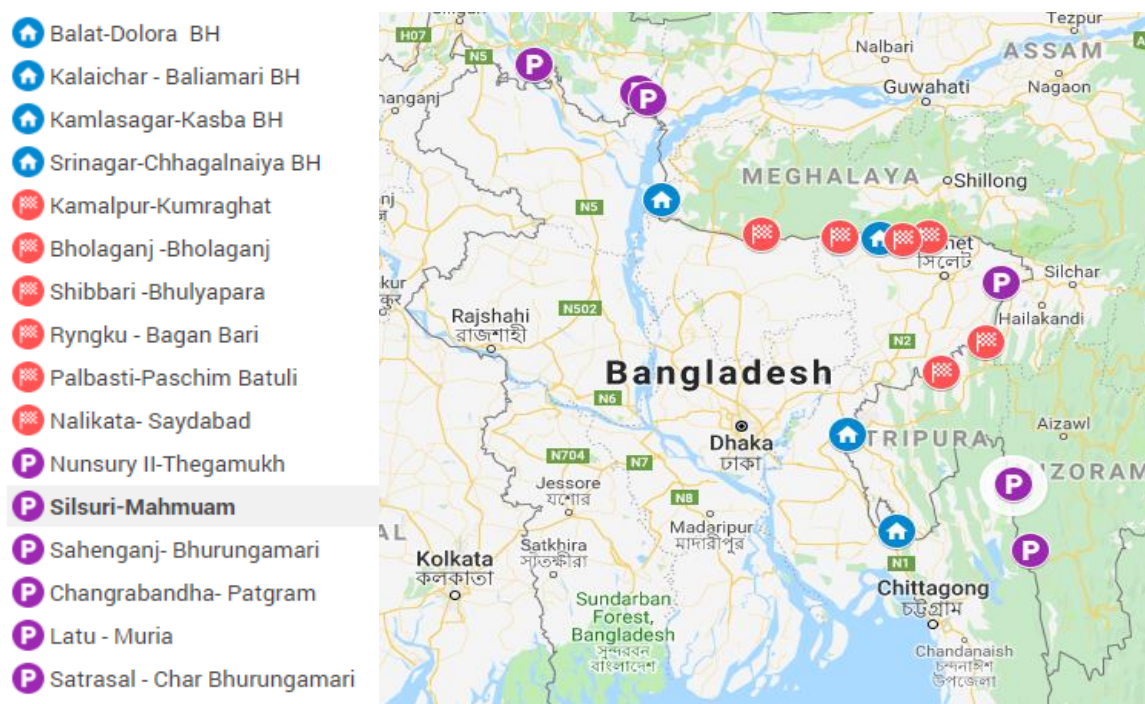
Since none of these three states has a border haat, it would be interesting to know how various stakeholders (viz., State Government, Local governments, villagers residing in the border areas, etc.) perceive border haats and analyse the feasibility, potentiality and rationality of establishing new border haat in these locations. These locations were selected based on purposive sampling guided by parameters such as a good network of stakeholders and geographical accessibility to undertake and complete the survey successfully within the estimated timeline.

Table 3: Proposed Border Haats Selected for the Survey

India	Bangladesh
Nunsury II, Lunglei District, Mizoram	Thegamukh, BarkalUpazila, Rangamati district, Chittagong division
Silsuri, Mamit District, Mizoram	Sajek (Mahmuam), Baghaichari, Rangamati, Chittagong
Sahebganj, Cooch Behar, West Bengal	Bhurungamari, Kurigram District, Rangpur Division
Changrabandha, Cooch Behar, West Bengal	Patgram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur
Latu, Karimganj, Assam	Muria, BeanibazarUpazila, Sylhet District
Satrasal, Dhubri, Assam	Char Bhurungamari, Kurigram District

Moreover, these were locations proposed either by the BSF or the State Governments or even by Members of Parliament to establish Border Haat. A list of the proposed locations has been presented in Table 3.

Figure 2: Upcoming Border Haats at the Sanctioned and Proposed Locations



Target Population and Sample Size

The target population includes those directly or indirectly involved with the existing border haats or are likely to get involved with the upcoming border haats at the sanctioned and proposed locations. Target populations also include those who can provide information relevant to the study.

The target population for the present study has been divided into six sub-groups for operational locations and four sub-groups for sanctioned and proposed locations to draw together a sufficiently representative sample (number of respondents) from each group. Additionally, focus group discussions were conducted with three stakeholder categories: women self-help groups, farmers and businessmen in the existing, sanctioned and proposed locations.

A description of each category of person chose for the select sub-groups is provided below:

A. For Operational Locations

Key Informant: A person associated with the border haats or whose opinion regarding border haat is essential. In addition, the key informants were important since they provided a socio-economic overview of the selected locations (viz. Information about average population density, the predominant livelihood options, average income of the people living in the catchment area of the border haat, degree of women empowerment in the area and other relevant details.).

These respondents included members of the border haat management committee, Security officials, Customs officials, Block Development Officers, Additional District Magistrate, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Panchayat Pradhan/Chairman of Union Parishad, village headman/Member of Union Parishad, representatives from the Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, Department of Horticulture, Department of Industries, and Project Managers under National Rural Livelihood Mission.

Vendor: A person (either from India or Bangladesh) authorised to sell products in the border haats.

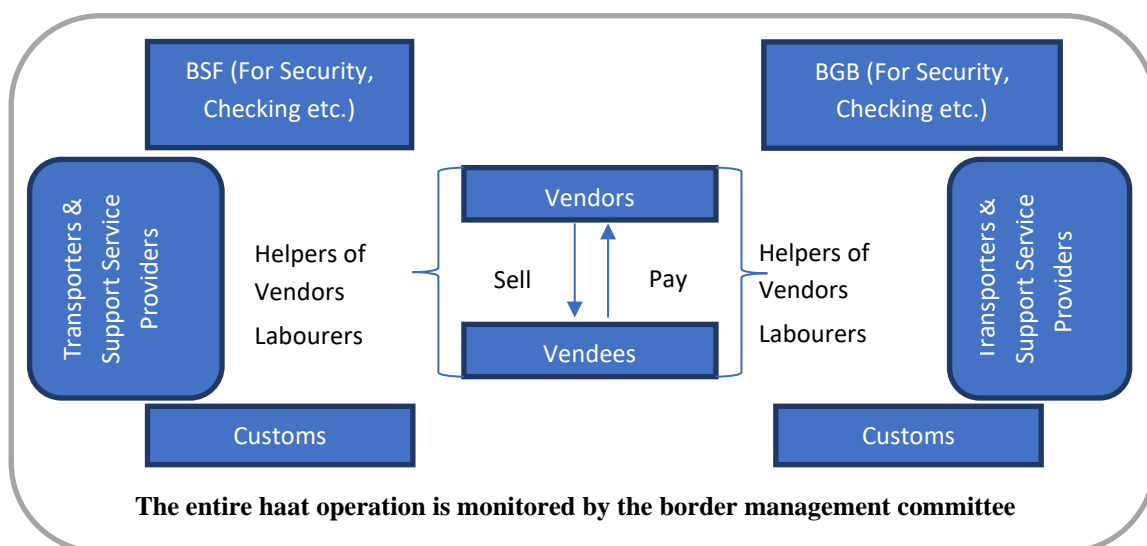
Vendee or buyer: A person (either from India or Bangladesh) visiting a border haat to buy commodities sold by the vendors in the haat;

Labourers: An authorised person who helps the vendors to carry products from the gate of the border haat to their stalls and back to cars/carts while returning, and also in selling products at the haat. They are also known as helpers.

Transporter: A person involved in transporting goods and people from and to the border haat.

Support service providers: They represent the most economically vulnerable group. They are primarily sellers of tea and snacks either inside the haat premises or outside the haat premises. The number of support service providers that can enter the haat premises is often left to the discretion of local authorities.

Figure 3: Stakeholders in Existing Border Haats



- **Role of various stakeholders in the existing border haats**

Interrelation between different stakeholders has been depicted in Figure 3. The major exchange/trade occurs between the vendors and the vendees – the vendors sell their products and the vendors purchase them; in the process, exchange of goods and money takes place. In addition, the vendors require labourers to accompany them to the haats.

These labourers are mostly given the task of looking after the shops and restrict theft or shop-lifting. They also carry the products of vendors either by cart or on headloads inside the haat premises. In addition, they do loading and unloading work. However, at times these helpers also sell their products along with the vendors for additional income.

In addition, there are transporters and support service providers whose livelihoods are linked with the haat. In general, the haats are located at 1-2 km from the nearest habitations. The goods to be sold by the vendors are thus carried up to the haats on pick-up vans. Also, the vendees commute to the haats by three-wheelers or local rickshaws. Thus, the transporters provide a vital link, connecting people with the haats and earning their livelihood.

The support service providers sell tea and snacks mostly outside but in the vicinity of the haats.

Lastly, the entire haat operation is coordinated by the border haat management committees comprising government officials, security agencies, and local representatives. They have been considered to be among the Key Informants in the survey.

The sample size considered for the survey has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Sample for Operational Border Haats Locations																					
LOCATION	VENDOR			VENDEE			LABOURER			TRANSPORTER			KII			SUPPORT SERVICE			GRAND TOTAL		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Balat-Dolora	9	3	12	7	3	10	4	3	7	6	-	6	6	-	6	4	-	4	36	9	45
Kalaichar-Baliabari	8	2	10	9	1	10	5	1	6	6	-	6	5	1	6	4	-	4	37	5	42
Kamlasagar-Kasba	8	2	10	6	4	10	6	-	6	6	-	6	9	-	9	3	1	4	38	7	45
Srinagar-Chagnalaiya	9	1	10	9	1	10	6	-	6	6	-	6	5	1	6	4	-	4	39	3	42
Total	34	8	42	31	9	40	21	4	25	24	-	24	25	2	27	16	-	16	150	24	174

B. For Sanctioned and Proposed Locations

Key Informants: The key informants include those already/likely to become the border management committee members in the sanctioned locations. In the case of proposed locations, the key informants were selected such that they can provide information about the socio-economic profiles of the selected locations, including the livelihood pattern; purchasing power of village residents; the pattern of informal trade, potential products that could be traded in the border haat; role played by women in these areas; needs and concerns about the establishment of border haats in that area.

They were mostly the Security officials (BSF/BGB), Customs officials, Block Development Officers, Additional District Magistrate, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Panchayat Pradhan/Chairman of Union Parishad, village headman/Member of Union Parishad, representatives from Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, Department of Horticulture, Department of Industries, and Project Managers under National Rural Livelihood Mission.

Farmers: Agriculture is the predominant occupation in the select locations. Due to marketing challenges, the farmers sell their produce to middlemen who generally procure it from the farm gate or local weekly haats. Farmers usually get low prices for their produce. The establishment of border haats will enable them to sell their produce directly to consumers in their neighboring countries.

Given that the farmers will be the direct beneficiaries of the border haats, they were surveyed at length during the study. In addition, many of the farmers are involved in procuring seeds, pesticides, and herbicides from the neighboring country. Farmers were an important source of information regarding the products they cultivated, the extent and direction of informal trade in agriculture, other products, availability and demand for products across the neighboring country, and other related matters.

Local retail shopkeepers: Agriculture apart, trading and running local shops constituted the second most predominant means of livelihood in the sanctioned and proposed locations. This category included persons who own retail shops located within 5km of the sanctioned or proposed location. There are, of course, instances where these shops procure products from the neighbouring country and sell them at their shops. On several occasions, these products were procured through informal channels.

Recent experience of the existing border haats suggests that such local shop owners and traders are most likely to get registered as vendors at the border haats. Thus they were surveyed to understand the products available in the local shops and their sources

Households: Households include the common people/family members who stay in and around the locations where border haats are likely to come up. Once the border haat

becomes operational, households would be the ones to purchase products from the border haats. They were surveyed to understand their livelihood patterns; their demand patterns; their purchasing power; whether they purchase products through informal routes and how they do so; availability and demand for products in the neighboring country; level of awareness about border haats; roles played by women; and popular expectations regarding benefits of such haats and their concerns and apprehensions once they are operationalized.

Table 5: Sample Size for Sanctioned Border Haats Locations

LOCATION	KII			LOCAL SHOP			HOUSEHOLD			FARMER			GRAND TOTAL		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Bholaganj-Bholaganj	7	0	7	8	2	10	10	0	10	10	0	10	35	2	37
Nalikata-Saydabad	6	0	6	9	1	10	9	1	10	10	0	10	34	2	36
Shibbari-Bhulyapara	6	0	6	8	1	9	9	1	10	9	1	10	32	3	35
Rynku-Bagan Bari	5	1	6	9	1	10	8	2	10	10	0	10	32	4	36
Kamalpur-Kurmaghat	7	0	7	10	0	10	5	5	10	10	0	10	32	5	37
Palbasti-Paschim Batuli	6	0	6	9	1	10	9	1	10	10	0	10	34	2	36
Total	37	1	38	53	6	59	50	10	60	59	1	60	199	18	217

Table 6: Sample Size for Proposed Border Haats Locations

LOCATION	KII			LOCAL SHOP			HOUSEHOLD			FARMER			GRAND TOTAL		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Nunsuri II-Thegamukh	9	0	9	10	0	10	10	0	10	9	1	10	38	1	39
Silsuri-Sajek	7	0	7	10	0	10	7	3	10	10	0	10	34	3	37
Sahenganj-Bhurungamari	9	0	9	10	0	10	10	0	10	10	0	10	39	0	39
Changrabanda-Patgram	10	0	10	9	1	10	9	1	10	9	1	10	37	3	40
Latu-Muria	5	1	6	10	0	10	7	3	10	10	0	10	32	4	36
Satrasal-Char Bhurungamari	10	0	10	10	0	10	7	3	10	9	1	10	36	4	40
Total	50	1	51	59	1	60	50	10	60	57	3	60	216	15	231

The Sampling Technique

The surveys have been carried out based on purposive sampling.

Rudra, A (1989) argues thus: "...quantitative estimates for a community as a whole, may not be the only or even the most important purpose for which a research project is undertaken. In many projects, the researcher is interested in studying very closely and intimately the working

of a social phenomenon. Such a purpose cannot be served through an extensive field survey. The deeper one wants to probe the intricacies of a phenomenon, the smaller has to be the size of the sample. And not only the size: the sample has to be rich in information relating to the phenomenon.

Further, the respondents have to be such as are willing to co-operate with the investigators. A random sample hardly satisfies all these conditions. The researcher may therefore purposely choose a sample to fulfill all these conditions."

The question at this stage, therefore, relates to the use of non-probability or probability sampling. Non-probability sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher, while probability sampling relies on chance. Among the two, non-probability sampling has been used to gather full and relevant information from a limited number of samples. The sample is selected based on its relevance to the study.

Under this type of sampling, there are different techniques available, most common among which include:

- **Convenience:** In this type of sampling technique subjects are selected because of considerations of convenience in terms of accessibility and proximity to the researcher.
- **Judgmental:** In this sampling technique, the researcher selects units to be sampled based on his existing knowledge or his professional judgment of the matter in consideration.
- **Snowball:** This type of sampling technique works like a chain referral. After observing the initial subject, the researcher asks for assistance regarding identifying people with similar/relevant attributes who can meaningfully answer the researcher's questions.

Table 7 presents information regarding the type of sampling techniques used for data collection from each respondent category.

Table 7: Sampling Techniques Used

Stakeholder Category	Type of Sampling used	Rationale
Key Informant	Judgmental sampling	It allows targeting officials from whom maximum required information can be expected.
Vendor	Convenience sampling along with judgmental	Convenience sampling allows obtaining basic data and trends relevant to the study without the complications of using a randomized sample. On the other hand, judgmental sampling helps collect specific data.
Vendee	Convenience sampling along with judgmental sampling	Convenience sampling allows obtaining basic data and trends relevant to the study without the complications of using a randomized sample. On the other hand, judgmental sampling helps collect specific data.
Labourers	Convenience sampling	It allows access to direct and basic data
Transporter	Convenience sampling	It enables access to required data.
Support service providers	Judgmental sampling	It allows interaction with support service providers who are associated with border haats.
Farmers	Convenience sampling and snowballing	Convenience sampling helps to get basic data easily and snowballing allows access to informative, vocal and/or particular categories of farmers within the estimated time.
Local retail shopkeepers	Convenience sampling and snowballing	Convenience sampling helps access basic data, and snowballing enables the identification of informative and particular categories (product) of local shop keepers.
Local residents	Convenience along with judgmental sampling	Convenience sampling allows obtaining basic data and trends relevant to the study without the complications of using a randomised sample. On the other hand, judgmental sampling helps obtain specific data.

Sample Size

The sample size was determined based on the rule of thumb. Initially, it was decided to select respondents, ensuring an equal number of men and women. However, in reality, we discovered that many women were not ready to talk or could not provide appropriate information. Hence, the intended equal ratio of men: women could not be maintained. 622 respondents were interviewed, out of which 566 are male respondents and 56 are women.

However, various women's self-help groups were found to be forthcoming. Thus, focused group discussions with 24 Self-help groups, each comprising 10 members, were conducted. The list of location-wise SHGs surveyed is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: List of SHGs Interviewed

S.L No.	Location	No. of SHGs Interviewed	Activity
1.	Kamalpur, Dhalai District, Tripura	01 (7-10 members)	In Kamalpur, the majority of women are involved in household activities. Though they are trying to get loans under Government schemes for SHGs, they do not possess any local handicraft skills as such.
2.	Palbasti, Ragna District, Tripura	01 (7-10 members)	A Self-Help group is engaged in the preparation of handicraft items from cane. Though there is not much demand for these products in Bangladesh, their products are exported to other countries.
3.	NunsuryII, Lunglei District, Mizoram	04 (each SHF had 8-10 members)	This group makes traditional dresses for women, locally called <i>Mekhli</i> . They informed that if there is demand, they will prepare and cater to the market. As the Chakmas live on both sides of the border, the demand for the product is likely to generate a considerable income.
4.	Satrasal	01 (7-10 members)	A few are directly associated with the SHG and earn handsome amounts from their production. But some are not directly associated with the SHG groups. They make products from stems of water hyacinth, locally called metekar. The products are purchased by middlemen directly from their homes.
5.	Sahebganj	03 (each having 7-10 members)	The usual engagements are animal husbandry (poultry rearing), maize cultivation using zero tillage technique, and pisciculture.
6.	Changrabanda	03 (each having 7-10 members)	The women members are involved in mushroom cultivation, making pickles, sattu, preparing mats and other decorative items.
7.	Silsury	04 (each having 10 members)	The village is inhabited only by Chakmas, so they prepare indigenous Chakma dresses using handlooms. They generally prepare these dresses for their use. Some of the SHG members have received training from the District Industry Centre (DIC).
8.	Latu (Gandhai GP near Latu)	04 (each having 10 members)	They are into manufacturing cane and bamboo handicrafts, gamcha, traditional dresses, pisciculture and animal husbandry.
9.	Kalaichar	03 (each having 10 members)	The predominant engagements are drying and peeling of betel nut and animal husbandry.

Data Collection¹

In the final step, structured questionnaires have been framed and tested in the pilot/scoping survey. The pilot surveys were conducted in one location where border haats exist, one location where the border haat has been sanctioned; and one location where the border haat is proposed. In all three locations, visits were made, and stakeholder interviews were conducted both on the Indian and Bangladesh sides. Based on the inputs received from the field surveys, relevant changes were incorporated into the questionnaire.

Thereafter, the teams visited all the 32 locations in India and Bangladesh to collect quantitative and qualitative information. The data collection process has also captured stories from the ground about the livelihood and social implications of border haats.

A brief overview of the socio-economic profile of the select locations has been given in Annexure – I to Annexure – XVI.

In addition, four locations were surveyed in India and findings from additional locations may be found in Annexure XVII.

¹ The conversion rate considered in this study is 1 BDT=0.0117453 USD and 1 INR= 0.0130911 USD

Chapter 4

An In-depth Analysis of Border Haats

A Brief History of Border Haats and Recent Developments

During the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh H.E. Sheikh Hasina, to India in 2010, the Prime Ministers of the two countries decided to establish border haats along the border of India and Bangladesh. The first border haat was opened on July 23, 2011 in the West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya, named Kalaichar-Baliyamari haat as a pilot project (MoU 2017).

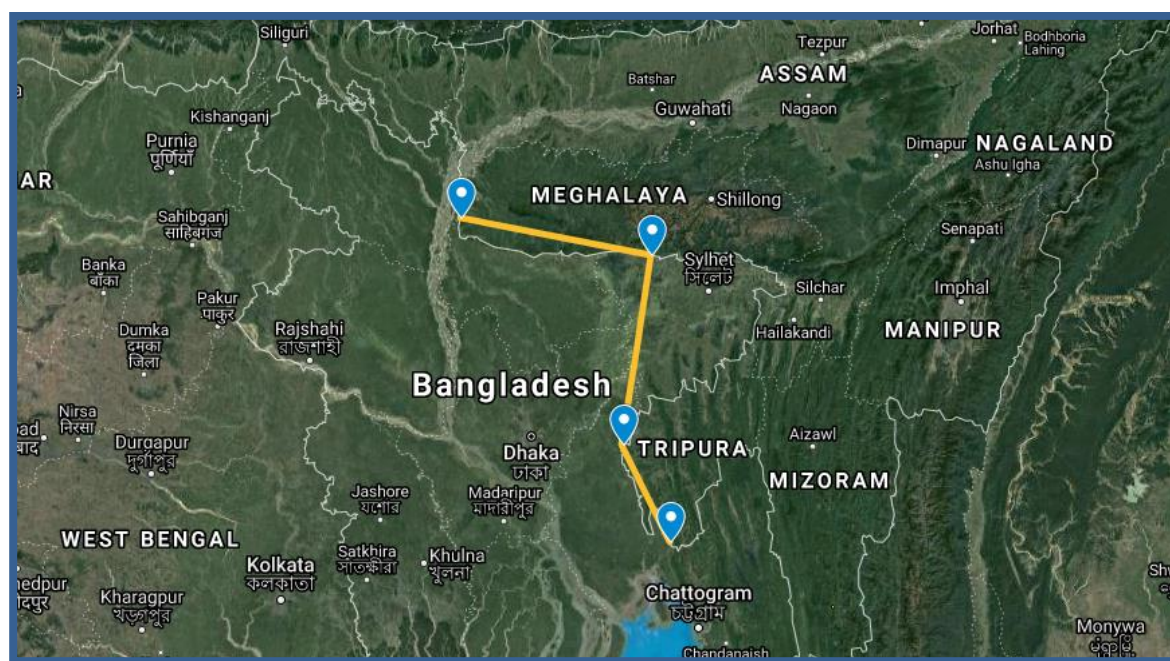
Encouraged by its promising results, three other border haats were opened between 2012 and 2015. All the haats operate once a week on a fixed day for a few hours, between 10AM and 4PM in summer and between 9:30AM and 3:00PM in winter under the surveillance of Border Security Force (of India) and Border Guard Bangladesh and are managed by the respective Border Haat Committees.

Table 9: Basic Details about the Operational Border Haats

S L No	Name of Operational Border Haat	Details
1	Kalaichar-Balaimari Border haat	Location of the Border Haat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In India- Kalaichar, West Garo Hills District, Meghalaya In Bangladesh- Baliyamari, Char Rajibpur, Kurigram District Operational since: August 2011 Day of operation of the haat: Wednesday
2	Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya Border haat	Location of the Border Haat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In India- Srinagar, Sabroom Sub-Divison, South Tripura In Bangladesh- Purba Madhugram, Chhagalnaiya, Feni District, Chittagong Division Operational since: January 2015 Day of operation of the haat: Tuesday
3	Balat-Dolura Border haat	Location of the Border Haat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In India- Balat, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya In Bangladesh- Lauwaghar, Dalora, Sunamganj Sadar, Sunamgang District Operational since: May 2012 Day of operation of the haat: Tuesday

4	Kamalasagar-Kasba Border haat	Location of the Border Haat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In India- Kamalasagar, Bishalgarh, Sepahijala District, Tripura ▪ In Bangladesh- Purba Kasba, Brahmanberia Sadar Upazila, Chittagong ▪ Operational since: June 2015 ▪ Day of operation of the haat: Sunday
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Figure 4: Location of all Four Operational Border Haats between India-Bangladesh



Source: Based on the information collected during the primary survey

All these haats are established on the zero line of the border between India and Bangladesh and locations were identified by both countries on consideration of various factors such as difficulty in accessing markets, history of pre-existence of haats, under-dependence among the inhabitants on both sides of the border and availability of suitable land.

On October 23, 2010 (MoU 2010), the MoU signed was further revised on April 08, 2017 (MoU 2017). Additionally, six new locations were sanctioned for the establishment of the haats between India and Bangladesh. The achievements of these Haats in terms of augmented trade, generation of livelihood opportunities, boosting people-to-people connectivity have also been acknowledged by the India-Bangladesh Joint Committee on Border Haats in its first meeting in Agartala, Tripura, in July 2018.

Constitution of Border Haat Management Committees, Roles and Responsibilities

For each border haat, both the countries constituted a Border Haat Management Committee (BHMC) to manage their respective areas of the designated border haat. The committee comprises of five members headed by the Additional District Magistrate/ SDM in the district having jurisdiction over the designated Border Haat of each country; it shall include one representative each from the police, customs, border security agency, Upazila Nirbah Officer (UNO) and village/union level local government.

This committee is liable to issue authorisations and maintain a list of authorised vendors/ vendees, entry/ exit of authorised vendors/vendees and look into the enforcement of other general health precautions as may be required from time to time. Recently, a representative from among the vendors has also been included in each committee from the Indian side to articulate the needs of vendors and vendees. The border haat committees of the mirror locations hold joint meetings to discuss operational issues of the haat. Although the produce/ products to be traded through the border haats are mentioned in MoU (2017) , that list can be modified/expanded based on the joint decision of the haat committees from both sides of each haat.

The security forces maintain surveillance over market operations, conduct security checks of the vendees, vendors and helpers and their goods both while entering and exiting the haat, keep track of their entry and exit, ensuring all the while that the participants at the haats adhere to the stipulated guidelines of each haat and safety norms inside the haat premises. Customs officials are liable to ensure that each vendor enters the haat with the sanctioned products.

An Overview of Various Provisions and Regulations Pertaining to Border Haats

Regulations on the Participation of Vendors and Vendees

These haats were opened to cater to the needs of the local inhabitants and generate income-earning opportunities for them in these remote locations. To ensure that outsiders do not usurp the advantages meant for the local dwellers, the MoU (2017) prescribed specific qualifications for participation as vendors and vendees at the Border Haats.

Residents of villages falling within a five-km radius from the border haat can only participate as vendors, vendees and labourers in each haat. The total number of vendors from each country in a haat should not exceed 50 to check overcrowding at the haats. But there is no stipulated guideline on the number of vendees or buyers permitted at the haat from each side. It is to be decided by the respective Border Haat Committees, again keeping

in mind that the haats do not get overcrowded. Local authorities are issued identity cards to the registered vendors, labourers, and vendees of each haat.

In practice, this guideline is strictly followed by vendors in all the operational border haats. But, in a few border haats there are relaxations for vendees, especially from the Bangladesh side.

Buyers who are eager to participate in the haats but dwell beyond 5km from that haat (also called **visitors** as they do not possess vendee card) are allowed to enter Kamalasagar - Kasba border haats from both sides; in Balat - Dolura and Kalaichar - Balamari border haats however, restrictions in this regard are visible on the Bangladesh side only. It is only in the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat that authorities from both sides have strictly restricted the entry of visitors. However, such regulations have been imposed only recently.

Earlier, India had imposed restrictions on the entry of visitors in the Kamalasagar - Kasba border haat. Still, after observing its negative impact on income opportunities of the Bangladeshi vendors at this haat, it has been withdrawn. However, in haats where visitors are allowed, authorities (Border Haat Committee) have imposed certain restrictions on their participation. These include limiting the number of visitors allowed on a haat day, mandating a nominal entry fee for them, citing the purpose of the visit is obligatory, etc. But such restrictions vary from haat to haat.

The number of vendors, labourers, vendees allowed/received by each haat (and even from each side) varies from haat to haat. It depends on restrictions imposed by the respective haat management committees, the population density within 5km of the haat concerned, on the products sold at the haat and the purchasing power of the residents. However, there are requests from vendors and vendees of each haat, except Kamalasagar border haat, to increase the limit of vendees and other visitors. This will increase the income of the vendors and facilitate the access of more people to local products. Table 10 shows the number of participants per haat. It was observed that the Kalaichar-Balamari border haat receives the least number of participants.

Table 10: Approximate Number of Participants Received by Each Border Haat		
Border haats	Total number participants from India	Total number of participants from Bangladesh
Kamalasagar-Kasba Border haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per haat exactly 1,000 persons are allowed to enter the haat, including vendors, Labourers, vendees and visitors. Vendors: 50 (out of which one is a Government shop supplying cooked food) Labourers: 250 (5 labourers for each vendor) Vendee + Visitors :700 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 3000 people visit the haat in a day. Vendors: 50 Labourers: 50-100 Vendee + Visitors: 2500-3000 (this also includes a few support service providers, they enter as vendees to sell ready-to-eat food such as tea, masala puffed rice, pickle, etc. to vendors and vendees)
Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya Border Haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 1300 participants. Vendors: 27 Labourers: 81 (3 labourers per vendor) Vendees: 1200 <p><i>(Before November 26th, 2019, 300 visitors were also allowed to enter the haat)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 400 participants (although 1300+ participants should be allowed) Vendors: 27 Labourers: (2 labourers per vendor) Vendee: Although the haat should allow 1200, it allows only 300-350 vendees. <p><i>(Earlier, about 100+ visitors were allowed)</i></p>
Balat-Dolora Border haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 400 people participate in the haat. Vendors: 25 (There are two batches of 25 vendors each and they attend the haat on alternative days. Labourers: 50 (2 labourers for each vendor) Vendee: 350 Visitors not allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 850 people participate in the haat. Vendors: 25 Labourers: 50 (2 labourers for each vendor) Vendees: About 600 Visitors: 200
Kalaichar-Baliamari Border haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 500-600 people participate in the haat. Vendor:50 Labourers: 120 (2-3 labourers for each vendor) Vendee: 350-400 Visitors are not allowed in the haat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 700 people participate in the haat. Vendor: 25 Labourers: 50 (2 labourers for each vendor) Vendee: 614 Visitors: 50+

Source: Based on information collected during the primary survey

Regulation on Trading Limit

A. Limit on Buyers

According to the MoU, the commodities sold at the border haat are exempt from Custom duties and are allowed to be exchanged in local currency/ or on a barter basis. Each individual is allowed to purchase as much is reasonable for bona fide personal or family consumption. The *upper limit of purchase by an individual on each haat day is US\$200*, which has been increased from US\$100 in 2017 when the MoU was revised.

In practice, most of the vendees were observed buying products in bulk, although generally within US\$200, as they often buy them to resell in the local markets or on behalf of other traders/whole-sellers.

This is true for all the haats except in places where strict security guards such as the BGB in Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya and BSF in Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat. In the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat the security personnel even confiscate products when they observe people buying in bulk and beyond the prescribed limit displayed in haat premises.

Unlike other haats, in this haat the Haat Committees have jointly decided *specific limits for each of the items traded in this haat* that a particular individual can buy. As there are no measuring devices to facilitate checking goods by these security officials in any haat, assessments about quantity or permissibility are based entirely on visual estimates.

B. Limit on Traders

As per guidelines of Indian Customs, each *Indian vendor is allowed to take products of valuation up to US\$1308.59 (INR 1,00,000) on each day for sale at the haat* and to ensure the observance of this rule, each vendor needs to submit supporting challans or cash memos to the Customs Officers. However, this rule is not strictly observed in a few haats, especially in the case of a few products such as betel nuts, cosmetics, etc. *It is striking that the Bangladesh Customs issue no such guideline.*

Figure 5: Limits for each of the items traded in the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat that can be bought by a particular individual- as displayed in the haat premises

বর্ডার হাটে ক্রেতাগণের সর্বাধিক ক্রয়যোগ্য দ্রব্য তালিকা		
ভারতীয় ক্রেতাগণের জন্য		
ক্রমিক নং	দ্রব্যসমূহ	পরিমাণ
1	ডাল	২০ কেজি
2	মাছ	৮ কেজি
3	শুকনো মাছ	৪ কেজি
4	পিল্লাজ	৬ কেজি
5	দড়ি (প্রাস্টিক)	৫ কেজি
6	হার্ড ওয়ার	৬ কেজি
7	কোদাল (বেলচা)	২টি
8	ফল/সবজি	প্রয়োজন মত
9	আদা	৩ কেজি
10	রসুন	৩ কেজি
বাংলাদেশের ক্রেতাগণের জন্য		
ক্রমিক নং	দ্রব্যসমূহ	পরিমাণ
1	হরলিঙ্গ	২ টি
2	চা পাতা	২ কেজি
3	বিকুট	৬ প্যাকেট
4	শাড়ি	৩ টি
5	চাউল	৫ কেজি
6	ডাল	১৫ কেজি
7	ডায়োপারস	২ টি
8	পোষাক	৩ টি
9	সিরামিক	৬ টি
10	মশলা	১ কেজি
11	কসমেটিক	প্রতি বকম ২ টি করে
12	ফল/সবজি	প্রয়োজন মত
13	অন্য দ্রব্য	প্রতি বকম ২টি/ ২কেজি

Commodities Traded in the Haats

As per the MoU (MoU 2017) the products to be traded in the haats are vegetables, fruits, spices, food items, Agri-implements, cosmetics, toiletries, garments, melamine products, aluminium products, bamboo products, plastic products, fruit juice, processed food items and any other indigenous product. However, the list can be modified based on the joint border haat's committee's decision.

Table 11: List of Commodities Sold in Each Border Haat

Border haats	Products sold by Indian vendors	Products sold by Bangladeshi vendors
Kamalasagar - Kasba Border haat	Toiletries, tea leaves, bakery, banana, spices, steel, baby food, diapers, branded chocolates, branded biscuits	Dry fish, garments, plastic, toys, agri-implements, bakery products (vermicelli, condensed milk, homemade biscuit), plastic products, melamine products
Srinagar - Chhagalnaiya Border Haat	Cosmetics, tea, diapers, baby food, stationery items, biscuit, chocolates, saree, rice, dal, ceramic, spices, food items (horlicks, milk powder, cold drinks), seasonal vegetable, banana and other seasonal fruits, stationery items, steel utensils	Plastic products, crockeries, melamine, garments, packaged dry food, agriculture tools, electronic (third country product), daal, chocolate, onion, rope (nylon and jute), electronic items, seeds of vegetables, bags, fresh fish, dry fish, onion, plastic ropes, fresh fruits, plastic products, local bakery products, mosquito nets, school bags, sunflower oil, lock and key, chains
Kalaichar - Baliamari Border Haat	Betel nut, oranges, tamarind, ginger, clothes	Processed betel nuts, garments including shawls, packet food (biscuits), fish, bed sheet
Balat - Dolura Border Haat	Local products traded in the haat are bamboo products, betel nut, betel leaf, lemon, bamboo shoots, wild vegetables, broomstick, sweet potato, firewoods, pepper, jackfruit, pineapple, mango, papaya, litchi, pomelo, guava, lemon, banana, chilly, ginger, turmeric, luffa aegyptica, cane, tomato and potato. Other products include horlicks, soap, shampoo, cosmetics, deodorants, detergents, paste, brush, diapers, etc.	Melamine products, plastic products, vegetables, beverages like fruit juice, packaged dry food like biscuits, chips, green peas, Bangladeshi readymade garments products especially jeans and t-shirt, some agricultural tools like spade, handicrafts

In practice, the products traded through each haat differ and are listed in table 11. The demand for these items is motivated by both local need and supply either due to preference, price or quality difference, or unavailability in their country. For example, there is a perceptible demand for Indian cosmetics and toiletries in Bangladesh; Bangladeshi women were observed buying these items in bulk from the haat. They consider Indian cosmetics and toiletries to be of superior quality. Even women from distant districts of Bangladesh visit these Haats to buy these products.

On the other hand, there is considerable demand for live and dry fish from Bangladesh in India due to differences in price and taste; and availability issues on the Indian side, especially in the northeastern states. Other Indian items for which there is a high demand in Bangladesh are garments, processed foods, diapers and baby foods, spices. Bangladeshi agri-implements, bakery products, melamine and plastic products are in high demand in India as they are cheaper. In light of such factors, Border Haat Committees decide the commodities be traded in the border haat.

It was observed that there is significant demand for all the commodities traded in the Border Haats. However, the Kalaichar-Baliyamari border haat is an aberration where the trade is mainly limited to locally produced betel nuts and locally grown vegetables and fruits.

Importance of Border Haats for People Residing in the Border Areas

In all the locations where border haats are established, agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the residents. The landless either work as labourers or migrate to towns and cities. Border Haats have created different avenues of income for these poor and marginalised people in employment as vendors, transporters, labourers, support service providers.

Border Haats have also created earning opportunities for vendors who buy products from the haats and sell them in their local markets, thereby earning some profit. For example, few vendees buy oranges at the rate of US\$0.07 per orange from the Kalacihar-Baliyamari border haat and sell them at US\$0.14 in the local shops.

Few positive externalities of the haats are improvement in the living standards of the inhabitants in these remote areas by augmenting their income levels and the supply of cheaper goods; reduction in out-migration; contribution towards women empowerment by generating income opportunities for them. The impact of border haats on livelihood and socio-economic elements is depicted in chapter 6.

Many women vendors and vendors participated at the border haats, which is rare due to restrictive social and religious norms for women in patriarchal societies. The role of border haats in empowering women is depicted in chapter 7.

Additionally, it has helped people source various items formally through the border haats, earlier traded informally, such as dry fish, cumin seeds, cosmetics, and toiletries. The impact of border haats in reducing informal trade is discussed in chapter 5.

These haats also serve as important connectivity and socialisation platforms, helping people meet relatives and friends across the border, especially those who neither have the means nor the literacy to undergo cumbersome passport and visa formalities that are part and parcel of foreign travel.

Chapter 5

Border Haats and their Impact on Informal Trade

Background

India and Bangladesh share a common history coupled with various geographical and cultural similarities. Moreover, there is no tariff on most commodities traded between India and Bangladesh due to the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Agreement. Unfortunately, trade and economic integration between the two countries has been limited despite these similarities and numerous trade agreements. There still exists some non-tariff barriers that hamper trade through formal channels. However, these non-tariff barriers have hardly been able to restrict consumer demands for certain goods in the two countries.

For example, restrictions on importing Hilsa from Bangladesh into India have hardly reduced consumer demand for Hilsa fish in India. Ironically, restrictions increased the demand-supply gap for Hilsa. Given that India and Bangladesh share a long and porous border, trade-in Hilsa through informal channels has flourished. It is estimated that the volume of informal trade is twice the volume of formal trade between India and Bangladesh (Islam, A. M., 2019).

Villages around the border are geographically isolated, underlined by connectivity challenges with nearby towns and cities of the concerned country. Some of the Indian villages close to the border have better connectivity with nearby markets in Bangladesh than with markets in the Indian mainland. Nunsury-II in Mizoram is a case in point. In such remote border villages' informal trade becomes vital for providing sustainable livelihood and food security to the inhabitants.

For example, a study by CUTS International (2018B) concluded that many farmers in the border areas indulge in informal trade in seeds and fertilisers since it provides them timely access to improved quality of seeds and fertilisers, which positively impacts their cropping pattern, income, and livelihood and food security. It was also noted that consumers residing in the remote border villages acquire access to a wide range of goods easily and at affordable prices through such informal channels.

Given this context, the chapter answers the following broad questions:

- What is informal trade?
- Is informal trade prevalent in and around the select locations?
- What are the commodities in which informal trade is predominant?

- What are the reasons that trigger such informal trade?
- Has the establishment of border haats been instrumental in reducing informal trade-in/around the existing locations?
- Will the border haats in the sanctioned/proposed locations succeed in reducing informal trade?

Informal Trade and its Relevance for Border Residents

Informal trade is often dubbed as illegal trade or, bootleg smuggling. However, such expressions usually have negative connotations and tend to downplay the importance and necessity of such practices. Thus, in the present report, the term informal trade has been used to broadly denote the trade that does not occur through formal channels. In this context, trade in arms, cattle, drugs, etc., which are illicit items, has been kept outside the ambit of informal trade.

During the field survey, it has been observed that various informal haats (not Border Haats) at particular locations on the India-Bangladesh border happen to thrive. In such haats, people from India and Bangladesh participate as buyers and sellers. Commodities generally sold at such markets include locally grown vegetables, spices, seasonal fruits, garments, FMCG items, electrical and electronic items, cooking gas (small cylinders fitted with an oven), cosmetics, toiletries, etc. A detailed location-wise list of items traded informally has been provided in Annexure IX. None of the items traded in such informal markets is illegal but happens to be either a necessity or a locally desired luxury commodity.

Since these informal markets are crucial to the sustenance of the locals, the inhabitants in their interest refrain from indulging in any illegal activity and risk closure of these market places. Borapansury in Mizoram is a case in point.

Case Study 1: Fading Borders: Case of Borapansury-II

Borapansury-II is a Village Council on the India-Bangladesh border in the Indian state of Mizoram. Borapansury falls under the administrative jurisdiction of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). It has around 450 households, with approximately 40 per cent of the people engaged in government services under CADC or the Govt. of Mizoram. The remaining 60 per cent of the population depends on agriculture (principally paddy cultivation) and Jhum cultivation. On the Bangladesh side of the border, Jhum cultivation is predominant and in addition to paddy, some vegetables are also grown there. People living on both sides of the border are Chakmas.

People on the two sides of the border meet each other at the informal weekly market, organised every Saturday from 06:00 AM to 09:00 PM at Borapansury-II. The market is an important source of livelihood and ensures market access and food security for more than 3,000 households living on both sides of the border (Table 12).

Table 12: List of Village Councils and Families Dependent on the Weekly Haat at Borapansury-II

List of Village Councils dependent on the informal Weekly Haat at Borapansury – II		Total number of Families Dependent on the Haat	
India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh
Borapansury-I, Borapansury-II, Bornasuri, Korpolbathora, Ugulchuri, Satapanchuri, Thurgachora	Andarmanik, Karolachuri, Boatek, Ulusuri, Perachora, Guisuri, Goihatchora, Noapara, Kalmonchora, CM Para, Dajarpur, Denuchora, Memberpara, Dulongbonya, Damaipara, Goihatchora	300 households on an average = 2,100 families	70 households on an average = 1,050 families

Source: As per the information shared by villagers

Goods that are traded at the Haat

Commodities from Bangladesh that are sold at the market– mostly vegetables (including watermelons, beans, tomatoes, brinjals, cauliflowers, cabbage), plastic items, local agri implements, mobile phones and accessories, electronic goods such as TV, fan, solar sets, plastic wares, dry fish, garments (both second hand and new), rice, and footwear.

Commodities from India that are sold at the haat- Sesame seeds, turmeric, ginger, onion, rice, packed foods items such as biscuits, beverages, chips etc., cosmetics and toiletries (soap, powder etc.).

Importance of the Haat

Villages on both sides of the border are in remote locations and lack access to big markets. On the Indian side, people in Borapansury had to depend on three markets, namely – Tlabong (130 Kms), Kamalnagar (11 Kms, but it takes more than two hours to reach by car owing to the poor condition of roads) and Thegamukh Bazar (40 Kms and it takes more than three hours to reach, again owing to the poor condition of roads). During monsoons, further deterioration of road condition compels the villagers to use boats along the Thega river near Borapansuri-II to reach Thegamukh Bazaar or Tlabong (also commonly called Demagiri).

On the Bangladesh side, the nearest market is at Borkal, situated 30-40 Kms from the border villages, but owing to poor connectivity (mainly by river), people are often required to travel on foot or by motorboats. There is also a market at Choto Harina in Bangladesh, but it is small and has low sales.

So important is the informal haat at Borapansury – II. According to the President of Borapansury Village Council, if the border point at Borapansury or Demagiri is closed for some reason, especially in the monsoon, people living there would have to suffer hunger and loss in livelihood opportunities.

Income from the Haats

On average, every vendor at the haat makes a weekly profit of USD 13.09-39.27, which is considered higher than profits earned in other markets both on the Indian and the Bangladesh sides.

Women Participation at the Haats

The haat is dominated by women both as buyers and as sellers. These women generally commute on foot to the haats and mainly carry the products they sell or buy as headloads.

Role of Border Security Force

They largely act as facilitators for these haats. However, they always maintain strict vigilance during haat days, ensuring no one goes beyond the haat and enters a village illegally. The BSF personnel refused to make any comment, and interestingly this could be explained in two ways:

- They also get their food supplies from the haats. BSF personnel were seen purchasing vegetables from the haats;
- There is a long history of friendship between the BSF and the Chakams in general. When there was political turmoil in Mizoram and the Mizo National Front (MNF) was involved in guerilla warfare with the Govt. of India, the Chakmas helped the BSF personnel by providing details of Mizo hideouts and also aided the BSF personnel's communication with the locals.

Such collusive behavior between local traders at the borders and representatives of state regulatory institutions is discernible in other parts of the world. (See Chapter 2: 'Review of literature' on informal cross-border trade.).

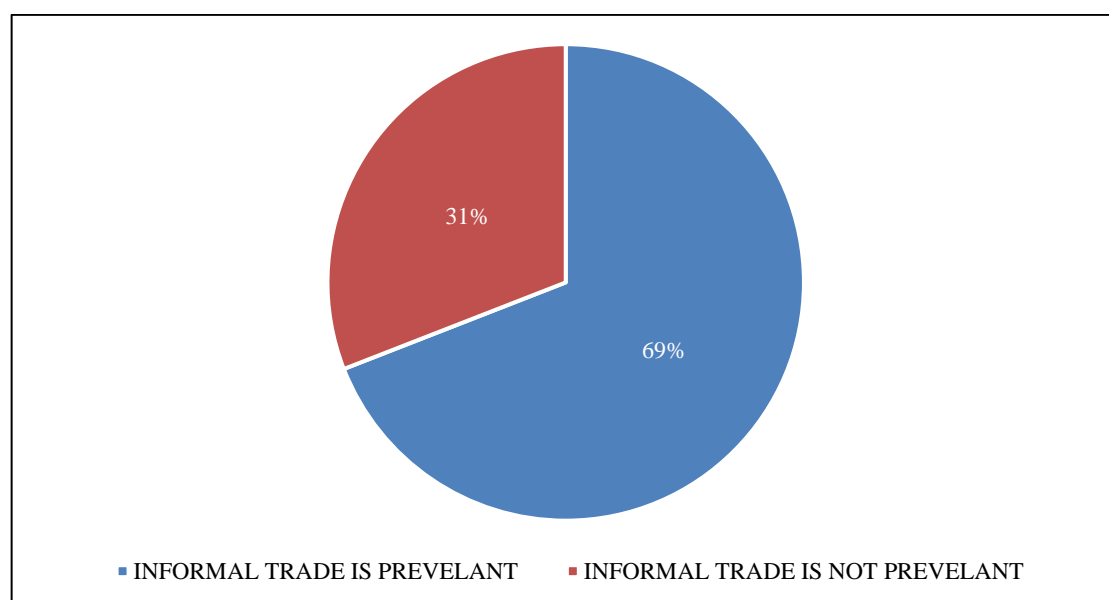
This case shows how informal cross-border trade benefits people on both sides of the border and engenders a symbiotic relationship between residents of both India and Bangladesh. Such relationships cement people-to-people connectivity and add assistance to the lives and livelihood of the local communities.

Prevalence of Informal Trade

While informal trade between India and Bangladesh has been prevalent throughout various locations along the border, it has been relatively more pronounced in some locations. One of the criteria behind the selection of locations for setting up border haats has been the prevalence of informal trade in/ nearby those locations. In addition, other factors viz. connectivity of the suggested area, availability of space for setting up border haats, mutual relationship between the residents on either side of the border etc were also considered. This has been corroborated by the feedback received from the respondents during the survey.

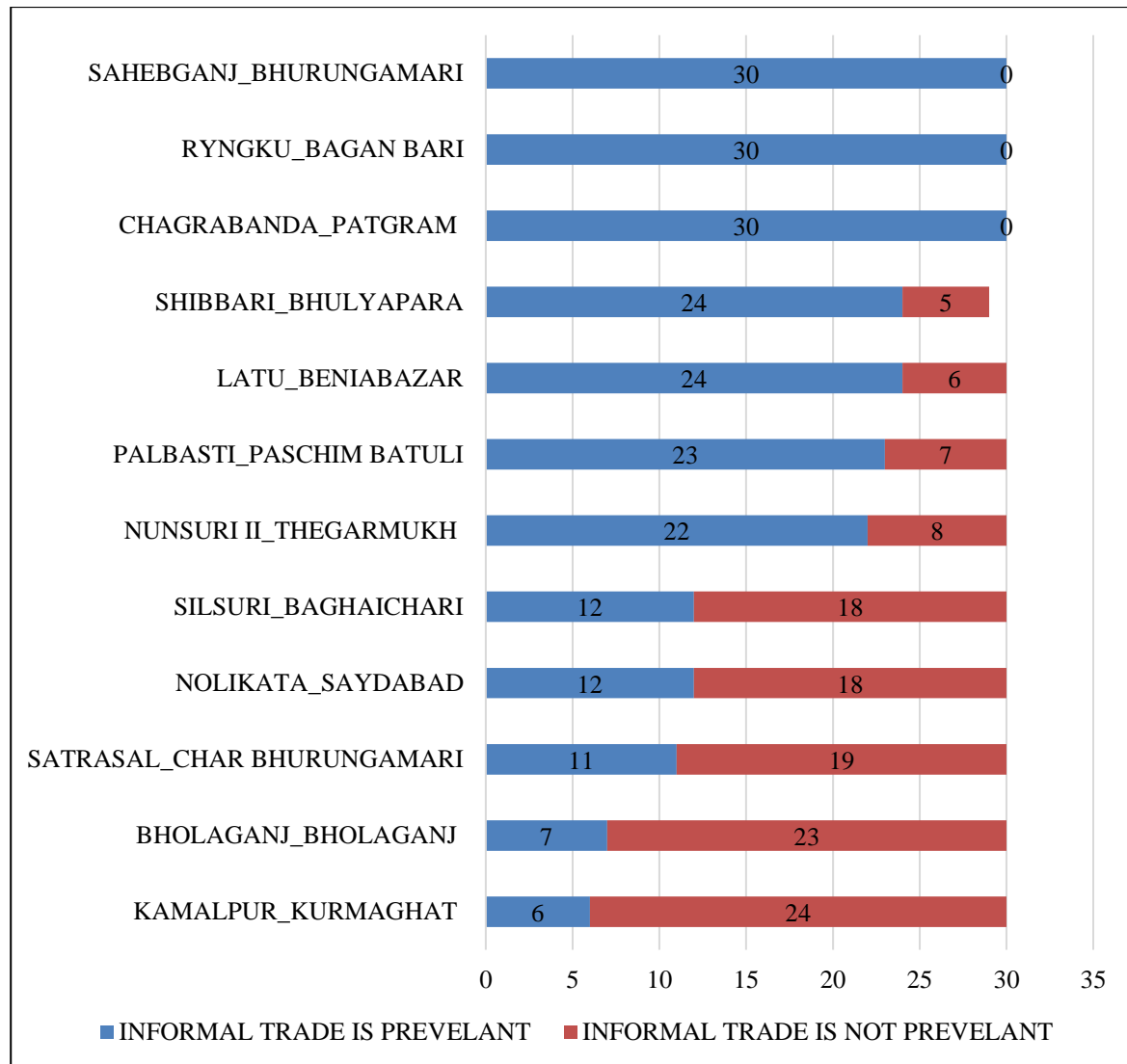
As indicated in figure 6, 69 per cent of the stakeholders interviewed in sanctioned and proposed border haat locations informed that informal trade is happening either in their village or, around villages in their vicinity.

Figure 6: Stakeholder's Perception on Predominance of Informal Trade in the Locations Already Sanctioned And Proposed for Establishing Border Haats

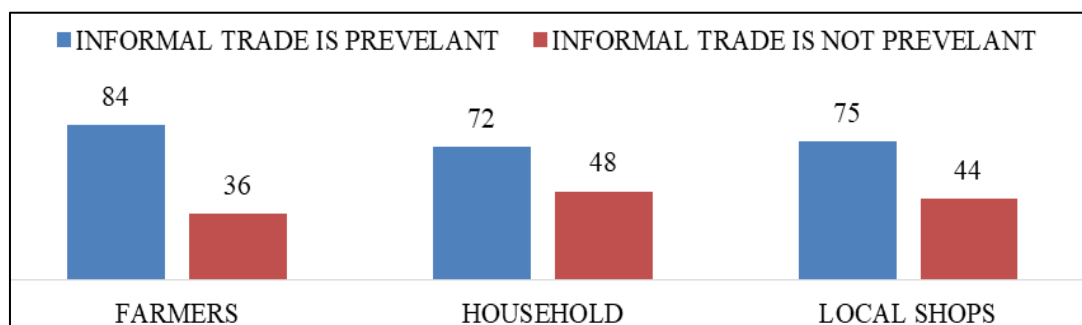


Source: Prepared by authors based on the data collected during the primary survey

Let's look into the location-specific stakeholders' perceptions of the prevalence of informal trade in sanctioned and proposed locations (as shown in Figure 7). We will observe that informal trade is predominant in most locations. But, it is particularly pronounced along the Sahebganj-Bhurungamari border, Ryngku-Baganbari border and Changrabandha-Patgram border.

Figure 7: Location-specific Stakeholders' Perception on Prevalance of Informal Trade

Source: Prepared by authors based on the data collected during primary survey

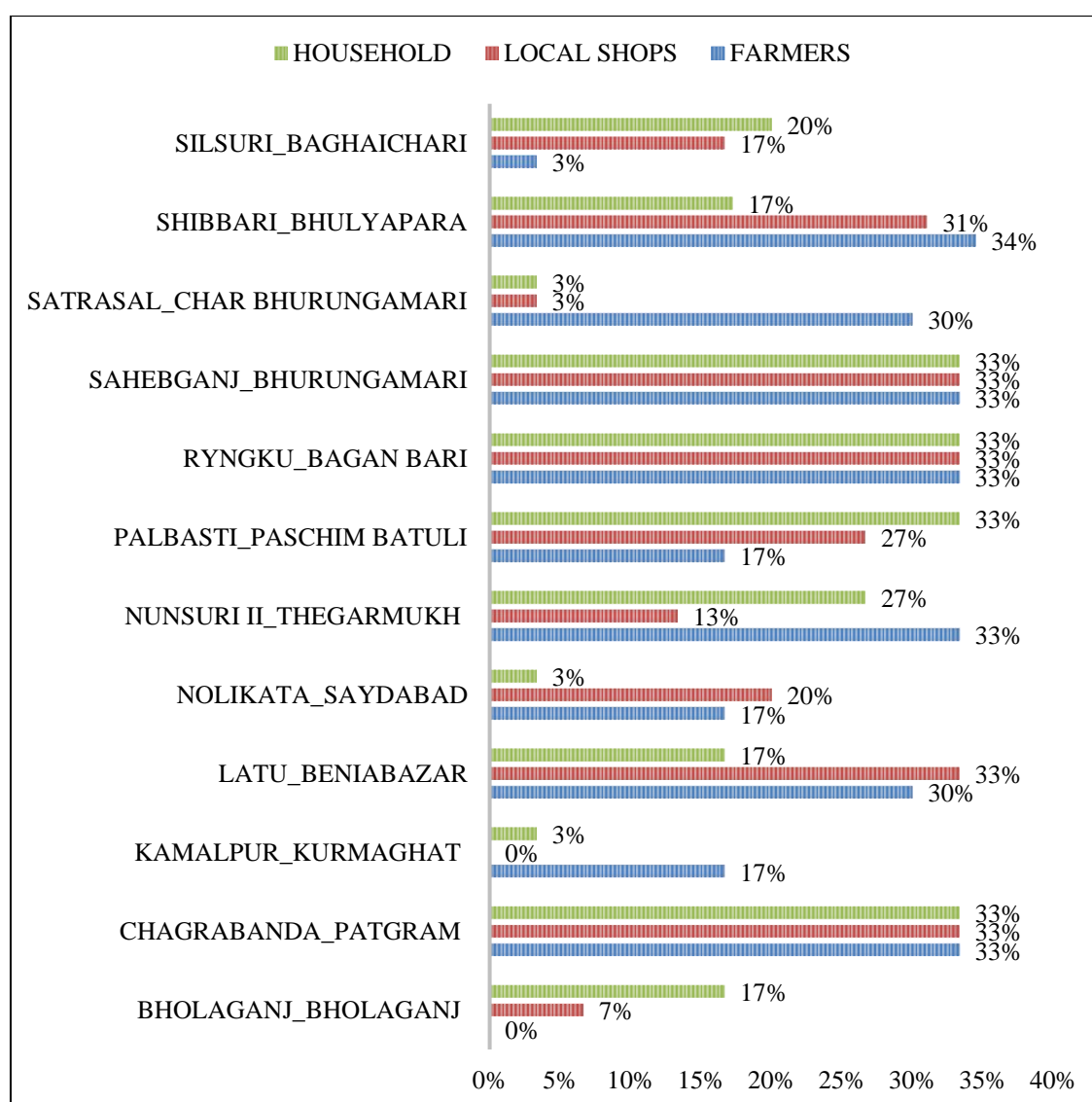
Figure 8: Awareness among Different Stakeholder Categories about Prevalance of Informal Trade among Stakeholders (in nos.)

Source: Prepared by authors based on the data collected during primary survey

As shown in Figure 8, farmers, local shops and common buyers (or, households) are aware of the prevalence of informal trade and in one way or another, they too participate in the supply chain either as sellers or as buyers.

Figure 9 presents a location-wise and stakeholder-wise extent of awareness about the prevalence of informal trade. It is interesting to note from Figure 9 that the consumers themselves are less aware of the prevalence of informal trade in some of the locations. For example, in Kamalpur-Kurmaghat, only three per cent of the households admitted the prevalence of informal trade. Similar is the case for Satrasal-Char Bhurungamari, and Nolikata-Sayedabad.

Figure 9: Location-wise and Stakeholder-wise Awareness about Prevalence of Informal Trade



Source: Prepared by authors based on the data collected during primary survey

One reason for this could be that householders are more interested in what products and prices are available to them rather than knowing how those products reach their local shops. Also, when interviewed, the householders mentioned that the products (FMCG items, plastic and melamine products, etc.) come through the formal Land Customs Stations. However, the situation is quite the opposite for Silsuri-Bagaichari, Palbasti-Paschim Batuli, and Bholaganj, which is intriguing.

Drivers of Informal Trade

The key driver for informal trade is the demand-supply gap in certain commodities leading to price differentials and tariff and/or non-tariff barriers that frustrate trade through formal channels.

Taking advantage of such differentials, some actors fill in the gaps by purchasing products from the country where the good is in excess supply (hence a lower price) and selling them at a premium to countries where demand for the commodities exists. Understanding the reasons for informal trade would require understanding the key drivers of informal trade. A detailed location-wise list of reasons for the prevalence of informal trade has been provided in Annexure XX and some of the key drivers of informal trade are mentioned below.

Prices Differentials

Table 13 lists the commodities for which there is a high demand among consumers residing on either side of the border, surveyed locations, and prices in the respective country. For example, Cumin seeds and Cardamom are two commodities for which Bangladesh has great demand. Prices of cumin seeds and cardamom in Bangladesh are US\$4.16 per kg and US\$42 per kg, respectively.²

Prices of the same commodities in India are US\$1.73 per kg and US\$14.28 per kg, respectively. Thus, a person who succeeds in procuring cumin seeds and cardamom from India and sells them in Bangladesh through informal channels will profit US\$2.43 per kg and US\$27.72 per kg. Similar is the case with Hilsa fish. The Hilsa fish is one of the most sought-after fish by Bengalis in both India and Bangladesh. The fish generally costs around US\$9.52 per kg in Bangladesh and US\$15.47 per kg in India.

Thus, it is profitable to purchase Hilsa from Bangladesh and sell in India, the accrued profit hovers over US\$3.57 per kg. If the same person had to resort to formal channels, it would have reduced the profit margin since it would have involved costs towards documentation, taxes and duties, and various clearances from the respective quarantine authorities.

² These are final prices paid by consumers and hence include all costs incurred from procuring the product to sale to the consumer.

Hence, quick processing is possible through the informal channel. Moreover, if the fish is kept in frozen storage for an extended period, its taste deteriorates.

Therefore, given the demand for commodities, their price differentials, and the high trading costs through formal channels, people are motivated to recourse to informal trade.

Table 13: Price Differential of Select Commodities those are Highly Traded Tthrough Informal Channels

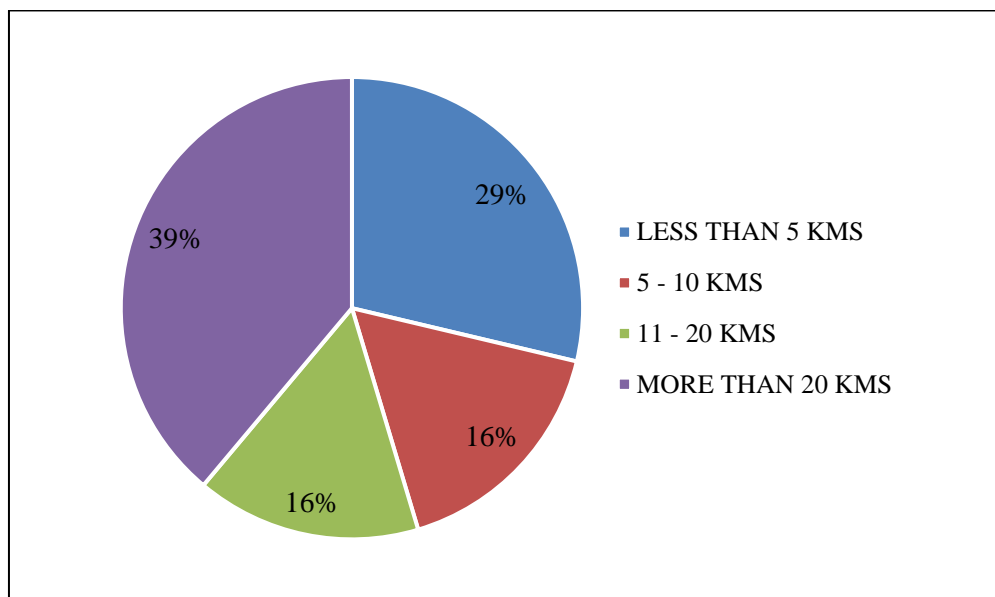
Commodities	Units	Price in Bangladesh (US\$)	Price in India (US\$)	Price differential in absolute terms (US\$)
Orange	Per Piece	0.18	0.10	0.08
Apple	Per Kg	1.43	0.71	0.72
Cumin	Per Kg	4.16	1.73	2.43
Biscuits	Per 10 Packets	2.97	1.73	1.24
Pomegranate	Per Kg	1.43	0.71	0.72
Dates	Per Kg	1.67	0.89	0.78
Cosmetics	Pper piece	3.81	1.01	2.8
Cardamom	Per Kg	42	14.28	27.72
Chocolate	Per 10 Packets	2.14	1.19	0.95
Clothing	Per Piece	2.38	1.55	0.83
Blanket	Per Piece	59	36	23
Tea	Per Kg	3.57	2.38	1.19
Mustard Oil	Per Litre	2.97	2.14	0.83
Onion	Per Kg	1.9	1.43	0.47
Potato	Per Kg	0.36	0.59	0.23
Shoes	Per Piece	5.95	3.57	2.38
Poultry Products	Per Kg	1.78	3.27	1.49
Salt	Per Kg	0.30	0.12	0.18
Soap	Per Piece	1.19	0.59	0.6
Hilsa	Per Kg	9.52	15.47	3.57
Lentil	Per Kg	1.19	0.48	0.71

Source: Data collected from field survey

Access to Market

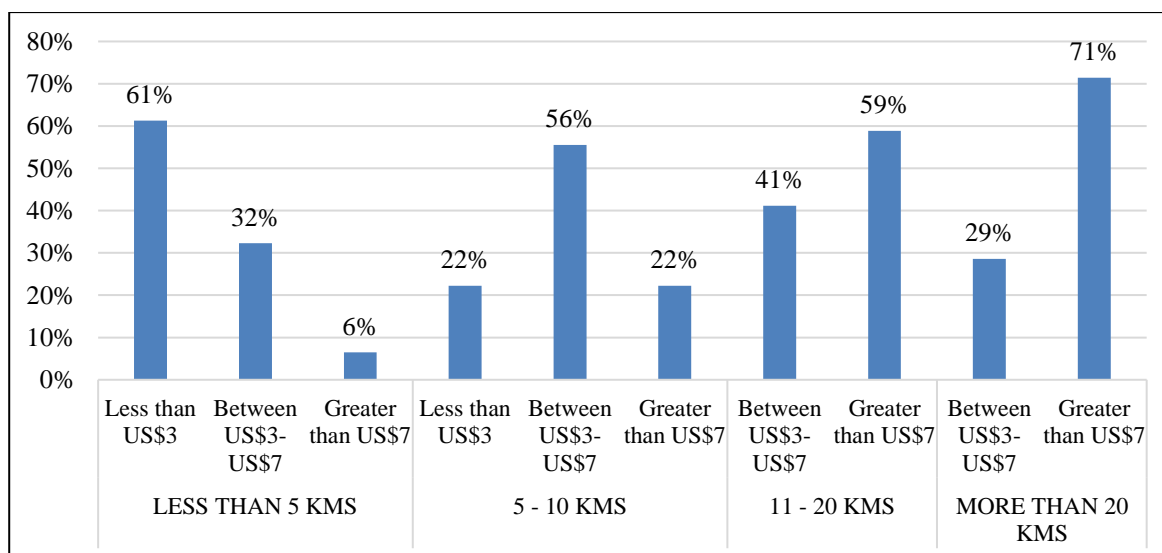
It has been pointed out earlier that the locations either sanctioned or proposed for establishing border haats are generally situated in distant areas with limited market access. This is depicted in Figure 10, which shows that more than 57 per cent of the local shops source their products from markets more than 10 km away from the villages.

Figure 10: Average Distance of Markets from which the Local Shops Source their Products



Further, the local shops also incur high transportation costs for carrying the products to their shops. This relationship between distance from major markets and related carrying costs has been presented in Figure 11. As indicated in Figure 11, when the markets from where the local shops procure the products lie within 5 km of the village, in 61 per cent of the cases, the carrying cost is less than or equal to US\$3.

However, in case the market lies beyond 20 km from the local shop premises, in 71 per cent of the cases, the carrying cost is greater than US\$7. Such high carrying costs are reflected in the prices charged from the consumers, over and above the 10-30 percent profit margin ensured by the local shops. Ultimately the consumers are the ones who pay higher prices for products, close substitutes for which are readily available at lower prices just across the border.

Figure 11: Relationship between Distance to Market and Carrying Cost Involved

Issues in Trade through Formal Routes

International trade through formal routes implies exports and imports between countries through designated ports and/or Land Customs Stations. Such trade involves paperwork and clearances from designated national authorities, including customs and quarantine officials. Formal trade is documented and it entails payment of duties and taxes (wherever applicable) as per national mandates.

Since India and Bangladesh are signatories to the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), trade does not attract any tariff. However, such arrangements do not mean that paperwork can be dispensed with. Small traders often find it challenging to participate in formal trade owing to such requirements. In addition, there are several non-tariff barriers and port restrictions that stand in the way of trade between these two countries.

Table 14: Location-wise Segregation of Carrying Costs

Locations	Less than US\$3	Between US\$3-US\$7	Greater than US\$7
Ryngku - Bagan Bari	20%	20%	60%
Bholaganj - Bholaganj	-	20%	80%
Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	-	60%	40%
Chagrabanda - Patgram	30%	20%	50%
Palbasti - Paschim Batuli	50 %	50%	-
Kamalpur - Kurmaghat	50%	50%	-
Sahebganj - Bhurungamari	-	40%	60%
Latu - Beniabazar	-	90%	10%
Silsuri - Baghaichari	-	-	100%
Nolikata - Saydabad	10%	10%	80%
Nunsuri II - Thegarmukh	-	50%	50%
Shibbari - Bhulyapara	22%	44%	33%

Source: Field Survey

For example, informal trade in paddy seeds between India-Bangladesh by the farmers of Bangladesh is common in both Sahebganj (in West Bengal, India) and Satrasal (in Assam, India) its trade through the formal channel is restricted.

Chanchal Chandra Sarkar, a fertilizer trader of Sahebganj, mentioned that Indian farmers who have their lands adjacent to the border fencing prefer Bangladeshi varieties of paddy seeds (viz. BRI 28, BRI 29) for they are cheaper. Their productivity is held to be higher than Indian varieties. The rate of Bangladeshi varieties of paddy seeds is about US\$1/-per Kg, whereas the rate of Indian varieties is about US\$4/-per Kg (approx.). Although its usage has decreased in the last three-four years, it is still significant along the border areas.

Similarly, both female and male farmers in Satrasal mentioned their preference towards Bangladeshi paddy seeds as they are cheaper, highly productive, less time-consuming, and tastier. Prabhati Das, a farmer from Satrasal, mentioned that she hopes that through border haats they will formally buy these seeds.

Another case in point is that of Bholaganj. Bholaganj has a formal land customs station, but the only limestone goes through it to Bangladesh from India. Nothing comes from Bangladesh. As a result, local shops on the Indian side have to procure goods from Cherapunji or Shillong, thereby incurring a high carrying cost.

As shown in Table 14, almost 80 percent of the local shops incur a cost greater than US\$7 per kg as a transportation charge. Since prices at the consumer's end increase after including the transportation cost, consumers demand close substitutes of the Indian products (mainly processed food items and fish) from Bangladesh. This, in turn, triggers informal trade in the area.

Poor Connectivity

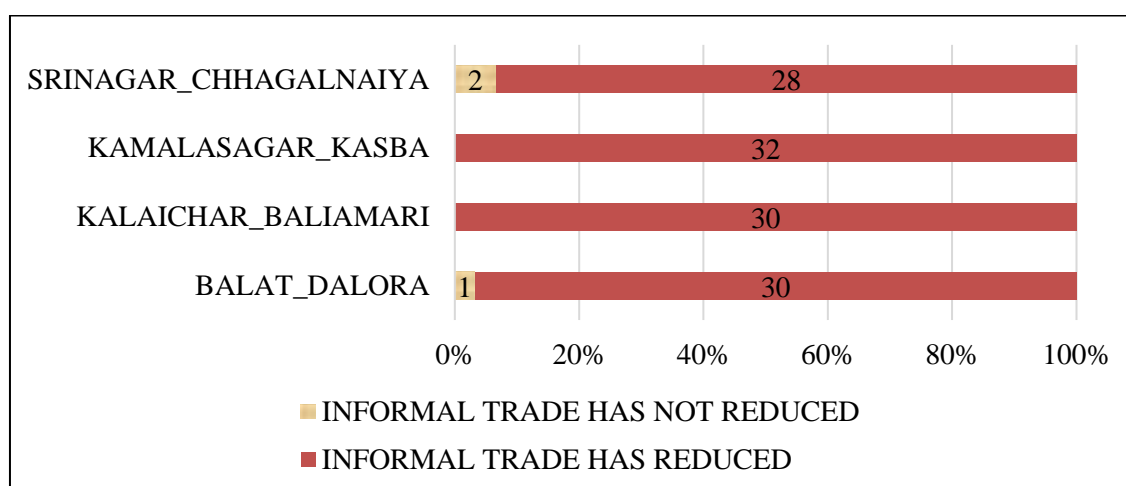
Interestingly, Table 14 also indicates the degree of geographical remoteness faced by local shops in the select locations. For example, all local shops in Silsuri-Baghaichari; and 80 percent of the local shops in Nolikata-Saydabad incurred a carrying cost of more than US\$7 towards transportation of the goods. Underdeveloped transport networks and poor quality roads have been the two key reasons for such high carrying costs. Another case is Nunsuri, where the roads connecting Nunsuri to Aizawl are not motorable in the rainy season.

Whether Border Haats have Reduced Informal Trade in/Around the Location where these are Operational?

A study conducted by CUTS International (2019) on the existing border haats found that there has been a significant reduction in informal trade in and around the operational border haats. The survey was undertaken in 2019-20 also yielded similar findings.

As shown in Figures 12, 117 out of 120 respondents interviewed from the operational border haats, agreed that informal trade had decreased significantly. However, only three respondents mentioned that some informal trade is still happening at Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya and Balat-Dolora border haats, but the quantum of such trade is insignificant.

Figure 12: Stakeholders' Perception on Impact of Border Haat on Informal Trade



Respondents from the existing border haats opined that border haats, alongside strict border security and fencing, have played an important role in reducing informal trade.

The majority of the respondents believed that border haats played a crucial role in reducing informal trade in two ways. Firstly, it created local employment opportunities, which provided an additional source of income to the local people. Secondly, the border haats allowed trade in earlier commodities traded through informal channels, discouraging traders from trading through uncertain and often risky informal channels (Annexure XXI).

Table 15 provides information about the earlier traded commodities but are presently traded through the border haats. According to the key informants in the existing border haats, allowing trading through border haats has encouraged erstwhile informal traders to abandon informal channels in favour of border haats.

Table 15: Commodities Earlier Traded Informally but Presently Traded through Border Haats		
Operational Border Haats	India to Bangladesh	Bangladesh to India
Balat - Dalora	Onion, Diaper, Horlicks, Garments, Oranges, Ginger and Turmeric	Dry Fish and Poultry Products, Betel Nut, Betel Leaf, Tomato, Sweet Potato, Spices - Black Pepper, Chilly, Jackfruit, Lemon, Pineapple, Mango, Papaya, Litchi, Pomelo, Guava, Banana, Other Products Include Horlicks, Soap, Shampoo, Cosmetics, Deodorants, Detergents, Paste, Brush, Diapers Etc.
Kalaichar - Balamari	Garments, Ginger, Betel nuts, Orange	Processed and Dried Betel nut
Kamalasagar - Kasba	Garments, Onion, Cosmetics and Toiletries	Garments (Jamdani Saree), Dry Fish
Srinagar - Chhagalnaiya	Garments, Onion, Cosmetics, Sugar, Saree, Vegetables, Spices	Fish

Data Source: Field Survey

It is important to understand that previously, illegal coal mining (or, rat hole mining) was widely prevalent in Meghalaya. After the recent decision of the Government of India to ban rat hole mining, several people (especially the economically vulnerable sections of the rural poor) have been rendered jobless in Meghalaya. Under such circumstances, border haats could provide livelihood and income opportunities to these sections in Meghalaya.

From the buyers' perspective, border haats are a blessing for them as they enable the local people to purchase goods available at lower prices in Bangladesh. As a result, even the buyers avoid purchasing commodities through informal channels at higher prices. This acts as an added disincentive for informal trade.

Whether and How the Border Haats will Reduce Informal Trade in the Sanctioned and Proposed Locations?

Given the success of the operational border haats in reducing informal trade, one may be optimistic about the success of the border haats at the sanctioned and proposed locations. However, this would hinge on a prudent identification of the commodities to be traded through the border haats, keeping in mind the complementarities in demand and supply of these commodities in the region.

Annexure XXII provides a list of commodities to be included for trading through border haats in the sanctioned and proposed locations. In addition to Annexure XXII, commodities mentioned in Table 15 would also have to be considered while finalising the list of commodities to be traded through the sanctioned and proposed border haats. It is important to note here that these commodities have been selected in consultation with all the involved stakeholders at the grassroots level.

A close look at the country-wise demand for commodities, presented in Annexure XXII, reveals that Bangladesh demands more commodities than India. Such imbalance has resulted in Indian vendors making more profit compared to Bangladeshi vendors at the border haats alongside reduced participation from Bangladeshi vendors and limited participation of vendees from the Indian side in some of the existing border haats like Kamalasagar-Kasba and Kalaichar-Baliamari.

Such imbalances could have far-reaching implications for the future sustainability of the border haats and need to be addressed by expanding the list of items to be traded through the border haats; and encouraging more Indian consumers to participate *border haats*.

Expanding the List of Items to be Traded Through the Border Haats

Expanding the list of items to be traded through the border haats would require amendments regarding certain product-specific restrictions. For example, it allows trade in fresh fish (especially Hilsa), poultry products and seeds. The previous study by CUTS International (2018) recommended including such items demanded by the residents on the two sides of the border.

One of the major concerns expressed by the BSF personnel was that people might smuggle drugs through fresh fish and use poultry. There is a need to equip the BSF personnel with appropriate scanners and tools to stop illicit goods like drugs and arms.

In addition, owing to various bio-safety concerns, trade in agricultural seeds without appropriate certification is restricted. In this context, as found during the field survey, farmers residing along the border villages have been using traditional seeds, especially paddy seeds (either from India or from Bangladesh). No major bio-hazard has taken place (barring the case of the wheat blast). Further, it needs to be remembered that even if the border haat restricts trade in seeds, the same will continue to occur via informal channels, whereby farmers will have to pay higher prices for the seeds.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

India and Bangladesh once shared a common history and many similarities in food habits, tastes and preferences. Before partition, what we now call informal trade was a persistent feature of their lives. The impact of this informal trade is manifold. While on the one hand, it leads to a loss in government revenue. On the other hand, it generates livelihood for the rural population residing in the border areas and ensures food security in some instances.

Thus, while it is important to formalise informal trade, it is equally significant to consider the role that informal trade plays in the sustainable livelihood of people living in rural and border areas - farmers, local traders, dealers and others who either practice cultivation, trade or are involved in the supply chain of the informally traded agricultural inputs.

Farmers in the border areas indulge in informal trade in seeds and fertilisers since it provides them timely access to better quality seeds and fertiliser, which is an essential part of their cropping pattern, income, and livelihood and food security. If goods traded through informal channels are available at a lower price, consumers will be inclined to purchase them.

The border haats have been instrumental in arresting and reducing informal trade in those areas by generating livelihood opportunities and facilitating the trade of goods through border haats that were earlier traded through informal channels.

In this regard, governments in both countries should take a long-term view of developing these border haats as major trading hubs by equipping them with necessary quarantine facilities and establish more border haats, rather than restricting trade through them.

Chapter 6

Socio-Economic Impact of Border Haats

Introduction

Border haats have played an important role in generating additional income and livelihood opportunities for the rural communities living in remote villages along the India-Bangladesh border, especially in North East India. The increased income of the involved stakeholders after establishing the border haats has been documented in CUTS's previous study.

Given this background, the present study tried to address the following questions.

- How have the incomes of the involved stakeholders from haat changed over time? What are the factors that have affected their incomes?
- What are the challenges that the stakeholders are presently facing?
- What is the socio-economic impact of border haats on residents and how does it vary across stakeholders and locations?
- How have border haats strengthened people-to-people connectivity?
- How satisfied are the stakeholders with the haat? What are the factors motivating their satisfaction levels?
- How are border haats expected to benefit residents in sanctioned and proposed locations?
- What are the expectations of the residents from border haats in sanctioned and proposed locations?

Impact of Border Haats

Impact of Border Haats on the Income of Different Stakeholders

In general, all the stakeholders reported an increase in their incomes after establishing the border haats. However, the incomes of the stakeholders from the haats have changed over time.

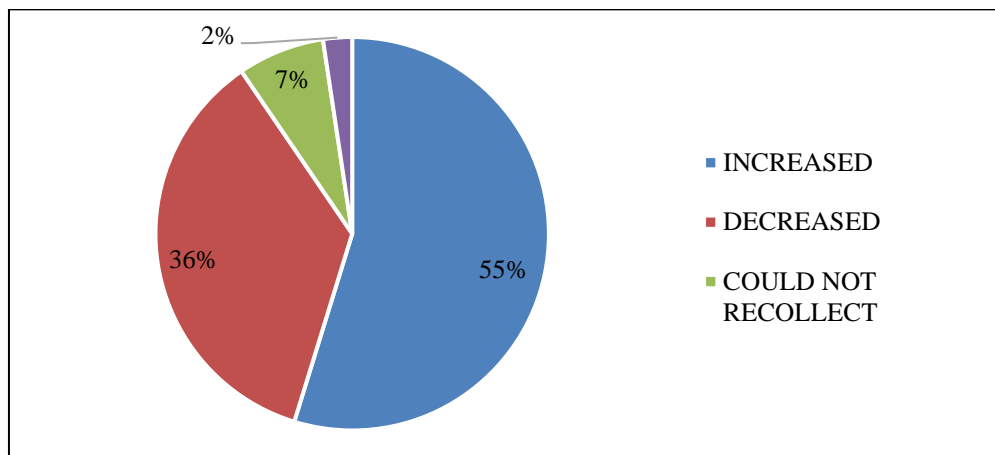
A detailed stakeholder-wise and location-wise impact analysis is presented below:

Vendors

- A) *Incomes of most vendors from border haats have increased over the last few years, but the increase is neither uniform across all the existing border haats nor the vendors*

A majority (55 percent) of the vendors interviewed mentioned that their incomes have increased over the last few years (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Vendor's Response on Change in Income from Border Haat Over Last Few Years



Source: Prepared by authors based on data collected during field survey

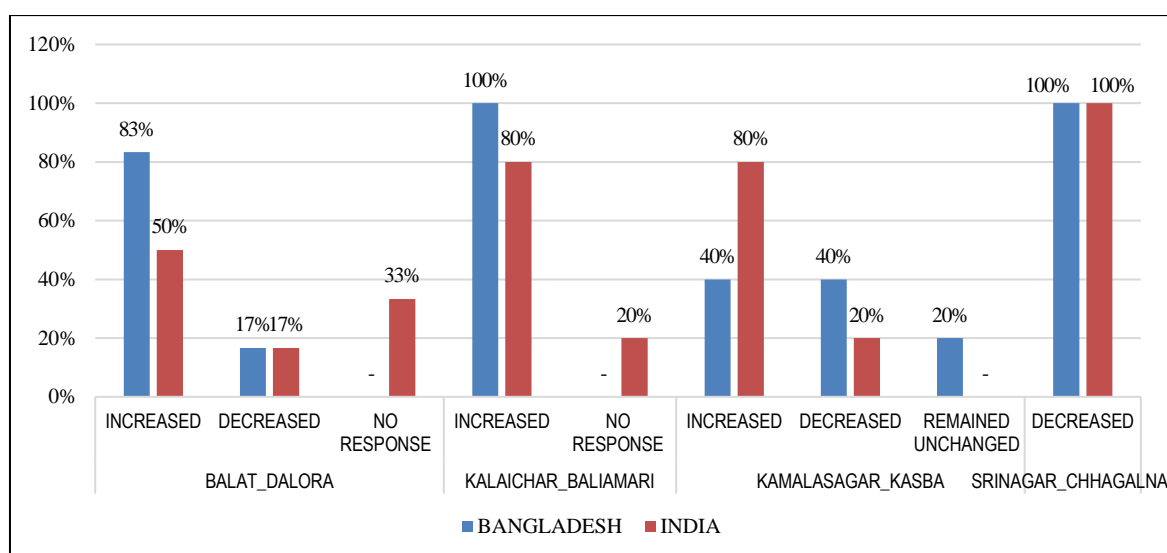
However, 36 percent of the vendors also mentioned that they had experienced a decrease in their incomes. This could be partly attributed to a decline in the number of visitors to the border haats owing to *strict compliance of the 5 km restriction and partly due to strict enforcement of rules and regulations by the BSF and BGB personnel, who do not allow buyers to purchase commodities more than the officially permitted value, i.e. US\$200 per person, as per the MoU signed between the governments of India and Bangladesh.*

A border haat-wise and country-wise analysis of their responses (Figure 14) provide some interesting insights into how vendors across existing border haats perceive changes in their incomes. Figures 13 and 14 underline that while, in general, there has been an increase in income from border haats, the increase in income has not been uniform across the border haats. While most vendors in Balat-Dolora border haat, Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat, and Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat have reported an increase in income, both Indian and Bangladeshi vendors have reported a decrease in border haat income at Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat over the years.

It can also be observed that while a majority of the Bangladeshi vendors at Balat-Dolora and Kalaichar-Baliamari border haats have reported an increase in income compared to their Indian counterparts, the trend reversed in the case of Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat. At Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat only 40 percent of the Bangladeshi vendors have reported an increase in border haat incomes compared to the 80 percent of the Indian vendors.

Various factors affect the income of the vendors. The prime factors are- level of demand for the product that the vendor is selling; many vendors selling the same product in the haat; purchasing power of the vendees attending that haat; several vendees visiting or allowed to visit the haat; how strict are BGB and BSF in terms of regulations and whether tourists or vendees residing beyond 5 km are allowed in the haat or not. These factors vary from haat to haat and across vendors.

Figure 14: Border Haat Wise Response of Bangladeshi and Indian Vendors on Change in Income



For example, one prime reason behind the decrease in income of Bangladeshi vendors in the Kamalasagar- Kasba border haat and income of both Bangladeshi and Indian vendors in Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya is the reduction in the number of tourists and vendees permitted. Moreover, as the vendors in Bangladesh informed the BSF and BGB disallow purchase in large quantities, even for personal consumption. This explains why the incomes of the vendors have not increased, despite a rise in the amount spent by buyers.

However, Bangladeshi vendors selling fish, cosmetics, plastic products and bakery products have experienced an increase in income as there is a massive demand for these products in India. Similarly, Indian vendors selling popular products such as spices, FMCG products have experienced an increase in income. The aberration is only in the case of the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat.

Moreover, in a few haats, the number of the vendor has been increased to 50³ in the recent past, so profit of the previous vendors selling similar products got distributed among the old and new vendors selling similar products. The specific factors are mentioned in Annexure XXIII.

³ No of vendors in each haat is mentioned in table 4.2

It is important to mention here that a few vendors for whom it is no longer profitable have stopped putting up their stalls in the haat, especially in the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat. Also, a few have started taking family members instead of hiring labourers as a cost-cutting measure to make their business viable. The following case study (No 2) highlights a Bangladeshi vendor from Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat whose income from haat has decreased over time.

**Case Study 2: Declining Profits of Bangladeshi Vendors at
Kasba-Kamalasagar Border Haat**

A Bangladeshi garment vendor Mr.Iqbal Hosen in the Kasba-Kamalasagar border haat mentioned that he is pessimistic about continuing his business in the haat due to declining profit. There is hardly any demand for Bangladeshi products except for dry fish, bakery products and Jamdani Saree.

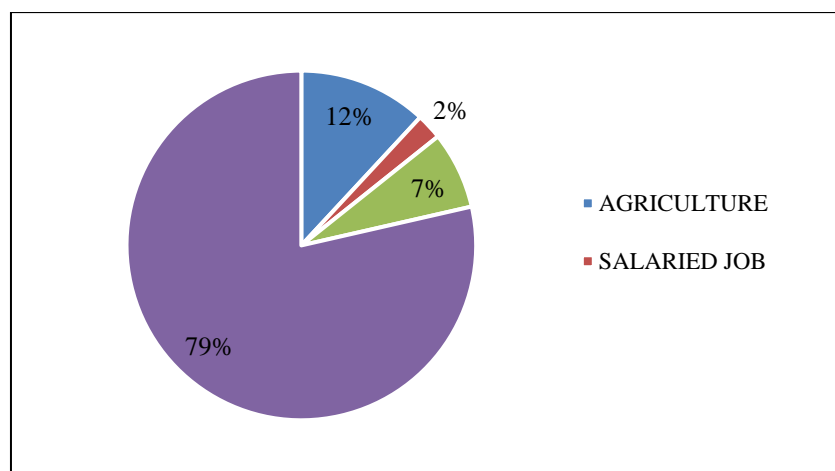
Moreover, the low purchasing power of the local Indian residents, a strict limit on the number of entries from the Indian side (total 1000 persons allowed including vendor, labourers, vendee and visitors) and a strict prohibition on bulk buying by Indian officials have added to the apprehensions of Bangladeshi vendors.

A few Bangladeshi vendors have stopped putting up their stalls in the haat. For them per haat day sale is just about US\$3-4. The business in this haat is mostly in favor of Indian vendors for several reasons: there is a considerable demand for Indian goods in Bangladesh; purchasing power of most of the Bangladeshi residents is high (due to remittance earning); bulk buying is allowed by Bangladeshi officials, and there is no limit on the number of vendees attending the haat from the Bangladesh side. Many people also visit the haat from other districts for business gains.

The Bangladeshi vendors in that haat requested appropriate measures to increase the number of customers to make their businesses profitable; otherwise, the haat will not remain a lucrative source of business for them.

B) While the total average annual income of vendors has increased significantly between 2016 and 2019, change in the share of haat and non-haat income varies across haats and countries

It was observed that the primary source of income of the registered vendors is either in the capacity of traders (79 per cent) or by their involvement in agricultural activity (12 per cent). For a few, the border haat is the source of income. Figure 15 shows the major sources of the incomes of the vendors interviewed.

Figure 15: Primary Source of Income of Registered Vendors at the Border Haat**Table 16: A Comparative Analysis of Change in Total Average Annual Income of Vendors and Share of Haat and Non-haat Activities**

Name of the Operational Border Haat	Country	Total Average Annual Income (In US\$)		Percentage of Total Income from Haat Activities (In US\$)		Percentage of Total Income from Non-haat Activities (In US\$)	
		2019	2016	2019	2016	2019	2016
Balat - Dalora	India	US\$3,273	US\$284	43%	68%	57%	32%
	Bangladesh	US\$1,719	US\$217	55%	37%	45%	63%
Kalaichar - Balimari	India	US\$2,435	US\$201	50%	72%	50%	28%
	Bangladesh	US\$4,769	US\$200	56%	43%	44%	57%
Kamalasagar - Kasba	India	US\$1,288	US\$301	45%	72%	55%	28%
	Bangladesh	US\$1,268	US\$189	43%	26%	57%	74%
Srinagar - Chhagalnaiya	India	US\$2,432	US\$266	53%	47%	47%	53%
	Bangladesh	US\$1,710	US\$206	62%	38%	38%	77%

Table 16 provides a comparative analysis of the average annual income of vendors and the shares of haat and non-haat incomes in the total income. The analysis reveals that while there has been a significant increase in the total average annual income of vendors in 2019 compared to 2016 (Refer to the previous study on Border haats by CUTS International in 2016), the changes in the composition of the average annual income have varied across haats and country.

In Dalora (Bangladesh), Baliamari (Bangladesh), Srinagar (India) and Chaggalnaiya (Bangladesh) the share of haat income in the annual income of vendors has increased whereas in Balat (India), Kamalasagar (India), Kasba (Bangladesh) and Kalaichar (India)

the share of non-haat income in annual income of vendors has increased (In Table 16, the shares that have increased are marked in red).

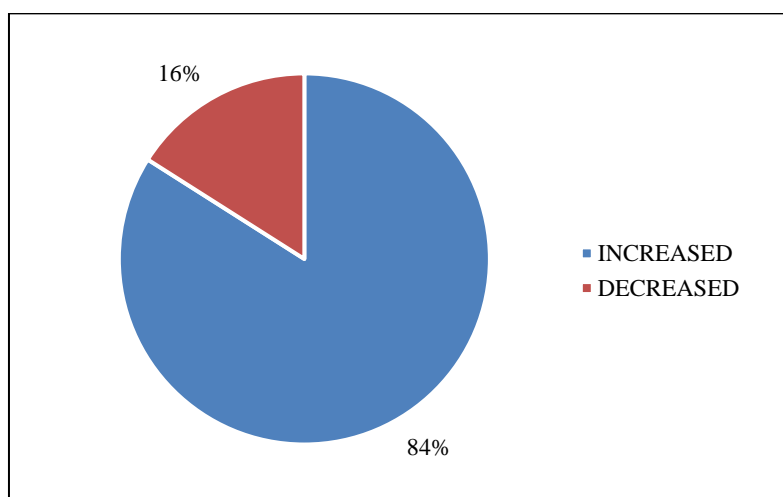
If we compare the Figure 14 and Table 16, we will observe that the finding of figure 14 does not corroborate all the findings of table 16. For example, Table 16 reflects that shares of haat income of the vendors of Srinagar-Chaggaalnaiya border have increased, whereas Figure 14 shows all the vendors have reported a decrease in their haat income over the last few years. The prime reason could be- the vendors interviewed in 2016 are different from the vendors interviewed in 2019 as the list of vendors in both India and Bangladesh has been revised after 2016.

Labourers

A) *Income of the majority of the labourers from border haats has increased in last few years*

84 percent of the labourers have mentioned that their incomes have increased due to an overall increase in income of most of the vendors at the border haats (Figure 16). Some labourers also earn additional incomes by carrying the goods bought by vendors' shops to exit gates or by selling some goods they manage to bring to the haat along with the vendors.

Figure 16: Labourer's Response on Change in Income from Border Haat Over Last Few Years



However, four labourers (i.e. 16 percent) have mentioned that their incomes have declined due to a greater number of labourers participating at the haats or shrinking of profit of vendors for whom they work. *Border haats provide an additional source of income for the labourers and haat day income is higher than non-haat day income.*

On average, the labourers are getting additional income support of 17-41 per cent (as indicated in third column of Table 18) by taking part in the haat activities. The activities

include carrying goods on headloads, guarding vendors' shops, pulling carts and working as helpers to the vendor. On the non-haat days, the labourers have other engagements: working as drivers of passenger cars, working as agricultural and non-agricultural workers or running small shops. The per day haat income is higher than the non-haat day's income (Table 17).

An Indian labourer, on an average, earns US\$7 by working as a labourer in the border haats, whereas he earns US\$3 per day on non-haat days. Similarly, a Bangladeshi labourer earns US\$9 by working in the haats and earns US\$5 on a non-haat day. But as haat operates only once a week annual non-haat incomes of labourers are higher than haat incomes.

The share of haat income of labourers in their annual income has increased

Table 17: Labourers: Country-Wise Segregation of Average Per Day Income from Haat and Non-haat Activity					
Country	Average per day income from haat (US\$)	Average per day income from non-haat work (US\$)	Average annual income (US\$)	Average annual income from haat (US\$)	Average annual income from non-haat work (US\$)
Bangladesh	9	5	1146	354	793
India	7	3	832	284	547
Average across both countries	8	4	983	318	665

Table 18 indicates that the share of laborers' annual haat income has increased in all the locations except Balat and Kamlasagar. This could be because of an increase in the wage rate on haat days compared to non-haat days. (The increased shares are highlighted in yellow and grey for haat e and non-haat incomes, respectively.) The average annual incomes of labourers and the average annual income of laborers from haat and non-haat activities/sources in 2019 are mentioned in annexure XXIV.

Table 18: A Comparative Analysis of Change in Share of Haat and Non-haat income of Labourers between 2016 and 2019

Name of the Operational Border Haat	Country	Percentage of Total Income from Haat Activities (In US\$)		Percentage of Total Income from Non-haat Activities (In US\$)	
		2019	2016	2019	2016
Balat -Dalora	Bangladesh	41%	20%	59%	80%
	India	31%	36%	69%	64%
Kalaichar-Balimari	Bangladesh	39%	27%	61%	73%
	India	35%	31%	65%	69%
Kamalasagar-Kasba	Bangladesh	17%	19%	83%	81%
	India	33%	30%	67%	70%
Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya	Bangladesh	32%	16%	68%	84%
	India	38%	36%	62%	64%

Case Study 3: Positive Externalities of Border Haats

Shahidul Islam, a resident of East Bathania, Bangladesh, is a 19-year-old youth studying intermediate. Hailing from a low-income family with aged parents, he struggled to maintain his family and educational expenses. His siblings, after their marriage, have also detached themselves from the family.

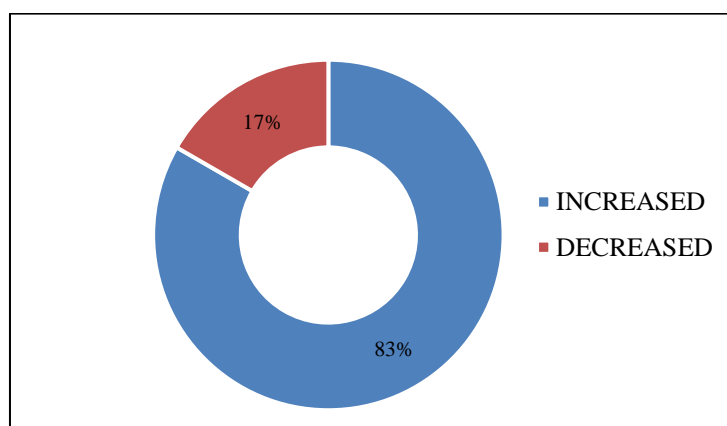
Therefore, he was searching for a part-time job and in 2018 he started working as a labourer at the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat with his neighbour who is a vendor at the same haat. As a helper, he supports the vendor in carrying goods to the haat premises and selling them and gets around US\$12-18 on each haat day. As a result, he earns about US\$59-71 every month, which helps him cope with his educational expenses and support his parents. Enthused by his experience, he is keen to apply for vendors shortly.

Transporters**A) Incomes of the transporters from haat have increased in the last two years**

83 per cent of the transporters (i.e. 20) who were associated regularly with the haat activities mentioned that their incomes have increased in the last two years due to an increase in overall business at the haats.

Few transporters, operating on the Bangladesh side of the Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat mentioned that owing to intensive checks by BGB both vendors and vendees have reduced that amount of sale and purchase, respectively. This has led to a decline in the overall business at the haat and a corresponding decline in the overall income of transporters from the haat.

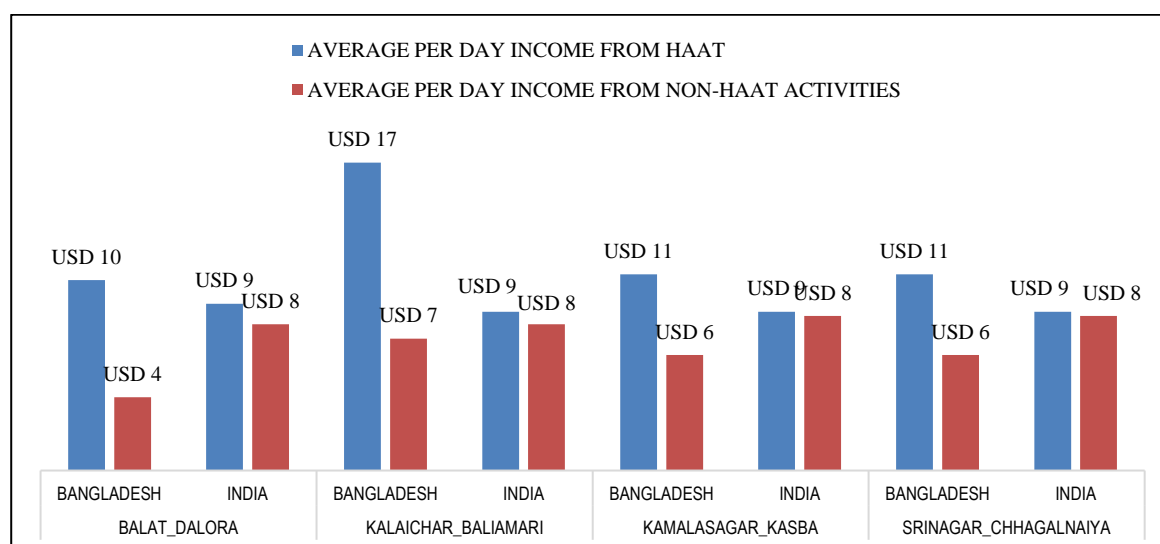
Figure 17: Transporter's Response on Change in Income from Border Haat over Last Few Years



B) The average per day income on the haat days is higher than the average per day income on non-haat days

The average per day income from haats has been found to be higher than the average per day non-haat income of the transporters (Figure 18) both for India and Bangladesh. Comparing the data across the two countries reveals that the average per day income of the Bangladeshi transporters is higher than that of their Indian counterparts. Indirectly it means that the number of participants from Bangladesh in the haat is higher compared to India.

Figure 18: Comparison of Average Per Day Income From Haat and Non-haat Income of the Transporters



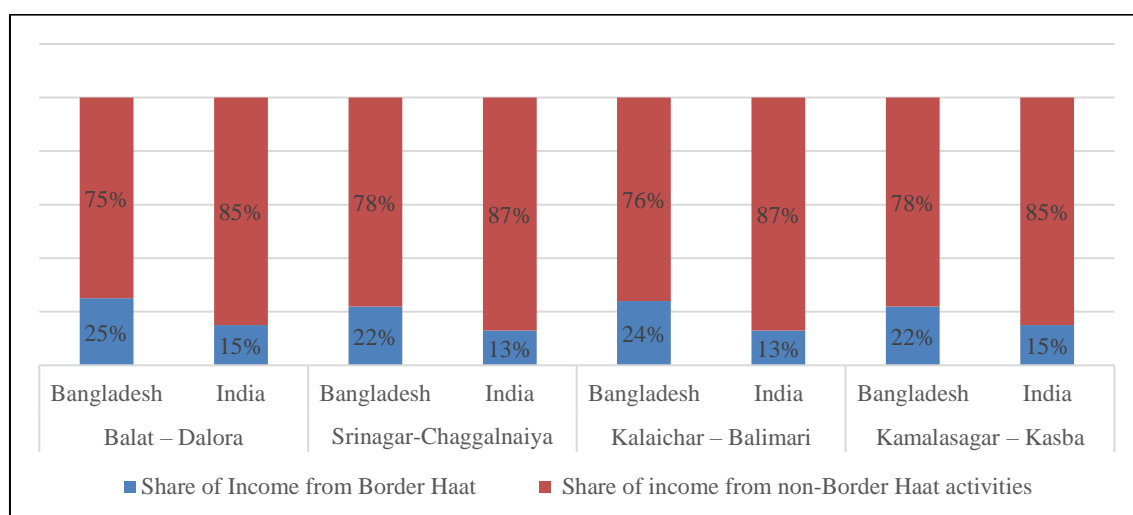
An important point to note is the difference in haat and non-haat incomes of transporters in Baliamari, Bangladesh. While their per day haat income is US\$17, it is US\$7 on non-haat days. This substantiates the response from one of the local residents at Rajibpur (Baliamari) – “During Haat days the overall picture of the area changes drastically. Everyone is busy going to the haat; the transporters earn a handsome amount on the haat days. During other days, the area becomes silent with a limited number of people visiting towns for business.”

In addition, the per day haat income for transporter in Baliamari is highest compared to transporters operating in other border haats. The main reason for this is the poor transport connectivity on the Bangladesh side of the border haat. People had to travel by auto and boats to reach the place and in general, the cost of transportation is higher, resulting in higher incomes for the transporters.

C) The border haats provide an additional source of income to the transporters

On average, the haats provide an additional 21-25 per cent income support for the Bangladeshi transporters. The Indian and Bangladeshi transporters get additional income support of 13-15 per cent and 22-25 per cent, respectively. The average annual income and average annual income of transporters from haat and non-haat activities are mentioned in annexure XXV.

Figure 19: Share of Haat and Non-Haat Income in Average Annual Income of Transporters



Support Service Providers

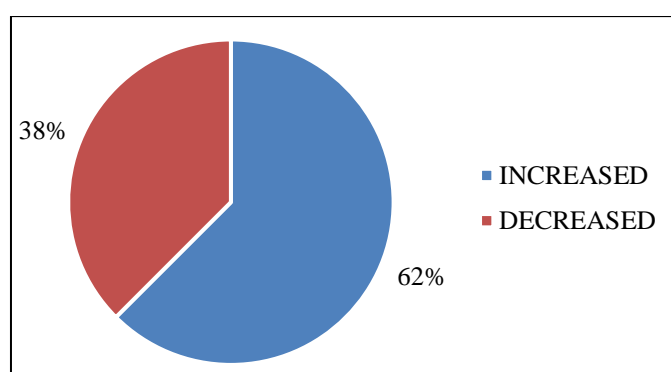
Support service providers are probably the most economically vulnerable groups largely dependent on border haats for additional incomes. The support service providers mainly comprise people who work as daily labourers in agriculture and shops. Some of them run small tea shops or sell snacks in trains or the village.

The survey covered support service providers, who sell tea and snacks or even sell entertainment items for children or people within or outside the haat premises. Some of them are as new as six months to the haats, while others have been selling tea and snacks at the haat from the inception of the haats.

A) *Income of the support service providers from the haats has increased marginally in the last few years*

Out of the 16 support service providers surveyed, 62 per cent mentioned that their incomes have increased in the last two years, whereas 38 per cent of the respondents reported a decline.

Figure 20: Support Service Provider's Response on Change in Income from Border Haat over the Last Few Years



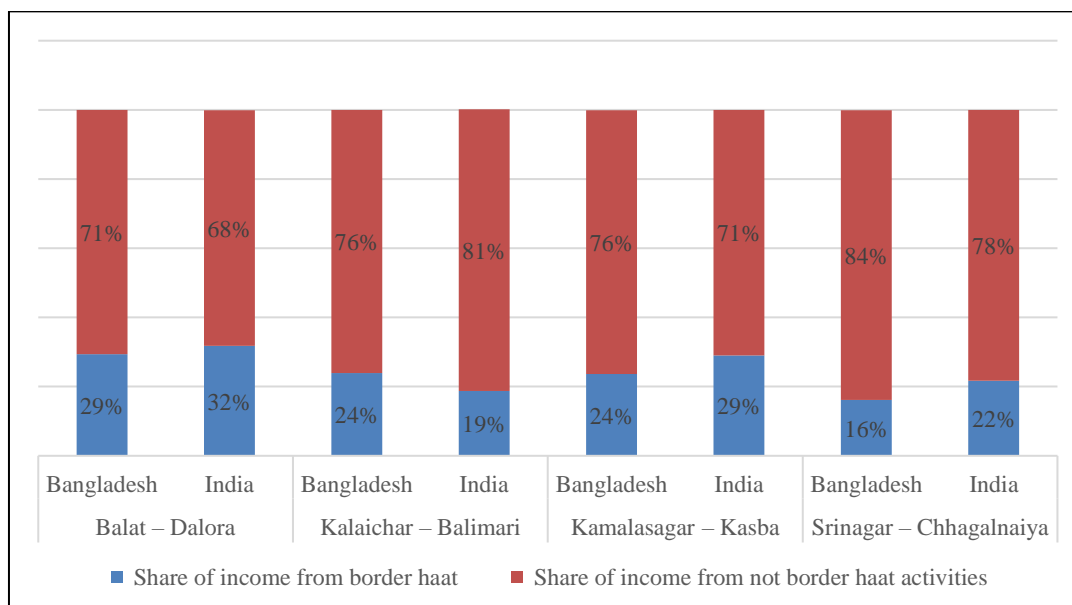
Of the six support service providers who reported a decline in their haat incomes in the last two years, two are from the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat, one is from the Bangladesh side of the Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat and three persons are from the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat (see Annexure XXVI).

One of the main reasons for the decline in haat income is due to a drop in the number of visitors at the border haats. It is interesting to note that responses of the support service providers, especially in regard to the decline in the number of vendees at the Kamalasagar-Kasba and Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haats has been also mentioned by other stakeholders.

B) *Income from haats provides additional support to the support service providers*

Income on haat days provides an average 16-32 percent additional income to the support service providers (Figure 21). Unlike transporters, the share of income from the border haats of support service providers is more or less the same across all the border haats. The total average annual income of the support service providers and their average annual income from border haat and non-haat activities are mentioned in Annexure XXVII.

Figure 21: Share of Haat and Non-haat Income in Average Annual Income of Support Service Provider

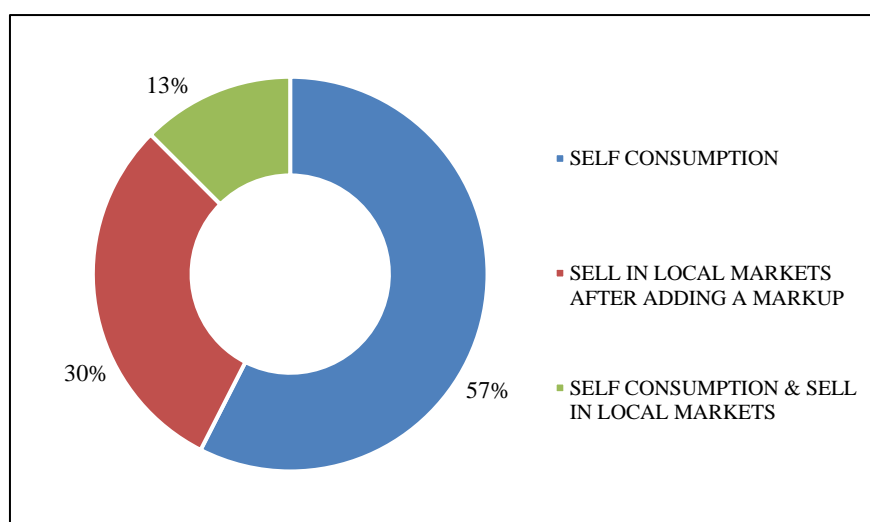


Vendees

A) Some of the vendee's purchase products from the border haats to sell them in the local markets in their respective countries, generating additional income opportunities for themselves

Border haats constitute an additional source of income for the vendees. Out of 40 vendees surveyed, 30 percent mentioned that they purchase products from the border haats to sell them at the local markets in their respective countries.

Figure 22: Purpose of Purchasing Goods From Border Haats



In addition, another 13 per cent of the vendees mentioned that they purchase goods from the border haats partly for their own consumption and partly for sale in local markets (Figure 22). An income groupwise segregation of the data reveals that vendees having an income of more than US\$650 mostly indulge in re-selling the goods purchased from the border haats in the local markets of their respective countries (Annexure XXIX). This implies that vendees having greater purchasing power and engagement in other businesses (viz., trading firms or shops) tend to purchase for resale. This provides an additional source of income to them. This is one of the reasons why 35 out of 40 (i.e. 88 per cent) vendees surveyed mentioned that they attend all the haat days (Annexure XXX).

Impact of Border Haats on Select Socio-Economic Parameters

Border haats have positively impacted a wide range of socio-economic parameters. They have aided the reduction of out-migration by generating local employment. They have enabled the concerned stakeholders to provide education to their children and better healthcare facilities to their families.

In addition, increasing the locals' incomes helped generate demand for various consumer durables and encouraged people to reinvest profits to bolster existing businesses. Moreover, border haats have facilitated access to cheaper essential products for the poor and marginalised and strengthened people-to-people connectivity among border residents. Border Haats also created different ancillary income opportunities in nearby villages.

However, it is important to note here that barring a few vendors who purchase from the haats for reselling, the haat income is more relevant for the other stakeholders, i.e. vendors, transporters, labourers, and support service providers since they derive their primary income directly from the haats. Hence the stakeholder-specific analysis focusses more on the feedback received from the vendors, transporters, labourers and support service providers rather than the vendees or the buyers.

Child's Education; Investment in Existing Business Practices; Purchase of Home Appliances

To understand the impact of border haat on the above-mentioned socio-economic parameters on different stakeholders and locations, stakeholder-specific and location-specific responses have been captured.

Analysis of the stakeholder responses presented in Figures 23-27 reveals that majority of the vendors, transporters and labourers can provide better education to their children, access better healthcare facilities and purchase home appliances (like television and refrigerator) and are thereby able to improve the overall quality of their living partly due to the additional income opportunities offered by border haats. However, the support service providers offer mixed reactions on the issue.

Figure 23: Impact of Border Haat on Child Education by Stakeholders

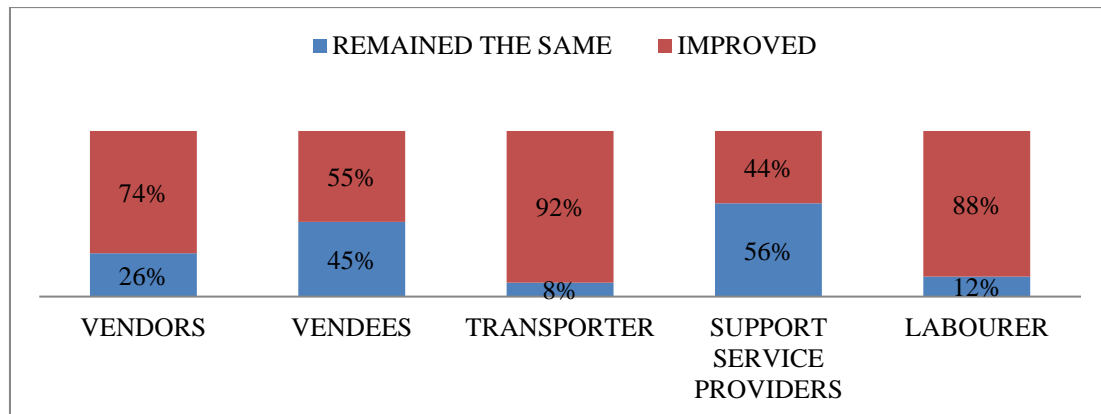


Figure 24: Impact of Border Haats on Access to Better Healthcare Facilities by Stakeholders

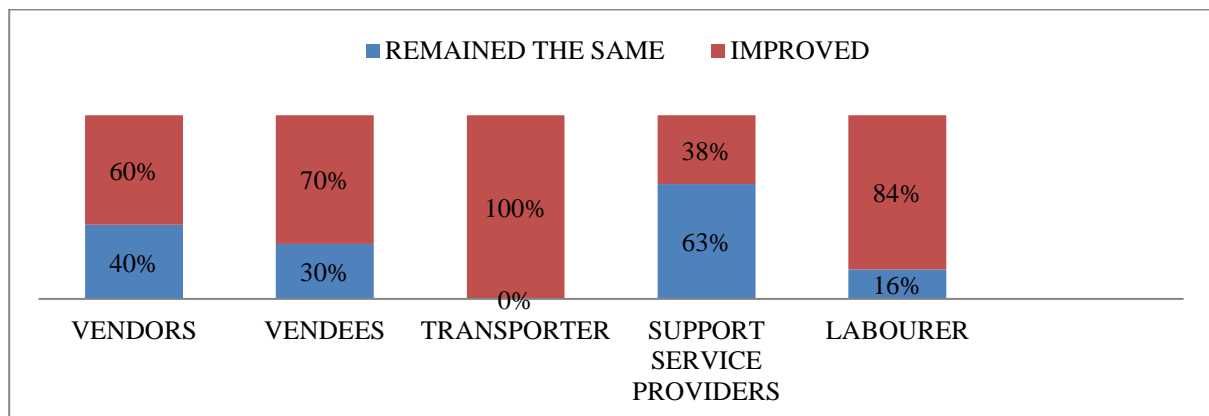


Figure 25: Change in Investment in Existing Business Practices by Stakeholders

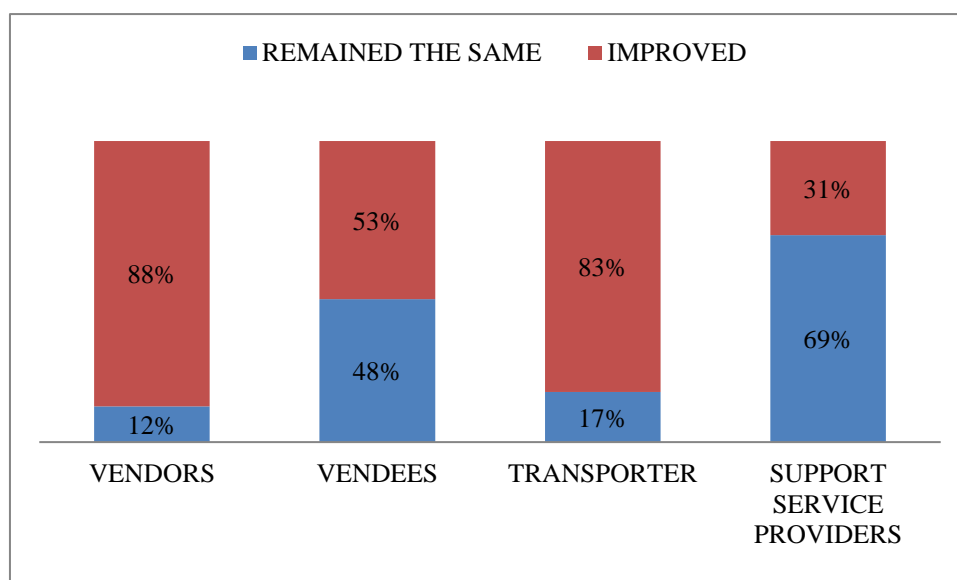
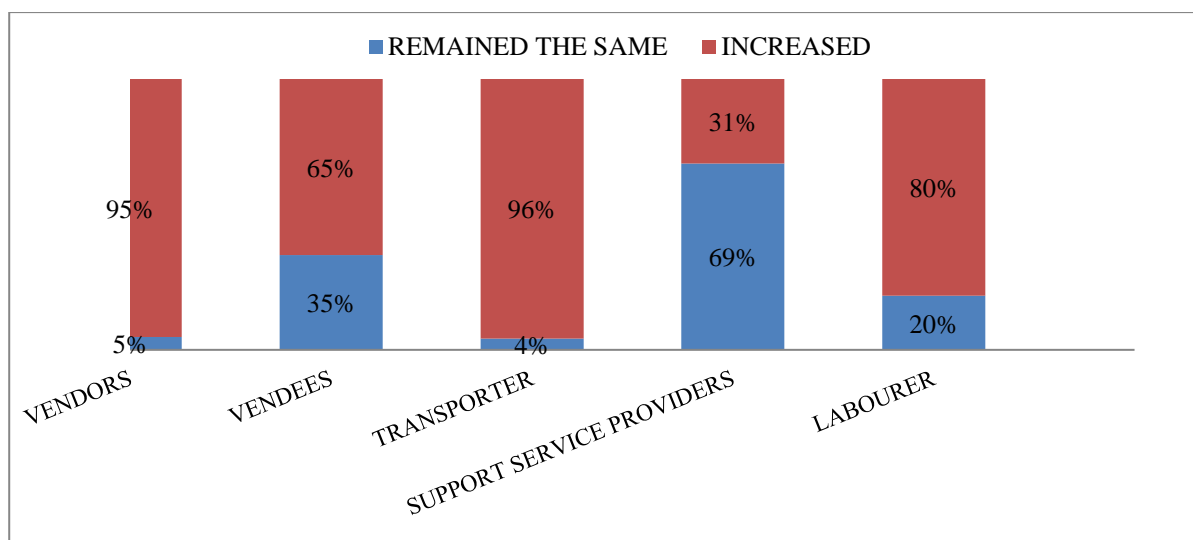
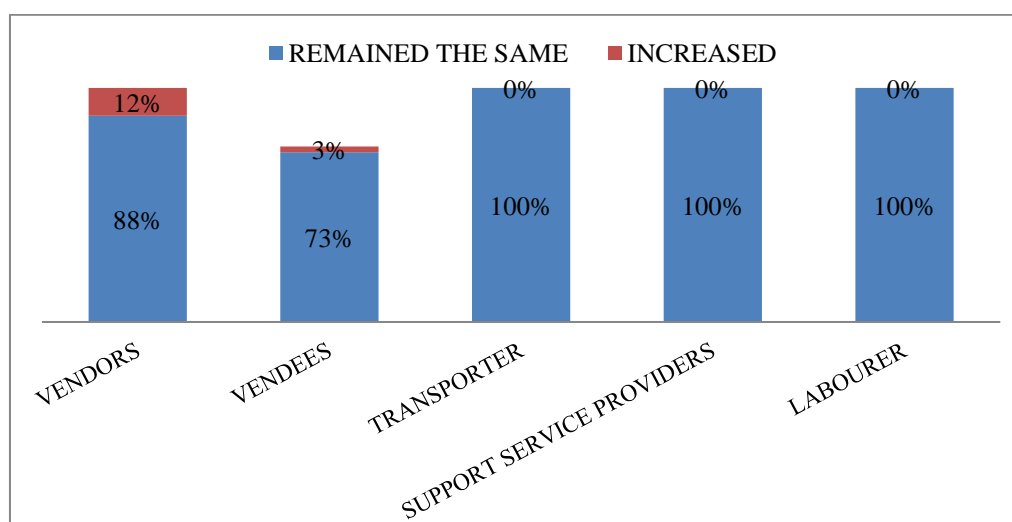


Figure 26: Purchase of Home Appliances**Figure 27: Impact of Border Haats on out Migration**

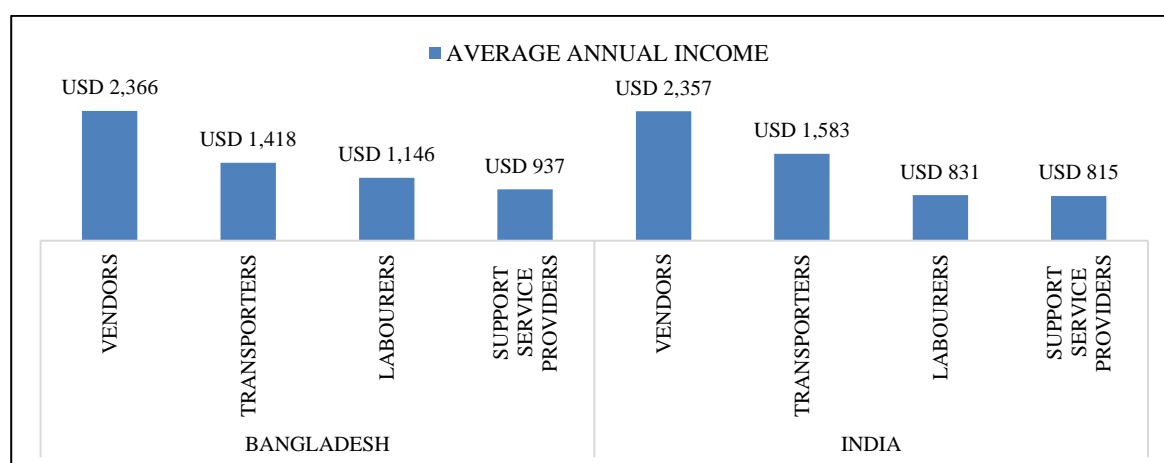
Now the question is why have the support service providers failed to derive much benefit from the border haats as compared to the other stakeholders. To understand this there is a need to consider two important factors – a) Average annual income (both from haat and non haat activities) of each of the stakeholders; and b) Reinvestment (capital and labour) done by the stakeholders to enhance income from the haats.

As shown in Figure 28, the support service providers have the least average annual income, compared to other stakeholder groups. The average income of a support service provider on the Indian part is US\$815 as compared to a vendor earning more than US\$2,000, on an average. Similarly, average annual income of a Bangladeshi support service provider is incomparably less than that that earned by other stakeholders.

In this regard, it is important to understand that the majority of the vendors and transporters have other businesses which comprise a significant share of their incomes. The profits earned from their businesses (both haat and non-haat) are further reinvested to enhance their profits. This is unlike the support service providers who have scanty earnings. Thus, as presented in Figure 25, while a majority of the vendors and transporters have increased their investments in existing businesses, only 31 percent of the support service providers reported an increase in their investments in existing businesses.

An analysis of location wise impact of border haats, based on the feedback from the stakeholders, on the selected socio-economic indicators have been presented in Figures 29 through 33. The data reveals that there has been an increase in children's education and access to better healthcare facilities by people living around the Balat-Dolora and the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haats.

Figure 28. Stakeholder Wise Comparison of Average Annual Income (in USD) Across Different Stakeholder Categories



In addition, there has been an increase in the purchase of consumer durables by the locals in these two locations. In addition, both these locations have seen a noticeable reduction in out-migration, which indicates that employment opportunities are available in and around the border haats.

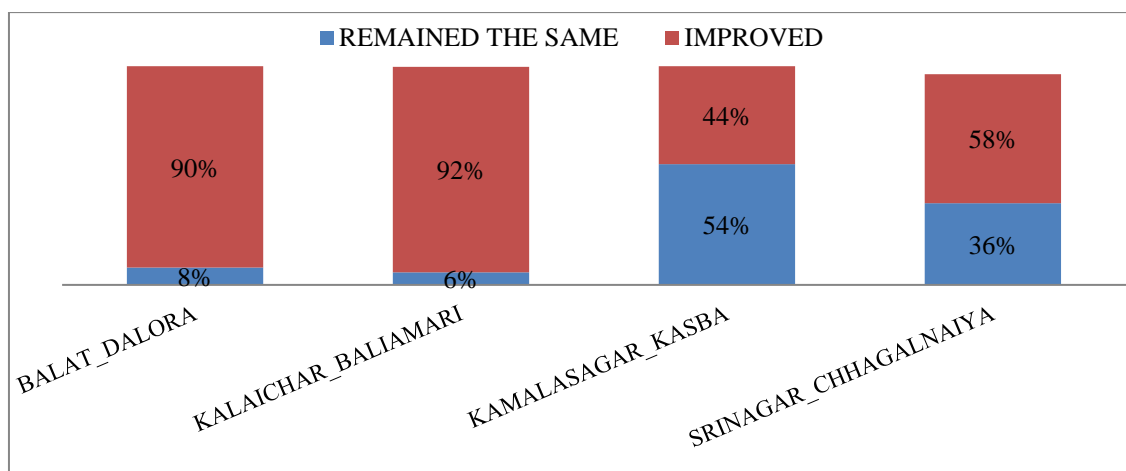
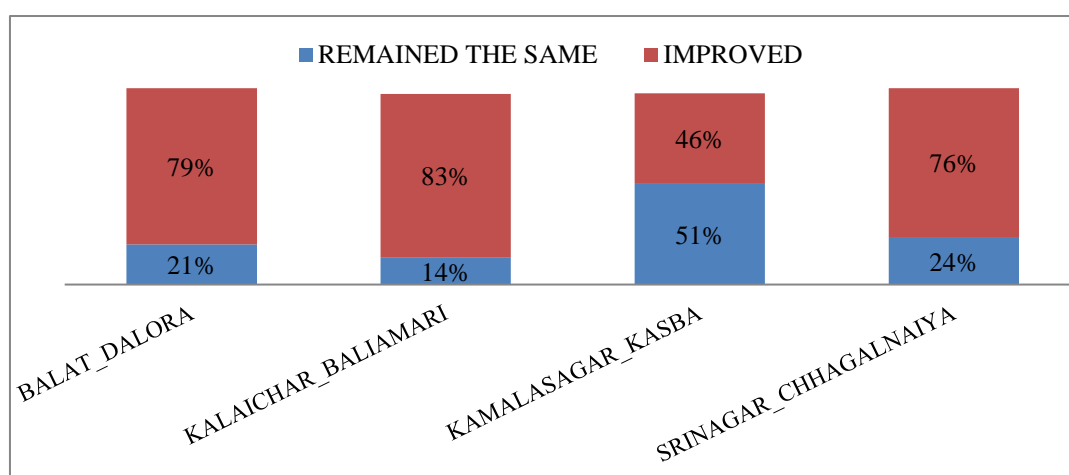
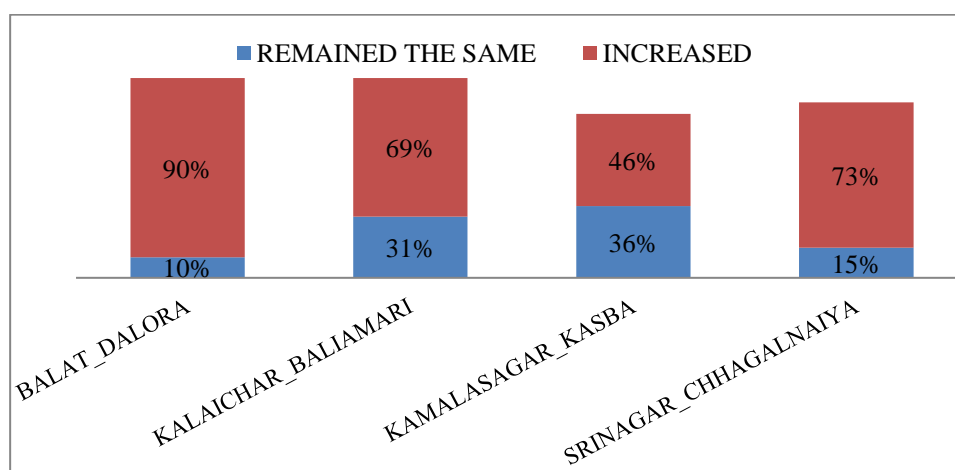
Figure 29: Impact of Border Haat on Childrens Education: Location wise Analysis**Figure 30: Impact of Border Haat on access to better Healthcare Facilities: Location wise Analysis****Figure 31: Investment in Existing Business Practices**

Figure 32: Impact of Border Haats on Purchase of Home Appliances by the Involved Stakeholders: A Location wise Analysis

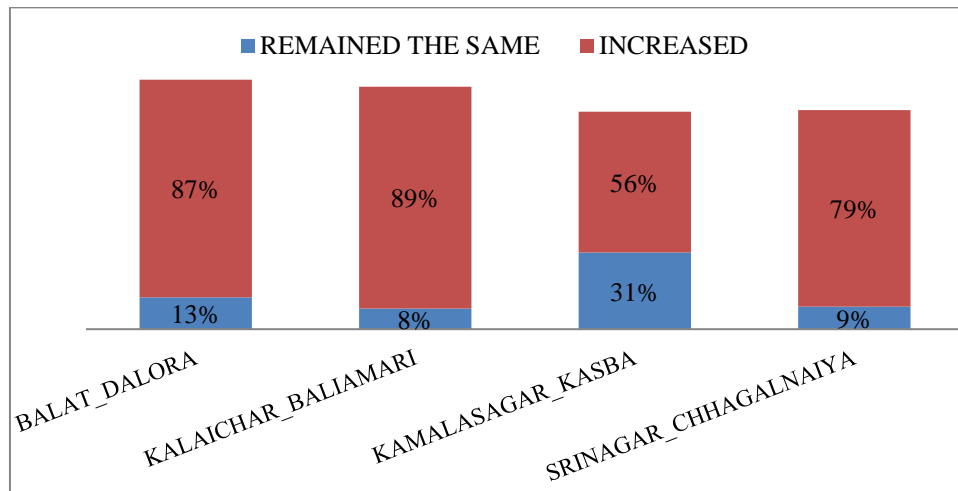
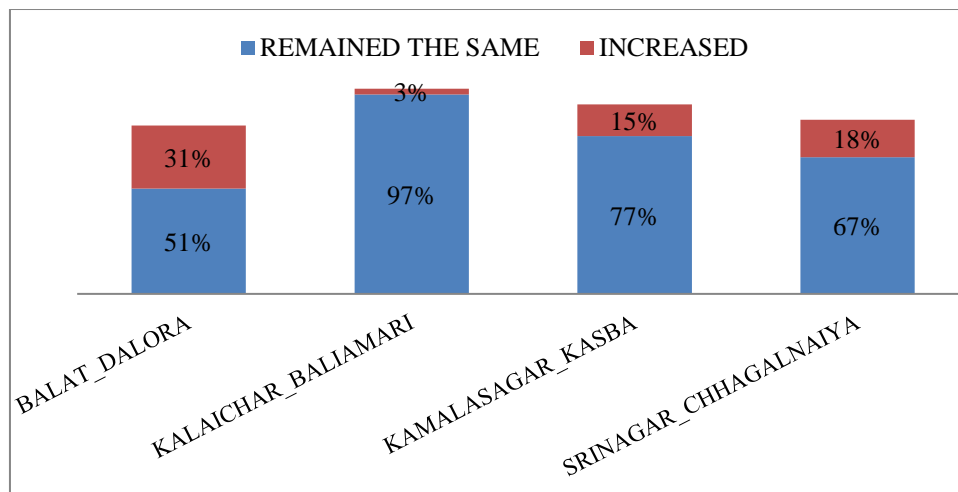


Figure 33: Creation of Women Centric Job Opportunities: Location wise Analysis



In the other two border haats i.e., Kamalasagar-Kasba and Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya, little effect is noticed regarding investment in children's education or migration. However, among these two border haats, stakeholders connected to the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat reported increased expenditure for purchasing consumer durables and reinvesting profits to enhance incomes at border haats.

A majority of the stakeholders mentioned that, unfortunately, the border haats could not create women-centric jobs. Evidence also suggests that while women indirectly benefitted from the border haats, the success stories were mostly limited to Balat, a predominantly matrilineal⁴ society, unlike places in Tripura or their mirror locations in Bangladesh.

⁴ kinship with the mother or the female line

Cross-border People-to-People Connectivity

Border haats being an international market draw both attention and interest from residents of the two countries. They perceive it as a place to buy commodities and as a place where they can socialise with people of their own and their neighboring country. A few also treat the haat as a place to hang out with family and friends.

Border haats also emerged as a platform for reunions for those who got separated pre or post-India-Bangladesh partition and lacked the necessary means for cross-country travel to revive old ties. The Border haat is like a ray of hope for them, especially for women. Many lack formal education (which is usual among rural women) and are reluctant and shy to undergo cumbersome cross-border travel processes involving documentation and other administrative procedures formalities. Additionally, their restricted mobility also inhibits them from indulging in distant, especially cross-border travel.

A 52-year-old lady, Shamma Khatun, a resident of Tripura (India), mentioned that the Kamalasagar border haat is the only forum she could meet her nephew, a resident of Bangladesh. She is the sole guardian to him and their meeting is something precious and vital to both of them. Other families for whom the haats have proved to be a blessing by facilitating the reunion of estranged bonds. Our survey team took particular notice of another family where the daughter met her mother in the haat after 14 years as she was married off to an Indian on the other side of the border, after which they never got to meet.

A labourer in Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat mentioned that about 40 years ago his father migrated to India in search of a job and his aunts live in Bangladesh. Their reunion was feasible only when this border haat was established, although they had long for years to meet each other. His aunts used to bring food to the haat to feed his father and his family. But, recently, haat committees of both sides (of this haat) have imposed restrictions on the entry of non-vendees (i.e. persons who don't possess any vendee card or stay beyond 5km of the border haat). So, at present, they can only pray for the removal of such restrictions if the reunions they cherish are to continue.

Therefore, the significance of the border haats lies in the economic sense: generating livelihood opportunities and providing access to cheaper items or reducing trade through informal risky channels and, in a social sense, reviving and intensifying people-to-people connectivity among the residents of both the countries.

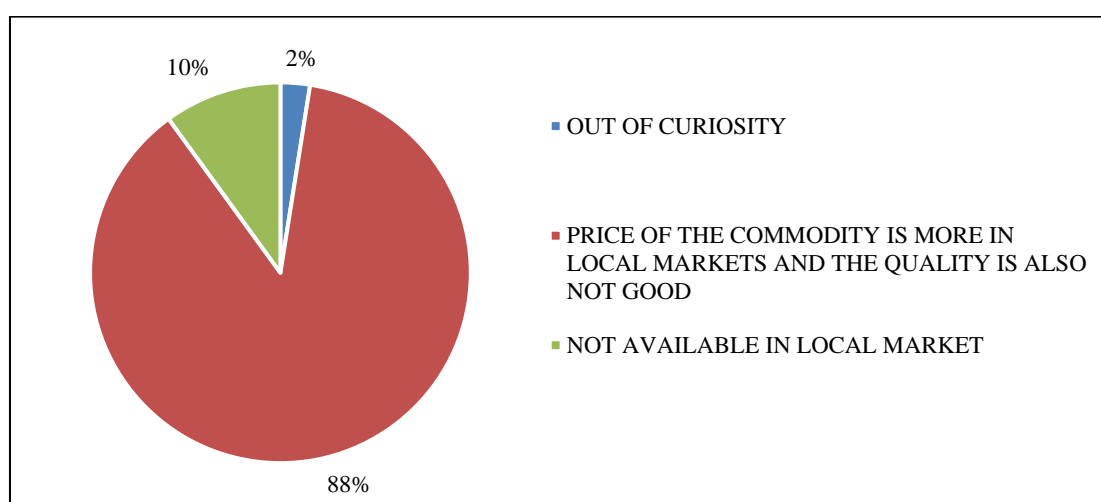
Access to Cheaper Goods

Vendees use border haats as a platform to buy quality products at lower prices. There are many Indian products such as FMCG items, tea, betel nut, spices, etc. There is a high demand in Bangladesh and a few products of Bangladesh such as melamine products, gamcha, lungi, etc., there is a high demand in India. Annexure XXX provides a list of items generally bought by buyers from the border haats.

It is interesting to note that while many of the products bought by vendees (mentioned in Annexure XXX) are also available in the local markets on either side of the border, yet the buyers prefer purchasing them from the border haats – This is because: *first*, the prices of the goods are lower at the haats; and *second*, it is believed that products sold at the haats are of good quality.

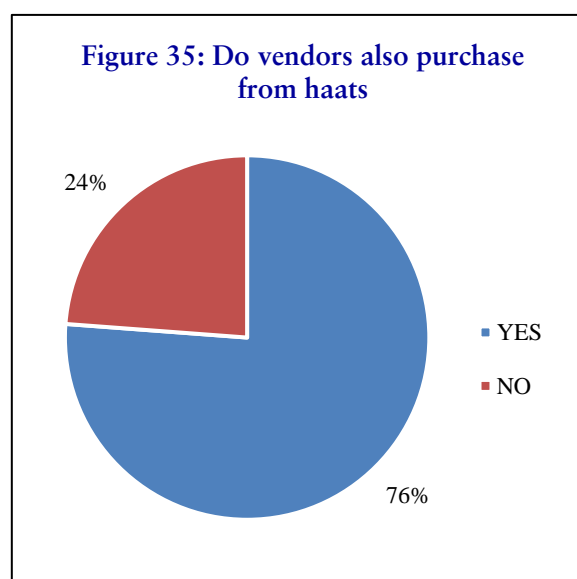
However, ten percent of the vendees cited that some of the Indian/Bangladeshi products are not available in the local markets and the border haat is the only place for procuring them (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Why Vendees Prefer Buying From the Border Haats



Along with the vendees, most of the vendors also purchase items from the border haat (Figure 35). There are three broad reasons: *first*, out of their fascination for the other country's product; *second*, since some of the FMCG and toiletries available in either India/Bangladesh are cheaper and also of good quality; and *lastly*, while returning from the haat the vendors want to take back something for their family members that are not locally available in one's country. The lists of products bought by vendors have mentioned in annexure XXXI.

Figure 35: Do vendors also purchase from haats



Case Study 4: Importance of the Balat-Dolora border Haat in facilitating access to essential commodities

The Balat - Dolora border Haat is vital, especially for the poor and marginalised sections in both countries, for accessing essential commodities at reasonable prices. The residents of Balat (under the West Khasi Hill district in Meghalaya) and nearby villages have to source required essential food grains, processed food items, vegetables, medicines and other consumer goods from markets in Shillong, Silchar or Guwahati located at a distance of 100 Kms, 300Kms and 200 Kms respectively and at higher prices for the additional transportation cost involved. The Border Haat comes as a saviour! Here they get fresh vegetables and other food items from nearby Bangladesh at half the price.

For Bangladeshi residents, too, the haat affords them access to items like Jeera (Cumin seed) and luxury items like bedsheets cheaper on the Indian side. Thus, while Jeera costs around US\$5.31 in Bangladesh, the vendees can buy the same Jeera at US\$3.30 at the haat. Similarly, in the case of bedsheets, its price is US\$25.94 in Bangladesh and they get it at US\$14.15 at the haat.

Level of Satisfaction of the Respondents From Border Haats

While border haats in creating local employment opportunities, arresting out-migration and stimulating consumer demand at the local levels cannot be undermined, it is also imperative to understand the level of satisfaction of the stakeholders who are engaged with the border haats in various capacities.

A) *Majority of the respondents across various stakeholder groups were either moderately or very satisfied with the haat (Figure 36). However, less than one-third of stakeholders are not satisfied at all.*

B) *The level of satisfaction is especially low among the vendors and vendees (Figure 37). But, labourers are moderately satisfied with the current opportunity.*

Figure 36 Level Satisfaction With the Haat

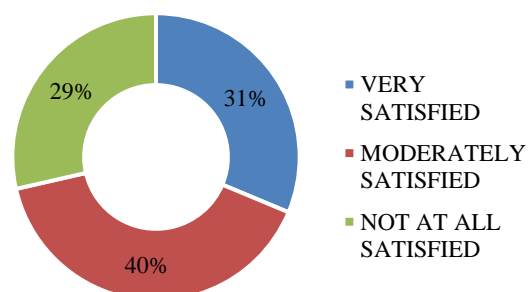
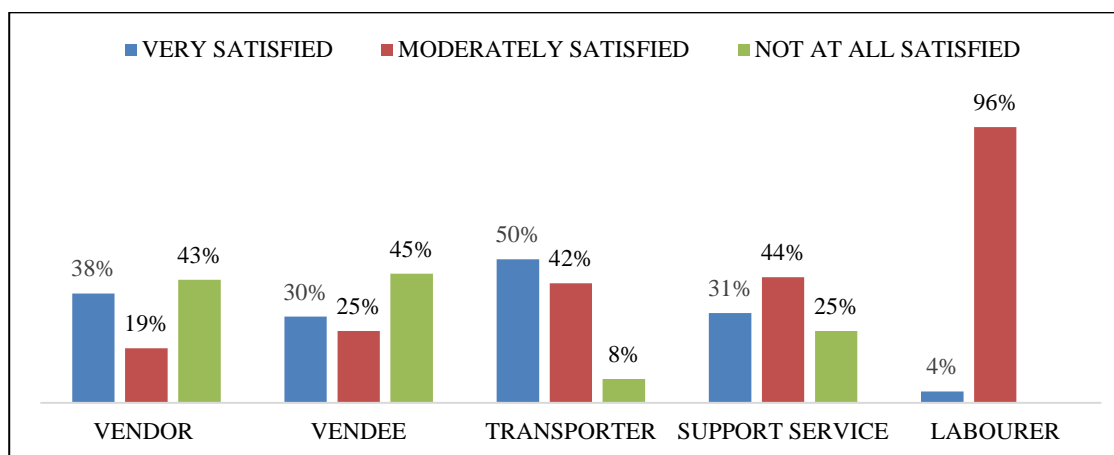


Figure 37: Stakeholder Wise Feedback on the Level of Satisfaction with the Haat



That is why many vendees and few vendors have reduced their visits to border haat.

C) *Unavailability of basic infrastructure and strict enforcement of regulations (especially those pertaining to the number of people participating at the border haats, the commodities sold at the border haats; and the maximum permissible purchase by a vendee) is constraining augmentation of businesses at the border haats.*

Most of the vendees are satisfied with haat as the commodities available at the haat are duty-free and generally available at cheaper rates. Additionally, there are port restrictions on many products, such as dry fish (those with high demand on the other side), so they cannot be traded through the Land Customs Stations (LCS), but these are also available at border haats.

Moreover, they can meet their friends and relatives on the other side. However, many vendees are not satisfied due to non-availability of branded products at the haat; restriction on bulk-buying in many haats; restriction on number of vendees allowed per haat; restriction on entry of visitors; lack of variety of items at the haat; ban on several products earlier available at border haats and reluctance on part of a few vendors to sell products in small quantities.

For example, a resident of Sunamganj, Bangladesh complained that he went to buy some fruits and one toothbrush for his family from Balat-Dolora border haat but Indian vendors denied selling one or two pieces of these items to him; as a result, he had to buy these items at a higher price from local market of Sunamganj. Vendees in Kalaichar-Baliyamari border haat informed that the haat is primarily used for betel nut trade (The case of trade in betel nut through Kalaichar-Baliyamari border haat is discussed in Case Study 5) and from 2018, trade in cosmetics and cumin seeds from Bangladesh and plastic items from India has been banned without any proper justification. Many vendees from different haats, particularly those who buy in bulk, complained about border guards seizing their products even though they bought goods valued at less than

US\$200. These factors upset buyers from both sides and over time they lost their interest in attending the haats regularly.

Above all, basic infrastructure at the haats started deteriorating to the extent that presently, none of the haats has clean washrooms and drinking water facilities. On the Bangladesh side absence of women security personnel added to the difficulties of women buyers in attend the haats, the women did not want to undergo security checks conducted by male personnel.

A few vendors who are not fully satisfied with the border haats mentioned that during the initial days of the haats, enforcement of regulations to control the number of participants at the haat used to be less rigid. This allowed several visitors both from the nearby villages and the nearby towns into the haat premises. In addition, tourists were also allowed to enter the haat.

In those days, the income of stakeholders, especially vendors used to be higher. However, with strict enforcement of regulations, the number of visitors at the border haats started declining. In addition, trade in some of the items that had/have significant demand (viz. live fish, poultry products and spices), was gradually restricted, which added to the decline in businesses and hence profitability of the vendors.

Bangladeshi vendors of the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border mentioned that are generally not allowed to buy any product from Indian vendors. A vendor stated that once he bought one Kg of tea from an India vendor, but while exiting the haat it was confiscated by BGB although a few vendors mentioned that if they buy items once in a while and in small quantities, BGB does not stand in their way. In locations such as Kamlasagar, products to be sold by vendors in border haats are decided by a lottery system. Many vendors are not happy with the products they are allotted.

Given, bulk trading is predominant in Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat (but not necessarily above US\$200) Indian Custom officials are apprehensive that arms and ammunitions, drugs could also be smuggled through the haat (in the sacks) to India from Bangladesh⁵ and they are not equipped with scanners to detect them. They are also concerned that a few items such as eatables, such as fish, bakery items, and seeds traded in the haat, otherwise requiring quarantine certification to be internationally traded, can negatively affect consumers. They also mentioned that Bangladeshi vendors often use chemicals to keep the fish alive for longer durations to lure customers and increase their sales. These chemicals can have detrimental effects on Indian fish consumers.

A few residents, especially in Bangladesh, perceive that border haat leads to income inequality in the border areas as generally influential people get the vendor licenses easily

⁵ This concern is also corroborated by various news articles.

bypassing the needy ones. In a few areas such as Baliamlari, vendor ships have not been changed since the inception of the border haat in 2011, and these vendors are getting richer. Few local businessmen selling similar products in the local market are also unhappy with the dramatic rise in the incomes of the vendors.

A majority of the vendors and vendees, who were not satisfied with the conditions presently prevailing at the border haats clarified the following reasons for their dissatisfaction:

- lack of infrastructures like clean washrooms and drinking water facilities,
- restrictions on the number of vendees allowed to enter a haat,
- limitations on purchases & sales; and
- seizure of goods by the security personnel.

Annexure XXXII provides a snapshot of feedback from the vendors and the vendees on why they are either not satisfied or moderately satisfied with the border haats.

Case Study 5: Betel nut trade at the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat

The Kalaichar-Baliamri border haat lacks the hustle and bustle that is typical of all other border haats. However, it can develop a cross-border value chain among farmers and traders in India and Bangladesh regarding production, processing and sales of betel nuts.

This trade of betel nuts is a flourishing business in the Kalaichar-Baliamari region. Business at the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat is mainly dominated by traders and growers of betel nut. Only a handful of Vendors/Vendees are engaged in the buying and selling of other products.

Such predominance of betel nut trade results from abundant production on the Indian side and good processing facilities on the Bangladesh side. Farmers on the Indian side sell the raw betel nut (*moja supari*) to traders in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi traders then dry the raw betel nut, peel off the outer cover and sell them mostly to the Mankachar based traders on the Indian side, who sell them within India. Given that India has restrictions on importing betel nut through formal land customs stations, the dried betel nuts enter India partly through the Kalaichar border haat.

An interesting question arises at this point: how are the Mankachar-based Indian traders able to procure the dry betel nuts since the Mankachar based traders are not allowed to enter the border haat?

What these Mankachar based traders do is that they pay the vendees an amount of USD 3-USD 5 per sack (40 Kg) to carry the sack out of the haat premises where the Manckachar traders wait along with their transports to collect the sack and send them to their shops in Mankachar. Once in their possession, these traders send them off for sale

to different parts of India. The cost of carrying the sacks outside the haat premises by carts is also borne by the Mankachar traders.

In general, a sack of dry betel nut weighing 40 kgs costs US\$1-US\$2 per Kg, depending on the quality and the same is sold at US\$1.5-US\$3 within India.

In a remote and economically backward area with limited employment opportunities like Kalaichar and Baliamari, this is an important source of income for the locals – farmers, vendees and local traders alike.

If a local farmer in India wanted to sell his/her produce, he/she would have to go to Mankachar and this to-and-fro journey would involve a transportation cost of approximately US\$64. By selling at the Kalaichar border haat the farmer can save on the transportation cost. As for a vendee, he/she is able to earn US\$5-US\$10 on a haat day. Since most of the vendees were found to be women on the Indian side, it is a source of income that provides valuable support to women. Lastly, the betel nut trade has encouraged local entrepreneurs to come forward and engage as traders, with the prospect of making an income of roughly US\$200-US\$300 per month.

This business also creates several employment opportunities in India and Bangladesh. At Mankachar, each of the traders has his own in-house sorting and grading facilities. A trader, Abdul Sheikh (name changed) informed that his facility employs at least 25-30 labourers throughout the year, with a male-female ratio of 1:3. The male workers earn a daily wage of USD 5 per day and women earn a daily wage of US\$3 per day. The male workers do the heavy work (viz., moving the sacks etc.) and women do sorting and grading.

The most positive impact of the border haat on the Bangladesh side is that it has created an avenue for the rural poor to earn some money. They work as labourers, support service providers and transporters. Raipur is a poverty-stricken area where job opportunities are scarce. Earlier, they had to migrate to Dhaka, searching for livelihoods and working in garment factories or as day labourers. After establishing the haat and subsequent flourish of the betel nut trade, the migration outflow has decreased significantly. Moreover, some, who used to work in Dhaka or elsewhere, have returned home. They started working at the border haat and with one-haat day income, they can sustain their family for the whole week. Some vendees buy the raw betel nut from the border haat for sale to the local traders and earn handsome profits sufficient to provide a decent living. It can be concluded that the Kalaichar-Baliamarihaat is significant from two aspects – *first*, it is creating income opportunities for Farmers, Vendees and Traders involved in the betel nut trade; and *second*, it has created a cross border value chain between India and Bangladesh in betel nut production, processing and sales. While it is essential to foster and deepen such cross-border co-operation, it is equally important to

address some vendors' concerns regarding the availability of only a few items at the haat.

In this regard, members of the border haat committee should encourage participation from local vendors to sell various commodities in demand among Indian and Bangladesh residents. For example, focussed group discussions with the villagers on the Indian side revealed a considerable demand for plasticware and melamine products available aplenty in Bangladesh. Similarly, there is demand for spices like cumin, cinnamon and cardamom in Bangladesh available at a much cheaper rate in India. Such mutual synergies must be exploited to facilitate upscaling and long-term sustainability of the border haats.

Understanding the probable impacts of border haats on the sanctioned and proposed locations

Recognising the importance of border haats in creating livelihood opportunities in the remote border villages, the Governments of India and Bangladesh decided to open six new border haats along the India-Bangladesh border. The idea is to allow the residents on either side of the border to buy and sell products in demand on both sides. This, like other border haats is expected to provide additional income support to the residents and reduce informal trade. The issue of informal trade and border haats has been discussed in the previous chapter. This section will focus on understanding how the border haats can boost livelihood opportunities in the sanctioned and proposed locations and the expectations local people have from border haats..

Expected benefits of Border Haats to stakeholders in sanctioned and proposed locations

Agriculture and local retail businesses are predominant in and around the villages of the sanctioned and proposed border haats. However, Latu in Karimganj is the only exception in which the majority depends on repatriated incomes. In Latu almost one person in every family works in the Middle Eastern countries. Besides, most of these villages lack road and transport connectivity with the nearby urban centres. This makes travel to the urban markets both time and cost-consuming for the farmers and local businesses.

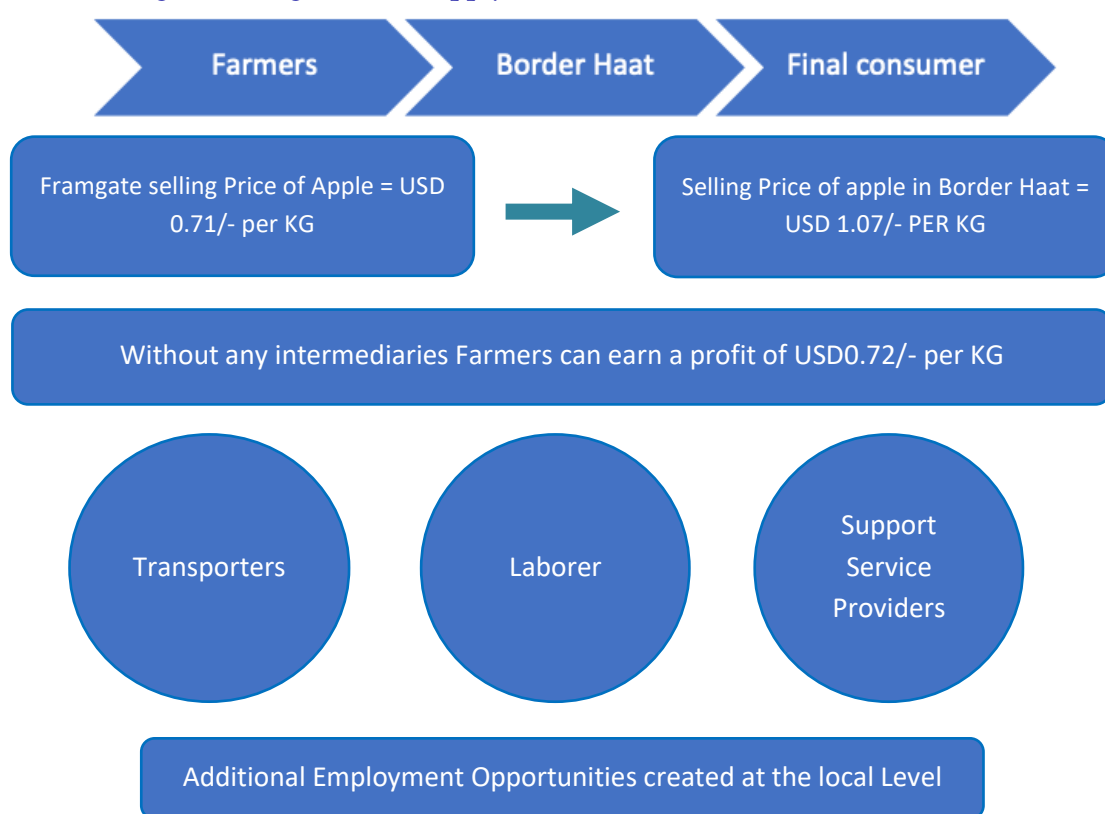
Thus, farmers prefer selling their produce to the aggregators in the local haats at lower prices. The local shops have to purchase products from the urban wholesale markets and incur an additional transportation cost. This cost is ultimately passed on to the consumers in the form of higher prices of the products.

This supply chain for agricultural produce has been presented in Figure 38. It is clear from the figure that an agricultural commodity sold by a farmer at US\$0.71/- at the farmgate or at the local village haats finally sells at US\$1.07/- (33 percent higher than the farmgate price) to the final consumer. However, the farmer gets only 20 percent of the profit and middlemen and aggregators to consume the rest in the supply chain. Border haats would

shorten and simplify the supply chain and, in the process, enhance the incomes of farmers and create additional local livelihoods.

With border haats in place, the supply chain will be like the one presented in Figure 38, where the farmers will sell their produce directly to the buyers in the neighbouring country without middlemen or aggregators. In the process, as with existing border haat locations, employment opportunities will be created. Local residents will have the opportunity to participate in the border haats as vendors and vendees and as transporters, labour, and support service providers.

Figure 38: Agriculture Supply Chain after Establishment of Border Haats



Perception and expectation of stakeholders in sanctioned and proposed location

It is the “PEOPLE” who would need to engage with each other through the border haats and hence it is imperative to understand their expectations from the border haat and simultaneously address their related concerns. Therefore, in the survey conducted by CUTS, an attempt was made to gather the local residents' perceptions about border haats. All the respondents welcomed the idea of setting up border haats in their vicinity since they will not only help farmers to sell their produce at good prices but will also help local shops to cater to the needs and demands of a larger set of consumers, thereby leading to a flourish of their businesses.

Case study 6 highlights the expectations and incentives of the residents living along the sanctioned border haat of Kamalpur–Kurmaghat from border haats. Similar instances were also observed at Silsury in Mizoram. Case study 6 further helps understand the interlinkages between people living on either side of the Indo-Bangla border. The location-specific reasons cited by the residents are listed in annexure XXXIII.

In addition, some of the respondents also mentioned that it would help them to meet their relatives living on the other side of the border. The urge on the people on both sides to meet each other can be gauged from the ‘Milan Mela’, which is organised jointly by India and Bangladesh once a year. In this fair, the Bangladeshis and Indians get the chance to meet their relatives by standing on the opposite sides of the barbed wire fencing. Thousands of residents from both sides (from various nearby villages and even districts) attend this fair. Few exchange gifts (sweets, sarees, hilsa, soap, homemade food etc.) with each other by hurling them across the fence. This fair is organised along the northern border of West Bengal, India with Bangladesh. The residents of West Bengal, especially marginalised ones are excited about border haats as they believe through border haats they will be able to meet their long-lost relatives and friends.

A few women in Kamalpur (Tripura, India) mentioned that their parents are in Bangladesh and they were married off in India, after which they have never met their parents. The upcoming border haat could be an opportunity for them to meet their families. However, for a few, it will require relaxation of the stipulated 5 km boundary.

**Case Study 6: Expectations of residents from the sanctioned
border haat at Kamalpur - Kurmaghat**

Residents, especially the farmers and elected representatives from Kamalpur believe that establishing the border haat would be beneficial to them in terms of accessibility to essential commodities at lower prices and increasing their incomes.

Presently, the farmers sell their produce in Kamalpur market, the only market accessible to them. Middlemen from Agartala come to the Kamalpur market to purchase their produce. These middlemen offer low prices to the farmers. If the border haat becomes operational, the farmers feel that they would be immensely benefitted in two ways: – first, they will be able to sell directly to the consumers and get good prices for their produce; and second, since the cropping fields are close to the haat, the farmers will save on the transportation costs incurred in carrying the produce to Kamalpur bazar which is US\$2.62 per ten quintals. In addition, the farmers also pointed out that they would be able to sell fruits (like Jackfruit) that fetch higher prices in Bangladesh compared to India. Jackfruit is widely produced on the Indian side but sold at US\$0.65 per Kg, whereas; on the Bangladesh side, the price hovers around US\$1.96 per Kg.

In Kamalpur, demand for Bangladeshi Bitter gourd seeds, Cauliflower seeds, Cucumber seeds and Turai (Jhinga) seeds, paddy seeds, fertilisers and herbicides is significant. According to the farmers, seeds and herbicides in India are costlier, whereas the productivity or quality is not at par with Bangladeshi seeds or herbicides. As a result, farmers buy these items informally from their Bangladeshi counterparts.

Similarly, villagers in and around the Champara tea estate (Bangladesh) were also optimistic about the border haat. They feel that the border haat will facilitate access to commodities of daily use from the Indian side at lower prices.

In general, it was also felt that the haat will not only help the residents on the Indian side to procure desirable items from Bangladesh at cheaper rates (viz. Simui, Biscuit, Tea etc.) and vice-versa, but will also be instrumental in buttressing livelihood opportunities and incomes of the rural communities.

Case Study 7: Synergies among the border residents of India and Bangladesh

Silsury, a remote village in Mamit district, in Mizoram along the India-Bangladesh border is inhabited by around 4000 people belonging to the Chakma tribe. This village is about 170-200 Km away from Aizawl (Capital of Mizoram) and not well connected to Aizawl by road or rail or any other mode. The road that connects Aizawl to Silsury is not an all-weather road. On the other hand, this village is surrounded by Bangladesh, which is commutable through waterways. Interestingly the residents along the border in Bangladesh also belong to the same ethnic lot- the Chakmas.

In that village there is only one market that operates along the Indo-Bangladesh zero point. Although this is a daily market, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the haat registers Bangladeshi vendors and vendees. The Bangladeshi vendors sell electronic items (bulbs, chargers, Mobile), vegetables (cucumber, gourd, green chilis, Lady's finger, tomato, potato, beans, brinjals), fruits (grapes, apples), plasticware, fish, both fresh and dry, traditional Chakma garments, melamine utensils and blankets.

In Bangladesh, since the villages are located at a distance from the border, the vendors carry items on their heads to the bank of the river Thega/Sajek from where they take Burma boats to reach this market in India. As they carry items as head load, both sellers and buyers take only portable items and in small quantities to and from the haat. Bangladeshi vendees visit this market to buy Indian products such as grocery items, garments (jeans, top, scarf, gamcha, longi, shawl), diapers, spices, betel nut, cosmetics and toiletries from this market, as the market nearest to their village in Bangladesh is in Machalong at a distance of 25 km, and due to hilly terrain, it takes around three to five hours to reach Machalong. This exchange is driven by easy access to a cheaper material,

ready market availability, and product preference similarities. Moreover, as this area is not fenced, border crossing is not difficult.

As the haat receives significant footfall from both Indians and Bangladeshis on every Wednesday and Saturday the sale is considerably higher for all Indian vendors. One Indian shopkeeper said that “on haat days (i.e. Wednesday and Saturday) I generally get over a hundred customers and am able to sell products above US\$523.644, whereas on other days it ranges from US\$130.91-157.09. The sale is even higher in winter when the footfall of Bangladeshis rises.”

The Indian shops in this market are also flooded with different Bangladeshi products such as- food items (chips, cold drinks, biscuits) and medicines (pain relief injections, syrups, pain killers, gastric medicines, contraceptive pills, and medicines for ulcer), water purifiers, solar panels which they procure informally from the wholesale market in Thegamukh in Bangladesh.

This market, although informal, is crucial for residents of the Silsury and mirror villages in Bangladesh as it provides access to necessary items. But, as the fencing work has started along the border, people are apprehensive that they will no longer be able to access these items and hope that governments will establish border haat in that location to access the same service.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The chapter offers several findings, presented through data and anecdotal evidence. The importance of border haats in providing additional income to the stakeholders can hardly be exaggerated. In addition, the border haats played a pivotal role in creating local employment opportunities and arresting out-migration.

However, despite all positive aspects of border haats, many stakeholders expressed their dissatisfaction with how the border haats are managed by the relevant government authorities.

One of the grievances relates to the lack of basic infrastructure, including clean washrooms and drinking water facilities. In addition, strict enforcement of regulations (especially those pertaining to restricting the number of people participating at the border haats, the commodities sold at the border haats; and the maximum permissible purchase by a vendee) is posing a major obstacle to the enhancement of businesses at the border haats.

The strict imposition of the restriction on the participation of people beyond 5 Km of the border haats has also depressed business at the border haats and has added to the vendors' woes. In this regard, the stakeholders, especially the vendors, and labourers working

directly with the border haats, have urged the respective national governments to undertake necessary steps to facilitate greater participation of people, not just from the villages lying within the 5Km radius of the border haats, but also from tourists and residents of nearby urban centers to sustain and buttress businesses at the border haats in the longer run.

Apart from capturing stakeholder benefits and concerns in the existing border haats, the chapter also drew attention to some of the factors that can ensure the success of the upcoming border haats in sanctioned and proposed locations. In this regard, one of the key points to consider would be a careful selection of items suited to local conditions. In addition, for generating sustainable livelihood opportunities, it would be useful to select items that can promote synergies for creating cross-border value chains, similar to the case of trade in betel nut at the Kalaichar-Balamari border haat.

In this regard, the Governments of India and Bangladesh could consider revising some of the restrictions on trade with respect to select commodities like live fish, poultry products, traditional handicrafts, etc. This will make trading through informal channels redundant and, in the process, economically benefit local communities. In addition, appropriate infrastructure should be established at the border haats to facilitate the increasing involvement of various categories of participants and the consequent flourish of business.

On the whole, it may be concluded that considering the multiple benefits that Border Haats can and do offer to the local communities living along the Indo-Bangladesh border, simply putting up a marketplace with stalls of brick and mortar is not enough. The functionality of such structures will depend on the extent to which they are complemented by appropriate regulatory support to encourage the involvement of marginalised groups and the participation of the residents.

Chapter 7

Border Haats and Women Empowerment

Introduction

Participation of women in a country's labour force has been typically on the lower side in the South Asia region. During 2017, the labour force participation rate for women in Bangladesh was 36.3 percent, against 81.4 percent for men (ILO stat, 2017). In India, the labour force participation rate for women and men stood at 20.8 percent and 74.6 percent, respectively during 2018 (ILO stat, 2017).

A number of socio-cultural factors inhibit women from engaging in gainful employment opportunities, especially in rural areas. Gender-discriminatory practices prevalent in India and Bangladesh in rural and urban areas often restrict women's participation in the labor force. This stands in the way of women's economic independence and acts as a major roadblock in attaining universal gender equality, as laid down in the Sustainable Development Goals (SGD 5).

As per data collected in 2019 from 90 countries, women devote on average, roughly three times more hours a day to unremunerated care and domestic work than men, limiting the time available for paid work, education and leisure and further reinforcing gender-based socio-economic disadvantages (United Nations, 2019).

It has been argued in the previous chapters that border haats can play a pivotal role in creating employment opportunities at the grassroots, not only for men but also for women. Some of the women vendors across the border haats mentioned that border haats had provided them with an alternative source of income. They no longer had to ask their husbands for money or permission to purchase things they wanted. The women vendees also mentioned that the border haats enabled them to break from their household chores and spend quality time with friends and families. Moreover, few women vendees who purchase items from the haats for re-selling in their localities also look upon border haats as instrumental to their economic empowerment.

However, the degree of women's participation at the border haats has varied across countries and/or haats within the same country, depending on the social and cultural norms of that area or community. For example, Balat is a Khasi village and Khasi is a matrilineal⁶ community and usually, women in this community are empowered. On the other side of the

⁶ In matrilineal societies the parental properties are inherited by women

border i.e. Dolora in Bangladesh, the majority of the population is Muslim. Women are generally not allowed to participate (need permission from husbands or parents) in the haats either as vendors or as vendees. However, in a few haats, the participation of Bangladeshi Muslim women as vendees was significant.

Given this background, the present chapter tried to address the following questions.

- What is the impact of border haat on women stakeholders associated with the border haats?
- What is the perception of people in sanctioned and proposed locations on the participation of women in economic activities?
- What is the present level of involvement of women in economic activities in sanctioned and proposed locations?
- What expectations do women nurture about border haats?
- What are key challenges to the effective participation of women in the border haats?
- How can the participation of women in border haats be facilitated and encouraged?

Impact of Border Haats on Women Stakeholders

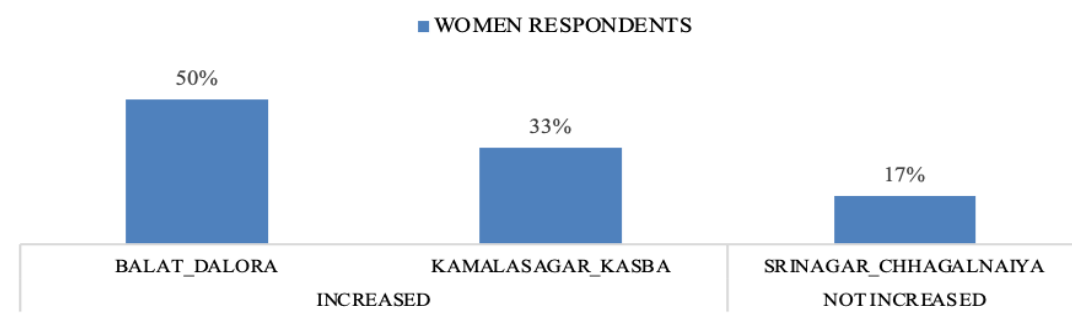
Impact of Border Haat on Livelihood on Women Stakeholders

It was observed that women participate in the border haats as vendors, vendees and labourers (helpers). But, participation of women as vendors and labourers in border haats is insignificant compared to men except for Balat where the male-female ratio is almost equal. In the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat there were no women vendors or labourers.

A) The average annual income of women vendors has increased in the last few years.

All the women vendors mentioned an increase in income after association with border haat, but five out of six women vendors interviewed reported an increase in their incomes from the border haats in the last few years. A location-wise analysis of their responses reveals that a majority of the women vendors who informed of an increase in their haat incomes belong to the Balat-Dolora border haat (50%). However, only one woman vendor from the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat pointed to a decrease in her income (Figure 39).

Figure 39: Impact on Income of Women vendors in last few years

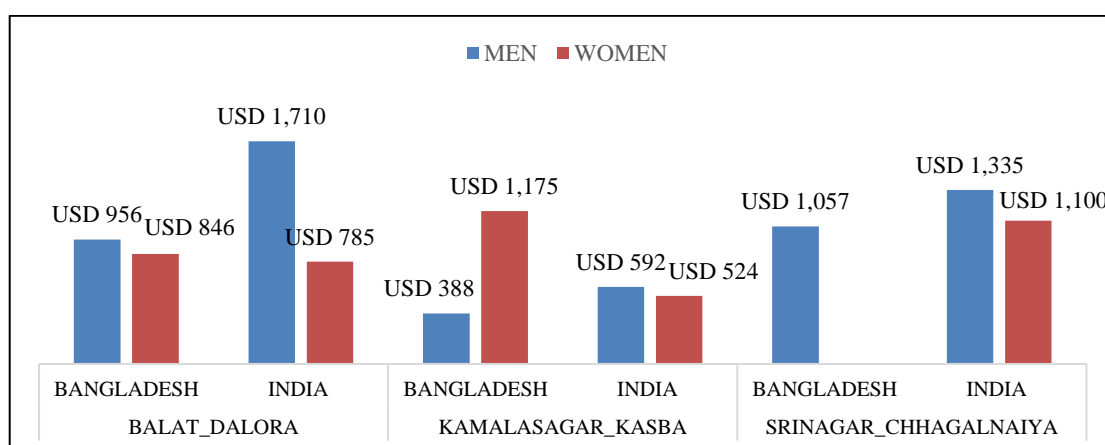


Note: There was no women vendor in Kalaichar-Baliamari Border Haat

B) In general, the average annual income of women from haat and non-haat activities is less than that of men

While most women have experienced an increase in income from border haats in the last few years, their average annual income from the border haats is less than that of the male members, except the case of the woman vendor at the Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat (Figure 40). As presented in Figure 40, the average annual income from haat related activities is consistently high for men in Balat - Dolora and Srinagar - Chhagalnaiya border haats. Since there was no woman vendor in Kalaichar - Balamari border haat, a gender-wise comparison is impossible for the location.

Figure 40: Comparative Analysis of Average Annual Income From Border Haats for Men and Women



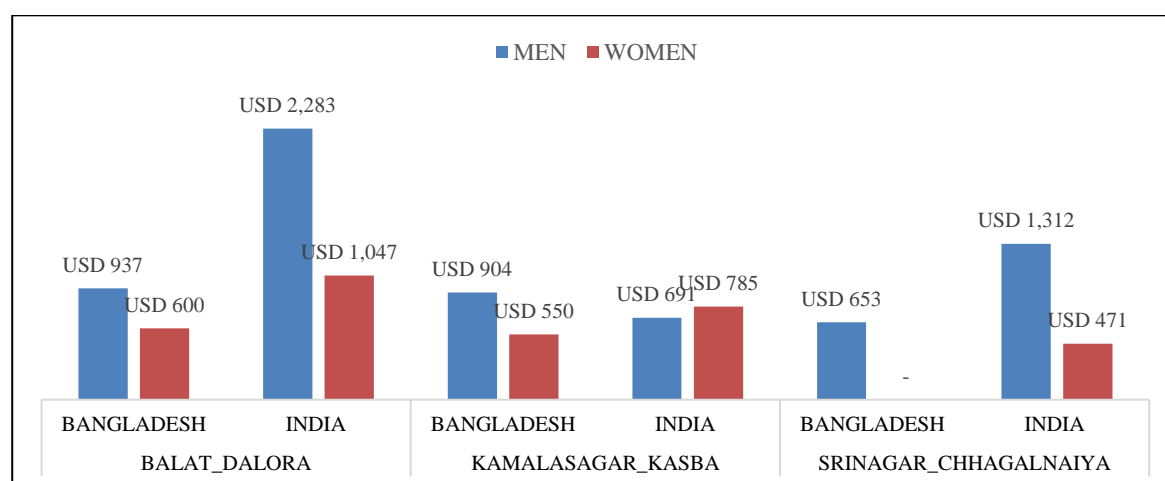
One interesting case in this regard is of Champa Das (age 26), who sells garments at the Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat. While she has the vendor registration in her name, the business at the haat is mostly conducted by her husband, who accompanies her to the haat as a labourer/helper. When asked, she admitted that she hardly understands the trade. Her husband has a garment shop near the border haat and guides her in commodities to be brought to the haat for sale. Thus, while apparently, it may seem that Champa Das, a woman vendor, is earning more than men, the reality is completely different. She, however, expressed her eagerness to switch to trade in cosmetics rather than garments, since other Indian vendors selling cosmetics are earning handsome profits.

This case, however, is far from unique. For example, there are contrasting cases, for example, Sharmila Dio, the sole women vendor operating at the Balat-Dolora border haat from Bangladesh. Sharmila Dio, a 40-year-old woman belonging to the Garo tribe, lives in a village in Bangladesh in the Balat-Dolora border haat. When the border haat was established in 2014, she applied for vendor-ship but was not selected and opted to serve as a labourer to a vendor selling readymade garments in the border haat.

Later, in August 2019, when the vendor licenses were revised, she got selected as a vendor and now she sells Melamine products and cosmetics along with garments. Her income from the haat helped her to support her children's education. She has also repaired her house with this additional income. She is also trying to expand her sales by introducing Garo and Khashia dresses, which are in demand on the Indian side. One of the reasons she could participate at the haat, is that she belongs to a tribal group where women's mobility is not restricted and men value women's opinions.

However, a comparison of non-haat incomes among men and women reveals that non-haat incomes of men are by far higher than those of women barring the cases of the women vendors of Kamalasagar-Kasba haat of the Indian side. (Figure 41).

Figure 41: Comparative Analysis of Average Annual Income From Non-haat Activities for Men and Women



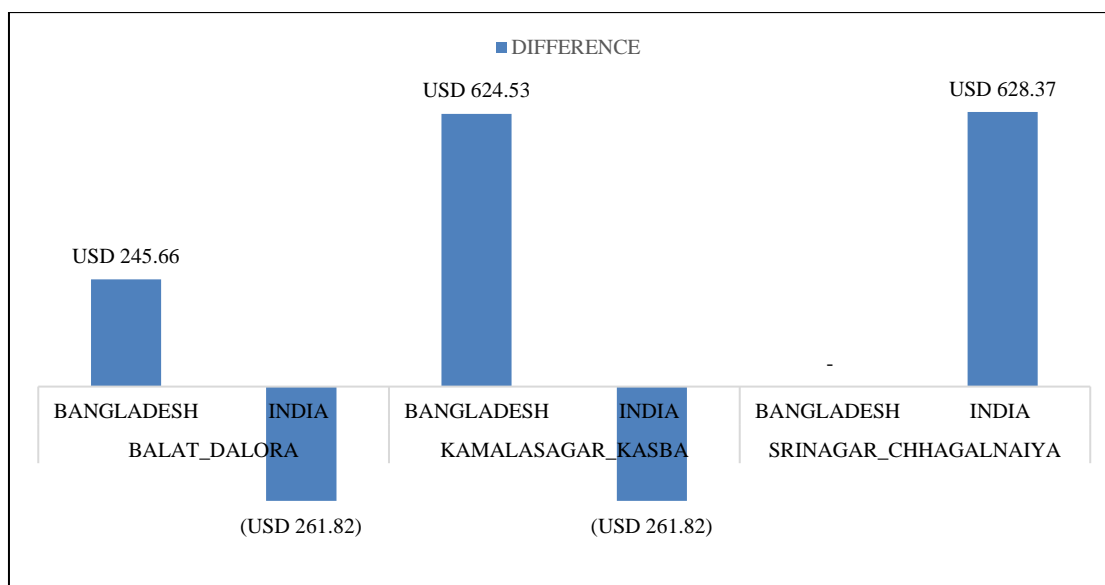
C) Participation in the border haat is providing additional income for the women, however, the Bangladeshi women earn more on haat days compared to their Indian counterparts.

Women vendors surveyed also run shops selling similar items on non-haat days. Since their shops operate on more days in a week than the haat, their average annual incomes from non-haat activity are generally higher than their haat day incomes. Nonetheless, participation at the haat provides them with an additional income source and helps them approximate a better standard of living. Selling similar items at the border haats and also in their shops helps them to reduce business risks. If the products remain unsold at the haats, the same get sold through their shops on non-haat days.

A comparative analysis of women vendors' income from haat and non-haat activities provides interesting insights (Figure 42). It reveals that, on average, the Bangladeshi women vendors at Balat-Dolora and Kamalasagar-Kasba border haats earn more on border haat days as compared to non-haat days. On the other hand, Indian women vendors at Balat-Dolora and Kamalasagar-Kasba border haats earn more on non-haat

days as compared to haat days. Again, the Indian woman vendor at the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat earns more on haat days than non-haat days.⁷

Figure 42: Difference Between the Average Annual Income From Haat and Non-haat Activities of Women Vendors in India and Bangladesh



One of the reasons for such difference in income is because both the Bangladeshi women vendors have been selling products that have significant demand in India and less in their vicinity. For example, the Bangladeshi woman vendor sells plastic & melamine products; and various FMCG goods at the Kamalasagar-Kasba haat, which are in high demand in India but are available in plenty on the Bangladesh side.

The Indian vendors at Balat-Dolora and Kamalasagar-Kasba border haats mentioned two main reasons why their haat income is less than their non-haat income. According to them, on the Indian side, there are many vendors selling similar items to Bangladeshi customers and hence average profit earned by individual vendors generally remains low. In addition, the average number of customers served by the vendors on non-haat days is higher than the haat days. This further adds to their non-haat income. After enforcing 5 km restriction, the number of visitors to the haats has significantly declined to add to their problems. Thus, increases in competition coupled with a decline in the number of visitors at the haat have eroded the vendors' income.

In the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat, the Indian woman vendor sells mainly cosmetics and toiletries, both at the border haat and at her shop on the Indian side. During the survey, she mentioned that Indian cosmetics and toiletries have considerable demand in Bangladesh since the Bangladeshi consumers like to flaunt their usage of “imported” goods and, in addition, the television promotion of various Indian goods

⁷ There was no women vendor in Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat

through Indian channels made them aware of the products. The volume of business remains on the higher side on haat days as compared to non-haat days.

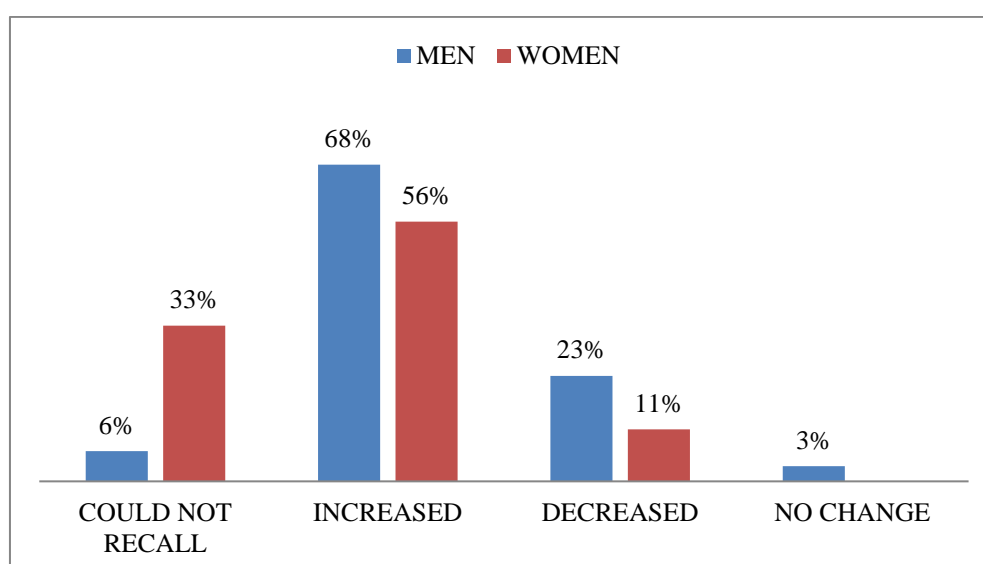
Impact Border Haat on the Spending Pattern of Women Vendees

The operational border haats are primarily located in remote villages where women, in general, hardly visit the market. The male members generally buy the required items in their family. As border haats are also considered tourist spots, men generally take women along with them to the border haats or visit the border haat. The following spending pattern was observed.

A. Average expenditure by Indian women buyers was found to be almost at par with that of men and a majority of women vendees have increased their spending at the haat.

A majority of the women vendees (56 percent) mentioned that they had increased their purchasing items at the border haats (Figure 43, Annexure XXXV). Interestingly 33 percent of the vendees could not recall whether their expenditures at the haats have changed in the last few years. This probably underlines the fact that these vendees visit the haat more as visitors, to enjoy a break from their household chores, rather than as serious buyers who track their expenditures over time.

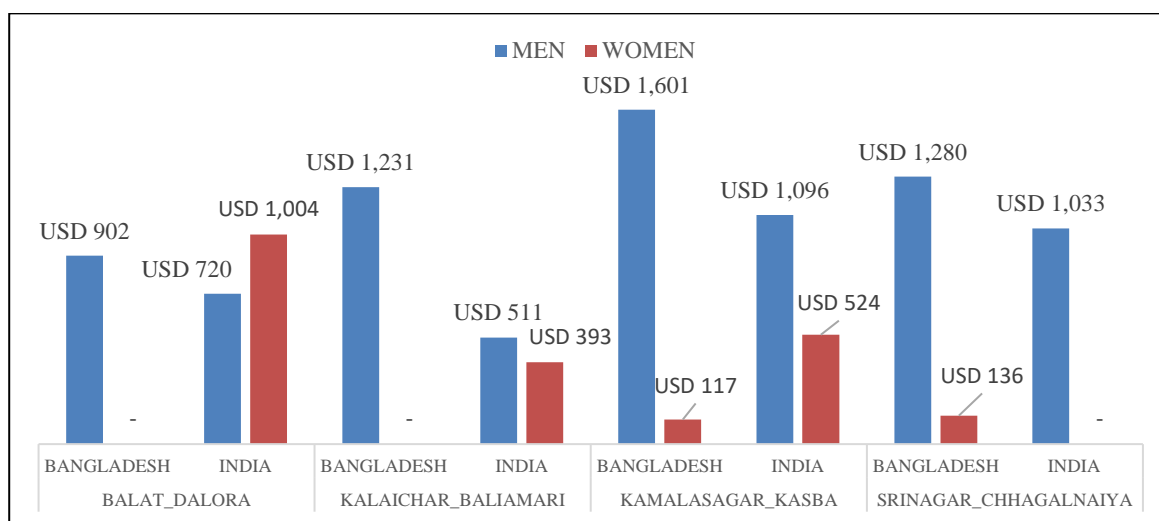
Figure 43: Response of Vendees About Change in Expenditure Pattern in Last Few Years



The women vendees who informed having increased their spending at the border haats mentioned that, over time, the border haats have been offering a more comprehensive range of commodities, especially cosmetics and toiletries from leading Indian brands.

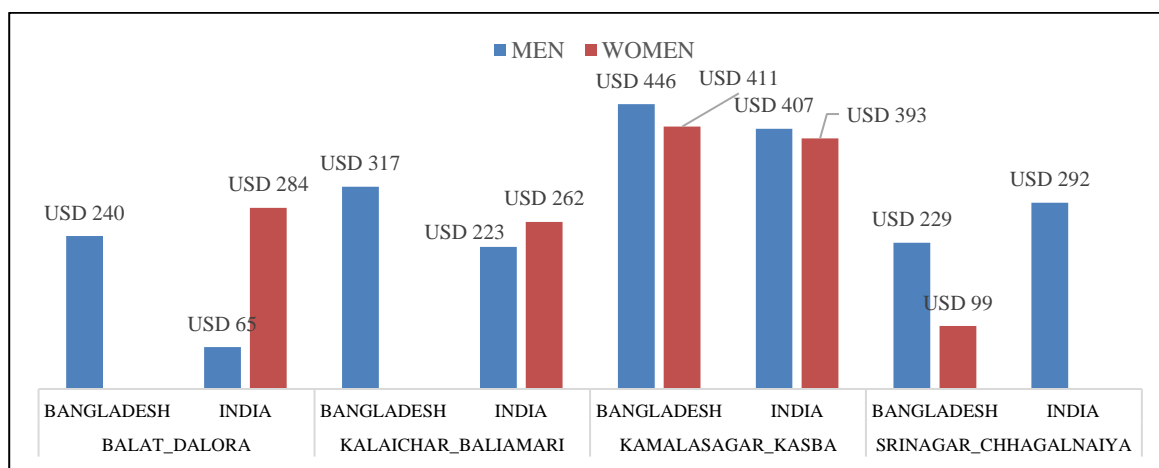
An analysis of spending patterns regarding both haat and non-haat items/activities indicates that barring Balat, women's non-haat expenditure is lower than that of their male counterparts (Figure 44) as women in those areas hardly visit the market.

Figure 44: Border Haat, Country and Gender Wise Segregation of Average Annual Spending Pattern on Non-haat Days



It was also observed that the spending pattern of women is at par with the spending pattern of men and, in some cases, even higher than men, such as Balat where women are highly empowered (Figure 45). *It is essential to mention that no women's vendee was observed from the Bangladesh side in Balat-Dalora and Kalaichar-Baliamari border haats and from the India side in Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat.*

Figure 45: Border Haat, Country and Gender Wise Segregation of Average Annual Spending Pattern on Haat Days



Perceptions of People (in sanctioned and proposed location) on the Involvement of Women in Economic Activities

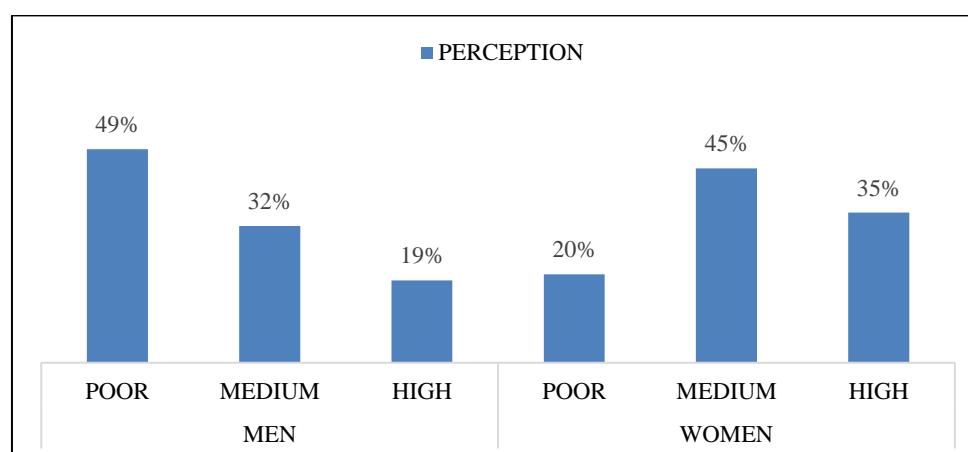
As was observed in the case of operational locations, socio-cultural factors and religious beliefs of the locality play a crucial role in determining the level of participation of women in border haats. Therefore, it is important to understand the perceptions of both men and women in sanctioned and proposed locations in the matter of participation of women in economic activities.

Following are the observations from sanctioned and proposed locations.

A) Women play an important role in agriculture, but it is hardly recognised by the menfolk.

While a majority of the women considered their level of involvement in agriculture to be medium to high, a majority of the men considered women's involvement to be either poor or medium (Figure 46). While 49 percent of the men opined that women are not much involved in agriculture, 20 percent mentioned that they only play a minor role in the agriculture sector. One prime reason for this difference in perception is that women are generally involved in agricultural activities as family members/helpers rather than self-employed or wage workers.

Figure 46: Perception of Men and Women about the Level of Involvement of Women in Agriculture



The traditional stringent social norms in Bangladesh severely constrain women's participation in agriculture and other economic activities. In addition, although women play significant roles in agricultural production as subsistence farmers, their role in agriculture goes mostly unrecognised.

However, such perceptions are not limited to the Bangladesh side. On the Indian side, too that perception exists, leading to differentiation in their wage rates. While a male

agricultural labourer in India gets a daily wage of US\$5, a women agriculture labourer gets approximately US\$4 per day.

B) Women's role in making decisions regarding purchases and sales is limited

A majority of the women mentioned that they have limited ability to intervene in decisions of the family regarding purchases, which is corroborated by the responses of the men respondents. (Figure 47). In addition, they are also not allowed to go to local haats to sell products without the permission of their family members (Figure 48).

Figure 47: Level of Involvement of Women in Making Purchase Decisions

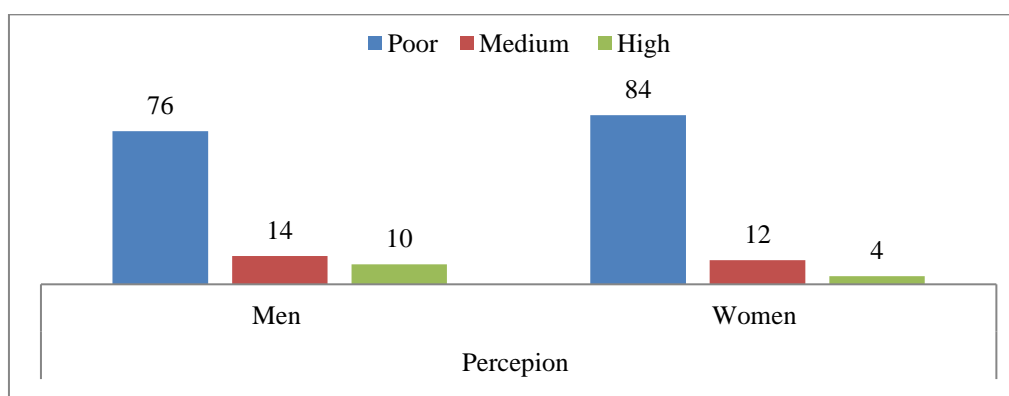
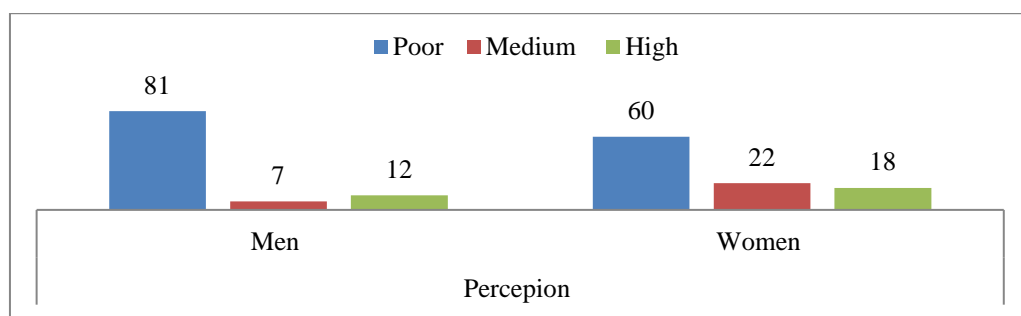


Figure 48: The Level of Involvement of Women in Selling Produce/Products at the Market



Location-specific perceptions of respondents on the level of involvement of women in purchase decisions and level of involvement of women in selling in the local markets is presented in annexures XXXVII and XXXVIII. There are multiple reasons for this- a) given that women in both India and Bangladesh, especially in rural areas, have to spend significant time in unpaid work they hardly get time to engage in economic activities, b) constraints of social mobility for women, c) they often lack the means (for example cycle, tractors to commute to the market) or capital to invest in a business, d) socio-cultural norms restricting the participation of women in trading activities.

Given these social constraints, it will be challenging to facilitate women's participation in the upcoming border haats either as vendors, or as vendees, or even labourers.

Level of Involvement of Women in Economic Activities in Surveyed Locations and their Expectations from Border Haats

In a few places such as Satrasal, Kamalpur, many women are primarily involved in agricultural activities but mainly as contributing workers, and in a few places, they help their family members to run shops. However, in a few places where women are more empowered, as in Siliguri, women are involved in economic activities such as running shops, cultivation, making handicrafts, etc.

In a few border villages, especially on the Indian side, there are various women SHG groups. However, most of them are newly registered and are trying to consolidate their finances; they usually practice poultry farming, piggery, cattle rearing, etc. A few SHGs are engaged in the home-based manufacture of items like traditional dresses, bags and cane and handicraft items. Unfortunately, these SHGs lack marketing linkages which severely limit their incomes and economic empowerment.

In a few locations, governments are also taking the initiative to build the capacity of women so that they can participate in economic activities.

Following are some case studies of women involved in economic activities at the surveyed locations. The case studies also highlight the expectations of women from border haats in empowering them further.

Case Study 8: Bag Production Centre at Kalaichar

The MSRLS⁸ provides employment-linked skill development training to the rural population to help them engage in gainful employment. The MSRLS has provided training in making bags among 17 women SHGs in and around villages near the Kalaichar border haat.

To employ the successful trainees, USHA in collaboration with MSRLS established the USHA⁹ & Meghalaya State Rural Livelihood Society (MSRLS) Bag Production Centre at Kalaichar centre in 2019. 12 trainees were selected and absorbed at the bag production centre. The centre produces roughly 400-500 bags per month and sells around 250-300 bags. The women workers get roughly US\$1 per bag. The average monthly income per worker stands at around US\$26-33. Raw materials are generally procured from Gujarat and Shillong. The bags are sold through various expos both within and outside the state. Mr. Rupam Hajong, the District Project Manager, NRLM, informed that samples have recently been sent to a trader in Chennai and orders are expected. However, marketing

⁸ A nodal state led non-profit society, established under the National Rural Livelihood Mission in India

⁹ A leading sewing machine manufacturer in India.

challenges loom large and might jeopardise the sustainable operation of the centre in the long run.

The border haat at Kalaichar can play an important role in providing a market for the bags in Bangladesh in the long run. But as of now, there are difficulties: *first*, the bag production centre is at a distance of approximately 20 Kms from the border haat; and *second*, the residents associate the border haat only with betel nut trade. Therefore, the Border Haat Management Committee (BHMC) needs to revamp the border haat and promote trade of other locally produced handicraft items without hampering the ongoing trade in betel nut.

Case Study 9: Women involved in making Metekar products

Satrasal (Assam, India) is a small village where female residents prepare different handicraft items such as mats, caps, bags, flower vases and etc., using stems of the Water Hyacinth plant (*Kochuripana*), which grows in the wild in and around all the ponds of this village. This is a unique art that is time-consuming but can be cultivated with negligible or no capital investment. The stems are collected from the wild, and after they are cleansed and dried, they are used to create various artifacts, which are locally called 'Metekar' products. To craft out big bags, they need two-three days, for a cap two days, for a mat one day, while two to three small bags can be made in a day. Although these women have been involved in this business for about five-six years, they are yet to form any group among themselves. Their household responsibilities also stand in the way of regular and systematic engagement in this work.

Aggregators from Dhubri visit their houses and collect the handcrafted items from them. The aggregators further colour and varnish them and provide the required finishing touches (such as stitching chains, buttons etc.) to these items and sell them in markets. For preparing a big bag, a woman gets US\$1.34 if it is not varnished, while a fully finished bag that is varnished and stitched fetches around US\$3-3.5. For small vases and hats they get US\$0.65-0.78 and US\$1.96, respectively. For mats the rate is US\$0.039 per square inch.

Since Satrasal is a small village and several households are involved in this handicraft, there is hardly any demand for these items. But there is significant demand for these handicrafts in the town. However, it is not feasible for these women to leave their household responsibilities and go to town every day to sell these products; therefore, they rely on the aggregators. However, they participate in fairs organised in their block to sell their items and they are interested in selling these items in the border haat. This additional income will provide much-needed support to men in meeting household expenses.

If a border haat gets established in Satrasal, these women will be able to sell their products in that haat as they are likely to capture the fancy of Bangladeshi vendees.

Case Study 10: Dying indigenous handicraft in Satrasal

In the small village of Satrasal, around 10-15 weavers of Assamese Saree (Mekhla), Gamcha and Lungi. Of late, due to insufficient income from their work, these weavers prefer to work as agricultural or construction labourers. A weaver informs that weaving a saree on the handloom takes two-three days and after selling it to a middleman, she is not left with sufficient profit. Therefore, it is comparatively advantageous for her to devote that same time to work as an agricultural worker to earn a living.

However, the scope for work as agri-labourer is also limited in Satrasal (in Assam) as this place is bound by West Bengal on one side and Bangladesh on another side. If the Border haat gets established then, these weavers can collaborate and put up a stall in the haat.

Case Study 11: Manipuri Weavers in Bangladesh

Jaylakhsmi Sinha, a 53-year-old women entrepreneur and weaver of Manipuri origin, residing in Sonarai, Bangladesh, believes that the upcoming Kamalpur- Kurmaghat border haat would enable market access to India for the Manipuri handloom items produced by them. She further added that this would contribute significantly to women's empowerment in Guler-Haor, Kalarabil, Mokabil, Ganganagar and Bhandarigram under the Islampur union in Bangladesh. All these villages fall within five km of the sanctioned border haat.

Handloom items produced by these weavers include Gamcha, Erufi, Pachhra, Lango, Bed sheet and Mosquito net. They depend entirely on the middlemen to supply various raw materials (viz. threads, colour etc.) and sell finished products. These middlemen generally provide door-to-door service whereby the middlemen supply the raw materials and procure the items directly from the weavers' houses. Sinha pointed out that the weavers are always denied good returns. The average annual income of a small weaver is US\$130-196, which barely compensates for their efforts. She further mentioned that owing to low returns and limited market access, the new generation is not inclined to this profession and the craft is likely to dwindle with time. In this regard, the border haat is a ray of hope for the Manipuri weavers. It can help them sell Manipuri handloom items directly to the consumers without the interference of middlemen.

She also highlighted that if the border haat gets established, they can easily procure new items from the haat and meet with their relatives residing on the mirror side.

Case Study 12: Women SHGs in Latu

In charge of Jivika Sakhi (Livelihood Assistant), Raina Begum was very happy with the SHG activities in the Gandhai Gram Panchayat under the Karimganj district in Assam (which is a little over 20 km from the proposed border haat at Latu). In the Gandhai GP around 132 SHGs are working in some of the following key items:

- Manufacturing Cane and Bamboo items (Shitalpati mat, baskets etc.);
- Manufacturing Traditional Manipuri Gamcha and dresses;
- Animal Husbandry;
- Manufacturing Agarbatti (incense sticks) and Scent; and
- Fishery.

Each of the groups has 10-11 members. While the women are engaged in manufacturing handicraft items and animal husbandry, men are mostly engaged in agriculture-related work. In addition, many men work in the middle east, mostly in Dubai as day labourers.

Fatrunissah Begum, a woman in her mid-40s is the Jahni SHG, who crafts *Shitalpati* mats from cane and baskets from bamboo. The selling price of Shitalpatis varies from USD 20- up to US\$130 depending on quality. The raw materials are bought from Kaliganj in Assam. Since these women cannot go to the markets, they ask local pickups to go to Kaliganj to buy the raw materials. The pick-up charges range from US\$48.44 to 52.36. Women SHG members working in the manufacture of these products get daily wages of US\$2.62-3.93. The finished products are generally sold at the local haats and middlemen from Guwahati, Shilchar and other places purchase the finished products from the local haats. Some of the nearby markets are Pramodnagar Bartol Bazaar (2 Km from Gandhai and it takes place every Saturday and Sunday), Gandhai Bazaar (it takes place every Monday and Friday) and Neelam Bazaar (3 Km from Gandhai and it takes place every Wednesday and Saturday). An interesting point to note here is that women are not allowed to go to these markets to sell their produce. Rather, they hire local pickup vans and pay them US\$52.36 for going to these local haats. In general, fixed and permanent buyers/aggregators operating in these markets purchase the items and pay cash immediately. Last year the SHG earned US\$523.64 as profit by selling Shitalpati and bamboo products; products involving a cost of US\$785.466 were sold at US\$1309.11. The President of the Jahni SHG informed that they are keen and ready to increase production if they get better market linkages. On average, each of the members earned US\$65.45-78.55 per month during the previous year.

Almost similar is the case with Matribhumi and Mahamaya SHGs, in the same Gram Panchayat. They mostly produce traditional Manipuri dresses (*Mekhla*– to wrap the upper part of the body; and *Lepnek* – wrap for the lower part) and Gamcha. Each of the SHGs has 10 members, and each member earns approximately US\$65.45-78.55 per month. Gamcha is one of the highest-selling products. The group produces three

categories of Gamchas – the best quality gamcha is priced at US\$7.85 per piece and the inferior variety is priced at US\$1.31 per piece. Yarn for the Gamchas is procured from Karimganj and the final products are sold at Patharkandi. The members travel once every month to Karimganj to purchase the yarn and to Patharkandi to sell the products. The products are procured entirely from a shop at Patharkandi. In addition, the local BSF camp also purchases Gamchas from these groups.

While the members of the SHGs were happy to learn the prospects of the upcoming border haat at Latu, and were confident about stepping up their production if they get orders, they remained apprehensive about going to the haat for selling their products. They were unsure whether their family members would allow them to go to the haats. This seems odd, given that Manipuri women generally belong to a social system where women are more empowered than men.

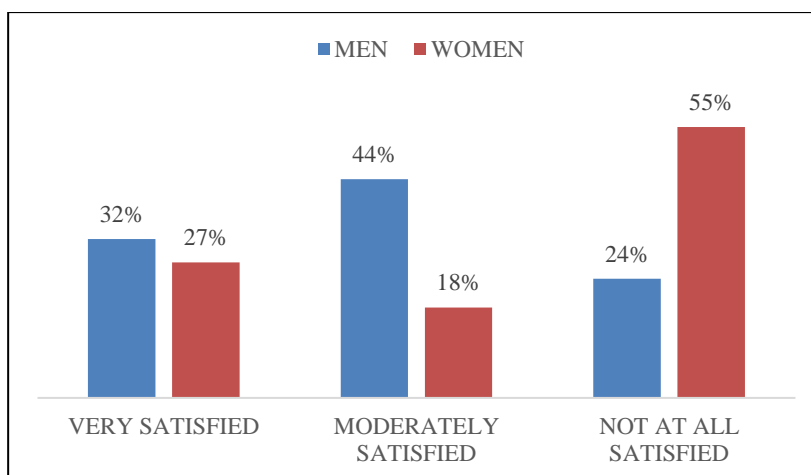
Discussions with members of all three groups revealed that the SHGs members use their incomes from these activities to improve their children's quality of education and health by employing private tutors and consulting good doctors when required. In addition, they are also investing profits in their existing businesses and animal husbandry. They all agreed that while in the initial days they had to face a lot of resistance from their family members, especially husbands and in-laws when they saw the SHG members earning from their work and spending them to enhance the quality of life of the family members, the change was gradually accepted. Now, their husbands and in-laws encourage them to engage themselves with the SHG activities increasingly.

Key Challenges in Participation of Women in Border Haats

A. Lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure in border haats

Dissatisfaction with the infrastructure of border haats was expressed by 55 percent of the women involved with the haat either as vendors or vendees or as helpers to vendors (Figure 49). One universal complaint has been the absence of proper washrooms, not to mention separate washrooms for women. A majority of the respondents, both men and women, mentioned that while washrooms are present in the border haats, none is usable. For the Balat-Dolora border haat, the BSF has constructed washrooms on the Indian side (within the Indian Territory that lies beyond the border haat). However, such infrastructure is absent on the Bangladesh side.

In addition, all the respondents mentioned that they have to go through a security check either while entering the border haat or coming out. While on the Indian side, the BSF has deployed women personnel, on the Bangladesh side, no such arrangement exists. This is one of the reasons why women do not feel comfortable visiting the haats. It is also in view of these inconveniences that men discourage their wives from visiting the haats.

Figure 49: Overall Level of Satisfaction with the Haat

In addition, none of the border haats has any medical facility. According to residents, the absence of medical facilities often discourages participation on the elderly. In addition, most of the border haat is without a shade or a cover (except for shades over vendor stalls.). As a result, during summer and monsoon, participation of both vendors and vendees declines perceptibly.

B. Lack of required means, knowledge and awareness

The women, especially those hailing from orthodox patriarchal Hindu families in Tripura, West Bengal, and Muslim families in Bangladesh, are apprehensive of registering either as vendors, vendors, or labourers. Reasons behind their apprehension include lack of experience in business, gender biases, absence of links with influential people unlike men and lack of capital/assets.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, women are still dependent on men for making any decision related to purchases and sales due to a lack of financial and economic independence.

C. Apprehension about security in border haats

While most of the women respondents in sanctioned and proposed locations have expressed willingness to participate at the border haats, they have raised a few security concerns. They fear that with the border haats in place, unknown men will come to the haats and indulge in unlawful, even terroristic activities. In addition, they mentioned that there are chances that drug smuggling in the border villages will increase, which could be ruinous for their children's future.

D. Socio-cultural and religious constraints

As mentioned earlier, socio-cultural and religious constraints are among the major factors that can affect the participation of women in border haats. These are generally ingrained and embedded through generations.

Recommendation to Facilitate the Participation of Women in Border Haats

- **Incorporating mandatory quota for women vendors/labourers in border haats:** Women respondents mentioned that women's participation as vendors in the border haat could only be facilitated by placing a mandatory quota system for women while granting registrations.
- **Creating awareness about border haats:** To remove apprehensions about security in sanctioned and proposed locations, success stories and experiences of women from existing border haats should be shared with residents. CSOs can play a crucial role in creating this awareness.
- **Addressing socio-cultural and religious constraints:** Sharing experiences and success stories of women and the border haats can play an essential role in this regard. As suggested by Shirin Akhter, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Bangladesh, people on both sides should jointly organise cultural events at the haats or places designated for establishing haats. Given that women on the Indian part are comparatively more empowered than their counterparts in Bangladesh, these joint cultural programmes can demonstrate how women empowerment has benefitted not only the women but also their families economically. Similarly, the Bangladeshi residents can showcase their art and culture before the Indian residents through women's groups. Such cultural interactions could play a pivotal role in re-orienting the outlook of the Bangladeshi people. In addition, such cultural programmes can help in building more vital trust and people-to-people connectivity.

Another crucial role in this regard could be played by the local governments, religious institutions, and civil society organisations in talking to the local residents and demystifying their inhibitions about women's position in society. They could instill in them the need and ways to empower women through the border haats. Given the utmost significance of religion in both Indian and Bangladesh, religious institutions would need to play an important role in facilitating women's empowerment through participation in various economic activities.

In addition, the civil society organisations by dint of their experience in grassroots connect, would also need to play the role of facilitators in motivating the men to accept the role played by women in undertaking various economic activities and thereby allowing the women to increase their participation in activities like farming, running shops, engage in the production of handicraft items, etc. Needless to clarify, such activities on women would provide invaluable financial and material support to their families.

- **Empowering women through Self-help groups:** Self-help groups or local women's associations can play a major role by providing the necessary economic support and training to women and help them to become economically and financially independent.
- **Establishing gender sensitive infrastructure in border haats:** The need to put in place gender-sensitive infrastructure at the border haats to encourage the participation of women. In this regard, mention may be made of basic infrastructures like clean and separate washrooms, deployment of women personnel for security-check, ensuring the security of women vendees, and availability of drinking water. BHMC would need to play a proactive role in addressing these infrastructural lacunae and encouraging more women to participate in the haats.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

Border haats can generate employment opportunities for women in the geographically remote villages along the Indo-Bangla border. Still, gender-specific socio-cultural norms, lack of awareness among women about border haats, lack of means, lack of gender-sensitive infrastructure in border haat, etc. are the major inhibitors.

For facilitating greater participation by women, there is a need to understand the socio-cultural and religious constraints they operate. Accordingly, appropriate strategies to reorient both men and women may be contemplated. Among others, one of the strategies would need to look at the local handicraft items that women SHGs have been producing and help them get their products marketed through the border haats. In addition, local government funds can be made available to the local women associations to capacitate them for more extensive commercial productions of locally made products. Since one group consists of approximately 10 members on average, the trickledown effect of increased sales through the border haats will be substantial.

Another strategy would be to work with key decision-makers in the communities and spread the need for women's empowerment and greater participation at the haats. Such a multi-pronged strategy will bring about the desired economic independence and empowerment of women that have been conspicuous by their absence in these rural societies along the India-Bangladesh border.

Chapter 8

Conclusion and Recommendations

Background

The positive correlation between international trade and economic development is widely acknowledged. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises international trade as an engine for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction and an important means to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the bulk of the available literature considers the trade that takes place through formal channels. The predominance of informal trade between the two countries has been attributed to various factors: lack of transport and connectivity infrastructure, several non-tariff barriers, lengthy documentation and cumbersome bureaucratic hurdles, etc., making it difficult for small traders to negotiate.

While such barriers can effectively restrict the movement of goods, they can hardly suppress the demands of consumers for their coveted commodities (for example, demand for Bangladeshi *Hilsa* in India). These demand-supply gaps lead to price differentials across borders and create the scope for small traders to indulge in informal trade. Also, in many geographically unfriendly regions encompassing hilly terrain and un-navigable water bodies along the Indo-Bangladesh border, it is easier for the residents to purchase goods from the neighbouring country through informal channels from distant markets in the home country. In addition, informal trade often becomes inevitable to address the issue of food security. It also becomes a panacea for economic deprivation where employment opportunities and sources of livelihood are limited.

Keeping these grassroots realities in perspective, the first border haat between India and Bangladesh was established in 2011 at the Kalaichar-Baliamari border in Meghalaya on a pilot basis. Given its success, subsequently, three more border haats were operationalised at Balat-Dolora, Kamalasagar-Kasba and Srinagar-Chagnaiya. CUTS (2016) highlighted the positive ways these haats impacted the lives and livelihoods of the local residents by reducing informal trade, providing additional income opportunities, arresting out-migration, and creating trust among the neighbours by facilitating more incredible people to people connectivity.

Since 2016, both Indian and Bangladesh governments have consolidated and deepened the benefits of border haat trade. These included enhancing the purchasing limit for vendees, increasing the number of vendors at the border haats, renewing the MOU for border haats

etc. In addition, both governments of India and Bangladesh sanctioned six more locations for establishing border haats. These newly sanctioned haats are at different stages of preparation for becoming operational. In addition to the sanctioned locations, there is a list of 73 locations that different state governments have proposed in India for establishing border haats.

Given this background, CUTS, in collaboration with Unnayan Shamannay, surveyed in 2019 to document the changes that occurred in the existing border haats and understand how the upcoming border haats can benefit local communities sanctioned and proposed locations. Additionally, the survey intended to understand the prospects and challenges that might emerge while establishing the border haats in the sanctioned and proposed locations. The overarching theme of the study was to gauge the immediate and probable impact of border haats on informal trade and women empowerment in the existing, sanctioned and proposed border haat locations.

Key Findings

Following are some of the key findings that emerged from the study:

Informal Trade

- Informal trade is predominant in the locations sanctioned and/or proposed for the establishment of border haats. A demand-supply gap in certain products coupled with impediments like lack of transport connectivity with urban centres, the difference in prices of commodities across borders, and various non-tariff barriers in trade through formal channels are key factors that encourage trade through informal channels.
- There has been an overall decline in the incidence of informal trade in the locations where border haats are operational. The decline in informal trade could be because - *firstly*, it created local employment opportunities which provided an additional source of income to the local people; and *secondly*, the border haats allowed trade in commodities that were earlier traded through informal channels, thereby discouraging trade through uncertain and often risky informal channels.
- Given that the border haats were instrumental to reducing informal cross-border trade, it is expected that the same could also happen in the sanctioned and proposed locations. However, this would hinge on an appropriate and location-specific selection of products based on appropriate demand-supply analysis. Trade through border haats is increasingly encouraged alongside the simultaneous diminution of informal trade. Based on discussions with several individuals in each location where border haats are expected to come up, a probable list of commodities has been presented in Table Annexure XXII. The commodities mentioned in Annexure XXII are those for which there is a significant

demand in the neighbouring country but are often traded in bulk through informal channels.

Income and Livelihood

- Except for the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya haat border haat a majority of the vendors across all the border haats have reported an increase in income. While some of the vendors have reported a decline, surprisingly, such decline happened despite the vendees' increased spending. This indicates an increase in the per capita spending of the vendees, which partly compensated for the decrease in the average footfall of vendees compared to 2016.
- The decline in income is associated with strict enforcement of the BSF and BGB and the enforcement of the 5 Km restriction. The linkage is stronger in the case of the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya border haat. In the other three border haats vendors have reported an increase in incomes. However, the increase has not been uniform across countries. While Bangladeshi vendors in Kalaichar-Baliamari and Balat-Dolora border haats have reported a greater income increase than those of their Indian counterparts, at the Kamalasagar-Kasba border haat, the Indian vendors have reported an opposite picture. Such differences are explicable in terms of the average income of the people living within 5 Km of the border haat and their preference patterns. A comparative analysis of the composition of the average annual incomes of the vendors between 2016 and 2019 shows a significant increase in the share of non-haat incomes in their total incomes. This is attributed to the fact that most of the vendors were found to have their shops in their localities and engaged in trading activities, which accounts for significant income support throughout the year.
- There has been an increasing trend towards the sale of non-agricultural products as compared to agri-horti products in the border haats. The reason for such shift towards non-agricultural products could be attributed to the following factors:
 - ❖ There aren't many locally produced agri-horti items (vegetables, fruits, spices etc.) that are available throughout the year compared to FMCG goods, cosmetics & toiletries, plastic and melamine products;
 - ❖ FMCG goods, cosmetics & toiletries, plastic and melamine products are more profitable to sell compared to vegetables, fruits, spices; and
 - ❖ FMCG goods, cosmetics & toiletries, plastic and melamine products are not perishable and in case there are unsold stocks, the same can be diverted through local outlets or sold on the next haat day.
- Majority of the buyers on the Bangladesh side purchase various FMCG items, cosmetics and toiletries, seasonal fruits & vegetables, tea, betel nut, and whole spices like – cumin, cardamom, and ginger. Vendees on the Indian side generally purchase items like vegetables, bakery products made in Bangladesh, plastic ware & melamine products, toiletries, gamcha and lungi.

- Some of the vendees mentioned that they purchase items from border haats to sell in their local markets, thus getting additional income from the border haats. It also emerged that vendees who indulge in reselling have in general higher annual incomes than those who purchase for self-consumption.
- Some of the vendees have reduced their frequency of visits to the haat owing to lack of availability of branded products (mostly garments), strict enforcement of restrictions by BSF and BGB, the reluctance of few vendors to sell one or two products to vendees (only sell to wholesale customers) and unavailability of select products. For example, betel nut trade is predominant at the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat and the haat hardly offers any other product of interest to the vendees.
- Many of the outmigrants have returned to their villages after the establishment of the border haats. They have started working either as vendors, transporters or as labourers in the haats. Incomes from haat are providing additional support to these stakeholders. Moreover, the average income from the haats was found to be higher for the transporters.
- The support service providers constitute the most economically and financially vulnerable group. They reported an increase in their incomes from haat in the last two years and mentioned that while income from haat is not sufficient to support their families' needs, it is still important to support in meeting vital requirements.
- Analysis of the stakeholder responses presented in Figures 23-28 23-27 (reveal that majority of the vendors, transporters and labourers can provide better education to their children, access better healthcare facilities and purchase home appliances (like television and refrigerator) and are thereby able to improve the overall quality of their living. However, the support service providers offered mixed reactions to the issue.
- The vendors and transporters opined that they reinvest the profits earned from their businesses (both haat and non-haat) to enhance their profits further. This is unlike the support service providers who have scanty earnings.
- The 5 km restriction and strict enforcement of regulations leading to a decrease in the footfall of buyers at the haats were considered to be among the reasons why vendors and vendees are dissatisfied with the existing haats. Another reason of dissatisfaction is the lack of basic infrastructure, viz. unavailability of clean washrooms and drinking water facilities. In addition, since the border haats are basically open-air markets, they are difficult for people to participate during summer and monsoon.

- Border haats are considered as an important platform for establishing people-to-people connectivity across borders. There are instances where relatives have met at the border haats after long years of separation. Such reunions do not require visas, and/or passports otherwise mandatory for travelling across formal immigration points.
- Border haats can play an important role in establishing cross-border value chains in select commodities. This has been found to be effective at the Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat. Raw betel nuts from India make way to Bangladesh for drying and peeling and are sent back to India for distribution and sales within India. In addition, the border haats can play an important role in shortening and simplifying the supply chain in select agri-horti products by allowing farmers to sell their produce directly to the buyers in the neighbouring country and the process enhance their incomes. In the sanctioned and proposed locations, the local residents were found to be quite eager about the establishment of border haats, as they are hopeful for an improvement in their incomes and livelihood opportunities. However, some of the respondents mentioned a few security concerns and the possibility of increasing the smuggling of illegal drugs. The locals also expressed apprehension that since the establishment of border haats could lead to a decline in informal trade, people involved in such activities might create impediments towards establishing and operationalizing border haats.

Involvement of Women in Border Haats

- The average annual income of women vendors from haats has increased in the last two years. Border Haat income of women vendors for Bangladesh was found to be more than that of Indian women vendors. Women were found to derive greater incomes from the border haats as compared to non-haat days. In this regard, the average non-haat income of Indian vendors was found to be higher than that of Bangladeshi women vendors. The reason for this are:
 - ❖ On the Indian side, many vendors sell similar items to Bangladeshi customers and hence the average profit earned by individual vendors generally remains low and
 - ❖ Since most of the women vendors also have their local shops, the average number of customers served by the vendors on non-haat days is higher than the haat days.
- Women buyers were found to be spending at par with the men at the border haats. Thus, encouraging more women to participate at the border haats is likely to boost the average daily turnover at the border haats.
- While border haats can play a pivotal role in creating employment opportunities for both men and women at the grassroots, women's participation was found to be limited and varied across countries and/or haats within the same country. A number of socio-cultural and religious constraints impair women's participation at the border haats. The socio-cultural and religious constraints were found to be more stringent in the orthodox Hindu families of Tripura and West Bengal and orthodox Muslim families in

Bangladesh. These constraints were found to be absent among tribal families. This is why Balat witnesses more women participation as vendors, vendors, and laborers compared to the other border haats.

- It was observed that though women play an important role in agriculture, their role is considered minimal by the men as women generally contribute as family members. Women can hardly make purchase decisions without the consent of their husbands or family members, let alone the option to visit local haats to sell products. Owing to a lack of economic and financial independence, they are hardly involved in the family's decision-making process.
- Unavailability of usable separate washrooms for women and unavailability of women personnel in BGB for security-check of the women vendees have deterred participation of women in the border haats.

Key Recommendations

Findings from the study re-emphasise border haats in improving lives and livelihood of the local communities living in remote villages along the India-Bangladesh border. While the study highlights several benefits accruing to the local communities, it also draws attention to issues that need to be addressed to consolidate and further deepen the socio-economic benefits of the border haats. In this regard, a three-pronged intervention would need to be undertaken— *firstly*, regulatory intervention; *secondly*, removing infrastructural deficits and deficiencies; and *lastly*, creating awareness among the relevant stakeholders.

Regulatory Interventions

There is an urgent need to consider changes in some of the provisions of the MoU on border haats signed between the Governments of India and Bangladesh to enhance business and promote greater participation of people, including women, at the border haats. In this regard, the following are recommended:

- The 5 km restriction should be removed to allow vendees from key urban centers to participate at the haats. This will provide the much-needed boost to incomes and businesses at the border haats.
- There is an urgent need to reconsider the list of commodities allowed to be traded through the border haats. One of the reasons for informal trade is the demand-supply gap for the commodities traded through the informal channels. However, as per government norms, live fish, poultry products and agricultural seeds are not traded through the border haats. However, this cannot restrict trade in these commodities – rather, it encourages trade through informal channels so far as these products are concerned. One can instead think of putting quantitative restrictions on the trade of these items – for example, instead of completely prohibiting trade in Hilsa, one can allow one vendee to purchase one hilsa fish. Since security personnel fear drug trade through

live animals, one can always ask vendors to cut the fish or meat before carrying it outside the haat premises.

- To promote women's participation at the haats as vendors, there is a need to introduce a mandatory reservation for women vendors.
- There is need to promote sale of local handicrafts in the border haat. In this regard, the border haat management committee would need to have representatives from local SHG Federations who will identify products manufactured by women SHGs in the region. For this to happen, the 5 km restriction should once again be done away with. This will not help enhance the benefits of the border haats accruing to the women in the concerned countries.

Putting in place appropriate infrastructure

- There is an urgent need to ensure that the washrooms at the border haats remain clean and are provided with running water. There is also a need to look into gender-sensitive infrastructures, like separate washrooms for women. This has been a major lacuna of border haats and deterrent to participation by women. In addition, drinking water facilities would need to be provided at the haats and shelters should be built for people to rest, especially during summer and monsoon.
- BGB would need to recruit women security personnel to carry out security checks of women vendors and vendors entering and/or leaving the haats.
- One of the reasons why the BSF and BGB personnel are reluctant to allow too many vendees inside the haat premises at the same time, is the lack of basic security infrastructure like CCTV cameras, scanners, and metal detectors. Governments should provide the necessary equipment to help the BSF/BGB better monitor and effectively manage the haats.

Creating awareness among the relevant stakeholder

- There is a need to generate awareness about border haats among various stakeholders, especially in the sanctioned locations. Such programmes should highlight issues like the purpose of border haats, their mode of operation, and the local communities' benefits. These will address apprehensions related to women's safety at the border haats and help the local communities rationalise their expectations from the haats. Most importantly, it will provide a platform where the existing and prospective vendors, vendors, labourers, and helpers can interact directly with the BHMC members.
- In addition, during the key informant interviews, many of the border haat management committees lack clarity regarding several issues. For example, some of them asked whether the 5 Km restriction is based on aerial estimates, the permissible limit for vendors, i.e., how much worth of goods they can carry inside the haat etc. These gaps in understanding lead to differences in rules set by the border haat management committees

and the application of such rules. Such discrepancies need to be removed through appropriate capacity building of all haat administrators.

The Way Forward

The need of the hour is to re-orient the overall understanding and outlook about the border haats. It should not be looked upon simply as a place where few people buy and sell commodities of daily need and promote **cross-border value chains in agri-horti products and spices** at the local levels. The case of betel nut trade through the Kalaichar haat is an apt example of how this can happen. Similarly, there is an urgent need to trade locally produced handicrafts through the border haats. Since women are primarily involved in manufacturing handicrafts, it will boost their income and encourage them to engage more in the border haats. This would be a prudent way of addressing the issue of women's empowerment.

There is a need to consider the border haats as **centres of cultural and knowledge exchange** among residents on either side of the Indo-Bangladesh border. Through such exchanges, people-to-people connectivity among local residents could be enhanced, thereby promoting mutual trust, ultimately helping in facilitating efficient border management at the local level. In addition, through these cultural exchanges, countries can share their stories of women empowerment and how that benefits families and communities.

Areas of Further Intervention

- Identify agri-horti products that have the potential for creating cross border value chains;
- Enhancing women's participation at the border haats;
- Mapping prospective women dominated handicraft clusters vis-à-vis the existing, sanctioned and proposed border haats;
- Generating awareness among stakeholders in the proposed border haat locations and creating a demand for border haats at the grassroots level suggests locations where border haats will be more beneficial than others.
- Exploring prospects for establishing border haats along the Indo-Myanmar border.

Implications of COVID-19 on border haats

The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced governments of many countries to enact stringent measures such as national lockdown, suspension of international trade, etc. Closing of border haats along the international border between India and Bangladesh from mid of March 2020 for an indefinite period is another measure adopted by the Governments of India and Bangladesh to contain the spread of this virus.

Given the significance of the border haats and their positive impact on the local communities, prolonged closure of border haats will be detrimental to the interests of border residents of both India and Bangladesh as it may force many people below poverty levels due to a decrease in income opportunities and non-availability of essential commodities that were available at affordable prices at the border haats.

Additionally, this can also result in the migration of border residents as income opportunities are limited in these border areas. The situation will be even more critical for women as their mobility is restricted given their domestic responsibilities and security concerns - a consequence of occupational segregation due to socio-cultural norms prevalent in a patriarchal society like Tripura on the Indian side and the villages in Bangladesh adjacent to the Border Haat. It is logical to be apprehensive that the pangs of unemployment and hunger might drive a few towards informal trade that was predominant in these areas before the establishment of the haats.

Given these inevitable adverse consequences of the suspension of border haats, it is crucial to re-open border haats at the earliest. COVID-19 is, however, a problem that is going to stay. Going by projections of contemporary medical expertise the world over, it seems that we have to reconcile ourselves to the 'new normal' where we will be required to abide by various practices about the maintenance of hygiene, sanitisation norms and physical distancing. To ensure safety, both personal and public, in this COVID-19 era it is equally important to ensure the practice of social distancing and adherence to other safety norms within the haat premises.

Annexures

Annexure I

Existing Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Balat-Dolora Border Haat

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Haat	Balat, East Khasi Hills District, Meghalaya	Lauwaghar, Dalora, Sunamganj Sadar, Sunamgang District
Day of the Haat	Tuesday, 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM	
Total Number of Participants in one haat day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 400 people participate in the haat. Vendors: 25 (There are two batches of 25 vendors each and they attend the haat on alternative days. Labourers: 50 (2 labourers for each vendor) Vendee: 350 Visitors residing outside the 5 KM radius of the haat are not allowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 850 people participate in the haat. Vendors: 25 Labourers: 50 (2 labourers for each vendor) Vendees: About 600 Visitors: 200
Topography	Hilly area	Plain Land
Population Density	Sparsely Populated	Densely populated
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture (paddy, betel nut and seasonal vegetables)	Primarily agriculture (paddy and vegetables). They are also involved in fishing and petty businesses.
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Dangar, Balat, Ingkyrsa, Kharabi, Phosdtein, Pyndenborsora, Pyndensohsaw, Mawpen, Dangardop, Pomblang, Dangar Dombah, Lalpani, Laitumsaw, Kakorkora, Rangweng, Panchering, Litumsaw, Dewsawlia, Laitumsaw, Jyllep, Pundendakni	Narayntala, Dolura, Fenibil, Gudigao, Kanabara, Nrayanta, Kamarbhit, khaspara, Bhai, Puratan Gudigao, Jhorjhora, Kmargao, Ampara, Jahannagar, Neidankanar
Major Markets	Balat Bazaar (once a week), Sonatula	Narayantola Narayantola (3

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
	(twice a week) and Dholai (once a week).	days in a week), Mangalkata (2 days in a week), Ampara (once a week).
Land Rights	The Saiyam (Khasi Chieftain)	Private land ownership
Commodities traded in the Haat (Country of origin wise)	Local products traded in the haat are bamboo products, betel nut, betel leaf, lemon, bamboo shoots, wild vegetables, broomstick, sweet potato, firewoods, pepper, jackfruit, pineapple, mango, papaya, litchi, pomelo, guava, lemon, banana, chilly, ginger, turmeric, luffa aegyptica, cane, tomato and potato. other products include horlicks, soap, shampoo, cosmetics, deodorants, detergents, paste, brush, diapers, etc.	Melamine products, plastic products, vegetables, beverages like fruit juice, packaged dry food like biscuits, chips, green peas, Bangladeshi readymade garments products especially jeans and t-shirt, some agricultural tools like spade, handicrafts
Commodities that were earlier traded informally but presently being traded through the border haats	Onion, diaper, horlicks, garments, oranges, ginger and turmeric	Dry fish, and poultry products, betel nut, betel leaf, tomato, sweet potato, spices - black pepper, chilly, jackfruit, lemon, pineapple, mango, papaya, litchi, pomelo, guava, banana, other products include horlicks, soap, shampoo, cosmetics, deodorants, detergents, paste, brush, diapers etc.

Annexure II

Existing Border Haat: Basic Facts About the Kalaichar- Baliamari Border Hhaat

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Haat	Kalaichar, West Garo Hills District, Meghalaya	Baliamari, Char Rajibpur, Kurigram District
Day of the Haat	Wednesday, 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM	
Total Number of Participants in one haat day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 500-600 people participate in the haat Vendor: 50 Labourers: 120 (2-3 labourers for each vendor) Vendee: 350-400 Visitors outside 5 Km radius are not allowed in the haat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 700 people participate in the haat. Vendor: 25 Labourers: 50 (2 labourers for each vendor) Vendee: 614 Visitors: 50+
Topography	Hilly area	Plainland
Population Density	Medium	Medium
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture (crops cultivated betel nut, cashew, black pepper, bamboo, tamarind, ginger, orange, and pineapple, paddy, etc.)	Primarily Agriculture (paddy, vegetable, <i>chinabadam</i> , pumpkin, watermelon, maize, jute, etc.); other than that fishing, day labour
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Bolangre I,II; Kalaicharpara, Lower Kalaichar, Upper Kalaichar, Gopinathkilla, Boldamgre, Salmanpara, Zikzak	Baliamari, Rajibpur Bazar, Bottoli Bazar, Jawneer Char Bazar, Shiberdangi Bazar
Major Markets	Mankachar, Khalaipara, Mahendraganj, Ampati, Betasingh, Garobada, Danalgre, Salmanpara, Hatsingmari, Tura	Rajibpur Bazar
Land Rights	Land rights are reserved for Garo Tribe only. Land can never be sold or bought and is only available on lease.	Private ownership
Commodities traded in the Haat (Country of origin wise)	Betel nut, oranges, tamarind, ginger, clothes.	Raw nuts (moja supari), garments including shawls, packet food (biscuits), fish, bed sheet

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Commodities that were earlier traded informally but are presently being traded through the border haats	Garments, ginger, betel nuts, orange	Processed and dried betel nut

Annexure III

Existing Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Kamalasagar-Kasba Border haat

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Haat	Kamalasagar, Bishalgarh, Sepahijala District, Tripura	Kasba, Brahmanberia Sadar Upazila, Chittagong
Day of the Haat	Sunday, 09:00 AM – 04:00 PM	
Total Number of Participants in one haat day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Per haat exactly 1,000 persons are allowed to enter the haat, including vendors, helpers, vendees and visitors. Vendors: 50 (out of which one is a Government shop supplying cooked food) Labourers: 250 (5 labourers for each vendor) Vendee + Visitors: 700 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 3000 people visit the haat in a day. Vendors: 50 Labourers: 50-100 Vendee + Visitors: 2500-3000 (this also includes a few support service providers, they enter as vendees to sell ready-to-eat food such as tea, masala puffed rice, pickle, etc. to vendors and vendees)
Topography	Plainland	Plainland
Population Density	Low density	High density
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture	Mostly businessman and labourer (60%), service (20%). A number of households (20%) have members working in other countries. Therefore their major source of income is remittance earning.
Villages within 5 km of the haat	Kamalasagar GP, Debipur GP, Bhatibari GP, Harihardula GP, Punabon GP and Radhanagar GP	Kharpara, Tarapur, Kasba sadar, Kalikapur, Charnal, Tetia, Dokkhin Kasba, Poschim Kasba, Sahapur, Akhor, Bogabari,
Major Markets	Debipur Market (within 1 Km from the border haar)	Kasba bazaar (nearest market about 1.2 Km from the border haat), Nayanpur, Kuti, Majlishpur, Emambari, Gangasagor
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Commodities traded in the Haat (Country of origin wise)	Toiletries, tea leaves, bakery, banana, spices, steel, baby food, diapers, branded chocolates, branded biscuits.	Dry fish, garments, plastic, toys, agri-implements, bakery products (vermicelli, condensed milk, homemade biscuit), plastic products, melamine products.
Commodities that were earlier traded informally but presently being traded through the border haats	Garments, onion, cosmetics and toiletries	Garments (jamdani saree), dry fish

Annexure IV

Existing Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Srinagar-Chhagalnaiya Border haat

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Haat	Srinagar, Sabroom Sub-Divison, South Tripura	Purba Madhugram, Chhagalnaiya, Feni District, Chittagong Division
Day of the Haat	Tuesday, 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM	
Total Number of Participants in one haat day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 1,300 participants Vendors: 27 Labourers: 81 (3 labourers per vendor) Vendees: 1200 <p><i>(Before November 26th, 2019, 300 visitors were also allowed to enter the haat)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 400 participants (although 1300+ participants should be allowed) Vendors: 27 Labourers: (2 labourers per vendor) Vendee: Although the haat should allow 1200, it allows only 300-350 vendees. <p><i>(Earlier about 100+ visitors were allowed)</i></p>
Topography	Plain Land	Plain land
Population Density	High	High
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture (mostly paddy, seasonal vegetables and betel leaf). Few also work as daily labourers in rubber plantations.	Primarily agriculture and remittance transferred by family members working in other countries. Few are also involved in private service, transport service.
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Madhabnagar GP, Rajnagar GP, Subashnagar GP, Krisnanagar GP, Srinagar GP, Dakshin Srinagar GP, Amlighat GP, Purba Takka Tulsi ADC, Parchim Takka Tulsi ADC, Darsarathangar ADC	East Madhugram, West Madhugram Mokamia, South Adharmink,
Major Markets	Srinagar (2 km), Belonia market (40 km) and Mono Bazar in Sabroom (18 Km).	Chaggalnaya, Jangal mia bazaar (1.5 Km from the border haat).
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership
Commodities traded in the Haat	Cosmetics, tea, diapers, baby food, stationery items, biscuit,	Plastic products, crockeries, melamine, garments, packaged dry

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
(Country of origin wise)	chocolates, saree, rice, dal, ceramic, spices, food items (horlicks, milk powder, cold drinks), seasonal vegetable, banana and other seasonal fruits, stationery items, steel utensils.	food, agriculture tools, electronic (third country product), daal, chocolate, onion, rope (nylon and jute), electronic items, seeds of vegetables, bags, fresh fish, dry fish, onion, plastic ropes, fresh fruits, plastic products, local bakery products, mosquito nets, school bags, sunflower oil, lock and key, chains.
Commodities that were earlier traded informally but are presently being traded through the border haats	Garments, onion, cosmetics, sugar, saree, vegetables, spices	Fish

Annexure V

Sanctioned Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Bholaganj

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Bholaganj, East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya.	Bholaganj, Companiganj, Sylhet
Topography	Hilly area	Plain Land
Population Density	Medium (Average population of local villages: 2000-3000 per village)	Densely populated
Livelihood	Agriculture and horticulture (betel nut, bay leaf, betel leaf, black pepper and orange etc). Residents are also involved in domestic and international trade (export to Bangladesh) in limestone; few also work as laborers in limestone industries.	Most residents are involved in the limestone business either as trader or labourer. People are also involved in cultivating products like tomato, spice, potato, coriander leaves, cabbage, cauliflower, bean, etc.
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Bholaganj, Dharambasti, Chaklabasti, Nayabasti, Tarai, Lailal, Kurikhal, Mawbanj, Umsawmaskom, Majai.	Volaganj, Noaganon, Sishgaon, Narayanpur, Toker Bazar.
Major Markets and distances	Bholaganj, Shela (15 km), Ichamati (10 km), Cherrapunji (52 km).	Bholaganj Bazar (about 2 Km)
Income	Per family, average annual income between USD 1309.11-26.18.22	High income
Land Rights	Under Village Council. Cannot be purchased or sold.	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	Pineapple, orange, jackfruit, banana, bay leaf, black pepper, betel nut, squash, soap and cosmetics, footwear.	Vegetables, fish (dry & live), plastic and melamine products, fmcg items (Mostly products manufactured by PRAN).
Products that could be traded in the border haat	Apple, grapes, orange, onion, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic, cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Reason behind informal trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Since Bangladesh is nearby, demand for essential commodities from Bangladesh is always there; however, people from Bholagunj mainly depend on Indian goods rather than Bangladeshi goods. In Bholagunj, there is a land customs station for exchanging goods. Still, other than limestone from India to Bangladesh, no other commodity is allowed through this port, especially no Bangladesh export to India takes place through this LCS. This is one of the major reasons behind informal trade. ▪ Since no trade is allowed through LCS, there is a propensity to exchange goods illegally across the area. ▪ The local people have a strong intention to sell their local produce to the adjacent Bangladesh market and get a better price than the prices offered by the traders/aggregators from Shillong. 	
Status of the border haat	Construction for the Border Haat has been set up. 13 stalls in each side are ready. Tendering is also done for selecting vendors. Other than that, a formal border haat management committee will have to be set up. ADC, BDO, SDO – Administration and BSF are listed as members of the haat management committee.	Sanctioned and the infrastructure is ready to open. Call for application for vendor vendee etc., has been started.
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bholagunj is too far from its capital city – Shillong. Both ways distance is nearly 200 km and with a very bad road condition, it is nearly impossible to travel to Shillong very frequently. Additionally, the local transportation system is also not adequate, only a shared car is available twice a day. • Bangladesh is very close to this location. The nearest market in Bangladesh is within 10 - 15 km. Trade is already happening between Indians and Bangladeshis from this location, but it's through illegally. • A formal border haat will restrict this practice, people from both sides will be benefitted. It can be assumed that illegal trade practices will be reduced. 	

Annexure VI

Sanctioned Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Kamalpur - Kurmaghat

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Kamalapur, Mouza - Mara Chara, Gram Panchayat - North Sonarai, Block - Kamalpur, District - Dhalai, State - Tripura	Champaray Tea Estate area, Union – Islampur; Upazilla – Kamalganj, District - Sylhet
Topography	Plainland	Mostly hilly tracts.
Population Density	Medium to High	Medium to High
Livelihood	Agriculture (monsoon paddy and vegetables)	Work as Tea garden labourers and some are also involved in agriculture activities (monsoon and summer paddy, vegetable, betel nut, jackfruit).
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Morasura, Borosurma, Methirmya, Darangtila, Chotosurma, Panchasi, Kosainala, Halhuli, Sonarai	Champara, Sonarai, Sarisabin, Kurma, Kalabon, Dakshin Galirao, Tilagaon, Dakshin Kanaidasi, Karunji, Bogachora, Susamanagar
Major Markets and distances (approximate)	Kamalpur market and Morasura (1km)	Kurma (twice a week and about 3 km away), Adampur Bazaar (twice a week), Sreemongal Bazaar (about 20 km away).
Land Rights	Privately owned	The proposed land of the haat area is under the national tea garden authority, a state-owned company.
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Jackfruit, litchi, pineapple, lemon, tamarind, herbicide, lemon, chilly, rubber, vegetables, bamboo, bitter gourd, cosmetics, chocolate, biscuit, spices (especially cumin), saree, cng tyre, hosiery items, cardamom, fruit, onion, sugar, lentil, kerosene, machinery parts, thread, shawl.	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Dried fish, melamine products, plastic products, seeds, herbicides, hilsa fish, prawn, tea, garments, and soap.

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
Products those could be traded in the border haat	<u>From India to Bangladesh</u> Grapes, orange, apple, pineapple, jackfruit onion cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits, potato chips cycle, thread, shawl or woolen products	<u>From Bangladesh to India</u> Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these products being informally traded.	Good quality products, relatively low price and demand from Indian side.	
Status of the border haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India acquired 1.36 acres of land to construct border haats and connect roads from the nearest border fencing gate to the border haat gate on the Indian side. Payment for the land transfer has been released to the owners of the lands (three farmers). The cost of land acquired was 2.19 crore. Construction work is yet to be initiated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Government of Bangladesh has given NOC.
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kamalpur is remote with limited connectivity with Agartala, which is about 120 km away. The roads are often cut off during the monsoon. But the area has good connectivity with Bangladesh. Livelihood opportunities are also limited. People have their relatives on the other side and hence security concerns are limited. Limited demand for local produce within the country, but significant demand exists in the neighbouring country. 	

Annexure VII

Sanctioned Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Nolikata-Sayedabad

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Nalikata, South West Khasi Hills, Meghalaya	Shah Arifen, Badaghat UP, Tahirpur Upazila, Sunamganj District, Sylhet Division
Topography	Hilly Terrain	Plainland
Population Density	Medium	High
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture	Primarily agriculture. Few are involved in fishing too.
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Nalikata, Kongkhak, Larkau, Query, Mawphullun, Fillagawan, Ranikor, Pamdaba.	Shahidabad, Lawrargar, Dalarpar, Sorarpar, Moksudpur, Dasghar, Masimpur, Lamacharan
Major Markets and distances	Pothkora (5 Km), Ranikor (3 km), Muflong (50 kms). People also visit Balat Border Haat (30-35 km) to purchase Bangladeshi products which are locally sold in Nolikata.	Lawrargar (2.5 Km), Badaghat Bazar, Tahirpur Upazila, Sunamganj (33 Km) Some businesses visit Dalora Border Haat to purchase Indian products (Footwear, Zira) locally sold in Lawargar.
Land Rights	Siyam (Khasi Chieftan)	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Betelnut, ginger, pineapple, jackfruit, orange, bay leaf, black pepper, cumin (zira), biscuit, chocolate.	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin:</u> Plastic and melamine products, vegetables, fish (fresh and dried) and poultry products.
Products that could be traded in the border haat	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Grapes, orange, apple, onion, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic, cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin:</u> Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason behind informal trade	Informal trade does not happen in this area (Informal trade between India and Bangladesh is a common phenomenon. No one can claim that this has stopped; however, as per local people's local administration and opinion, no informal trade is happening in this	

	area. We may consider and say that the trend of informal trade is relatively low in this area).	
Status of the border haat	Construction is complete. Processes like vendor selection, vendee selection etc., is pending.	The Border Haat construction has been completed (Shades, Washrooms, Freshwater source). Approach road is also complete. Local people applied for the procurement of vendor cards, but there is no progress to allot cards for vendees. No border haat committee has been formed yet.
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier, Nolikata was a tourism point where fairs and people from Bangladesh came to the Indian side. Also, local shops procure Bangladeshi products from the border haat in Balat. There was significant time and cost in travelling to Balat. That is why people had a long-standing demand to open a border haat with Bangladesh in this location. • Additionally, there is no market in Bangladesh around 2.5 km from the sanctioned spot. 	

Annexure VIII

Sanctioned Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Palbasti-Paschim Batuli

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Palbasti, Ragna District, Tripura	Pashchim Batuli, Juri Upazilla, Moulvibazar District, Sylhet
Topography	Plainland	This is a tea garden area and the terrain is semi-hilly.
Population Density	Densely populated	Densely populated
Livelihood	Agriculture (predominantly paddy cultivation). Few seasonal vegetables such as brinjal, tomato, Potato, cauliflower, cabbage are cultivated by them for self-consumption in winter (between November to April). Farmers owning land cultivate in their land and landless work as labourer in other's land. Few work at the Old Rangna Bazaar Land Customs Station (LCS) as labourer.	Agriculture (mostly paddy and vegetables on a limited scale)
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Baruakanti GP, Bhagyapur GP, Poschim chandrapur GP, Ragna GP.	Batuli, Daktila, Sagornal, fultola, Chungabari
Major Markets and distances (approximate)	Chandpur and Dharmanagar	Juri Bazar (20 Km) and Fultola Bazar (1 Km)
Land Rights	Private owners	Private ownership and government leasing
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin</u> Salt, Sugar, and cattle. <i>Note: Cattle smuggling is very rampant in the area and that is their main source of livelihood. However, no one spoke about it.</i>	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> FMCG items, fruit juice, cold drinks, garments, plastic product. keya soap, tobacco (biri).
Products those could be traded in the border haat	<u>From India to Bangladesh</u> Grapes, orange, apple onion cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers,	<u>From Bangladesh to India</u> Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
	powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits, potato chips, cycle, thread, shoes	
Reason for these products being informally traded.	These products are either costly or unavailable on the Bangladesh side, so Bangladeshi sources these products from India. For example, <i>Sathkora</i> (a fruit) is not available in Bangladesh, but they prefer it. In Indian cosmetics and toiletries, there is a perceptible demand for these products in Bangladesh. They are either not available in border areas or sold at premium prices in Bangladesh.	
Status of the border haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exact plot was decided. Land acquisition from the landowners (three farmers) has been completed and the fund has been transferred to the concerned owners. • Area of the Border Haat: 1.92 Acre • Approach road needs to be created to connect the sanctioned site to the main road. • Any construction work is yet to be started. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land has been identified. • Land acquisition process is yet to be initiated. • Any type of construction work is yet to be started.
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this location in the colonial era, there was a haat named ‘Jola Bazar’, but it got burnt in 1920. Therefore the residents want to reopen a haat in that site. They applied for the establishment of border haat in this area in 2002 and since then, they have been persistently trying to persuade the government to get it sanctioned. • Livelihood opportunities are very limited in these areas. Apart from paddy, the farmers on the Indian side hardly grow anything to sell in the market. • Products from both sides have been demanded on either side of the border haat. Trading will accrue welfare for both sides. • Hardly any product gets traded through the Old Ragna Bazar LCS. 	

Annexure IX

Sanctioned Border Haat: Basic Facts about the Ryngku-Baganbari

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Vill: Hatmawdon, Ryngku Bazar Block: Ryngku, Dist: East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya.	Village: Baganbari, Post office: Achirnagar, Upazila: Dowarabazar, and District: Sunamganj.
Topography	Low lying area	The surrounding area of the border haat is mainly plain land on the Bangladesh side, though high terrains can be found nearby, around 5 km. A small stream flows along Bogula bazar, which overflows in flash flood in heavy monsoon rains.
Population Density	Medium (Average population is 75-100 per village)	Population density is more than 1000 per square kilometre.
Livelihood	Agriculture and horticulture [Betel nut, Bay leaf, Betel leaf, Paddy, Banana, Pineapple, Black Brinjal, Citrus macroptera (shatkora), Sweet Radish, Black pepper and orange etc.] They also cultivate broomstick.	Primarily agriculture (Tomato, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Green chilli, Brinjal etc.) and fishery. Remittances is also a major source of income for the residents over here. Many households (approximately 40%), from Baganbari and Laksmipur village have migrants (especially in the Middle East).
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Hatmawdon, Mokhan, Mawdon, Nongtra, Delsora, Pathagat, Rungkumukh, Ryngku Bazar, Pathari, Katrang, Thangkurnow, Haphkata, Umnaang, Rynkuskong, Kyrdoli.	Baganbari, Gachgora, Peskargaon, Rajapur, Kathalbari, Koiyajuri, Edukona, Vangapara, Alamkhali, Kemperghat, Pekpara, Bogula, Bagahana, Noador, Baghmara
Major Markets and distances (approximate)	Ryngku Bazar it is the biggest village and runs twice a week. Other than that, in Hatmawdon there is a village market which runs once a week. People from Bangladesh keep coming to the Ryngku bazar to purchase goods.	Bogula bazar (1 km), Bangla bazar (4 km), Haknagar (6 km), Kandagaon (3.5 km)

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
Land Rights	Under Village Council. Cannot be purchased or sold.	About 5% of the total land is leased (around 5 km of the border haat) and the rest have government records.
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Pineapple, orange, jackfruit, banana, guava, bay leaf, black pepper, ginger, turmeric, tomato, pumpkin, betel nut, warm clothes, cosmetics, sarees, milk powder, shoes, fruits, spices, tea, betel leaf.	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish (dry, live), vegetables, poultry, plastic products, pharmaceuticals, melamine, ceramics, electronic goods, melamine products, poultry products.
Products those could be traded in the border haat	<u>From India to Bangladesh</u> Orange onion cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	<u>From Bangladesh to India</u> Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine .
Reason for these products being informally traded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ryngku is a remote location and access to nearby markets is difficult. It takes 4 – 5 hours to go to Shillong, the wholesale market, and the capital city of Meghalaya to buy commodities of regular use. Road condition is poor and only shuttle car service is available twice a day to reach Shillong. On the other hand, Bangladesh is nearby. Essential commodities can be brought from Bangladesh quickly. ▪ The local people have a strong intention to sell their local produce to the adjacent Bangladesh market and get a better price than the prices offered by the traders/aggregators from Shillong. 	
Status of the border haat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction work inside the haat premises has been completed, which includes shades and washrooms. • Road to approach the haat from the Indian side is well constructed but is poor and incomplete from the Bangladesh side. • Process of selecting vendors and vendees is pending. 	
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryngku is a remote location in East Khashi hills and is almost 90 km away from its capital town Shillong and the road connecting it is also not an all-weather road. Therefore, sourcing consumer goods and foodstuffs from Shillong is difficult for the residents of this area. On the other hand, Bangladesh is very close to this location and the nearest market in Bangladesh is within 10 km. 	

Parameter	India	Bangladesh
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before fencing, residents from both sides moved freely to through this region to buy products available in each other's country. • Peoples from both sides keep visiting all the nearest villages market in Bangladesh and Indian, which involve an illegal operation. A formal border haat will restrict this practice; people from both sides will be benefitted. It can be assumed that illegal trade practices will be reduced. 	

Annexure X

Sanctioned Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Shibbari-Bhulyapara

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Vill: Ghusgaon (near Shibbari), Block: Baghmara, Dist: South Garo Hills	Bhulyapara, Ghoshgaon, Dhobaura, Mymensing
Topography	Low lying area	Plainland
Population Density	Medium	2,500 people per square km
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture and horticulture	Primarily agriculture
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Chambalgre, Baniagre, Badmogra, Singbagre, Depogre, Dumbagre, Defulipara, Batabari, Kapasipara, Mandagre, Damdama, Baigonkona, Ghusgaon, Banajhuri, Rasnagre, Randokshi, Shibbari, Markachari. Silkigre, Bamongre.	Chandrakona, Baligaon, Atharbari, Dofuliapara, Ganee, Galaivanga, Bhuiyapara, Jigatola, Ghoshgaon, Bhalukapara, Jaripapara
Major Markets and distances	Weekly Haat at Shibbari (people from Bangladesh come – buy and sell products), Tura, Mankachar, Guwahati, Barengapara. Traders in Mankachar send Bolero Pickup vans to purchase commodities (mostly betel nut, oranges, pineapple, plastic products, bayleaf and black pepper from Shibbari).	Ghoshgaon Bazar (3.5 km)
Land Rights	Under Village Council. Cannot be purchased or sold.	Government ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	Under Village Council. Cannot be purchased or sold.	Government ownership
Products that could be traded in the border haat	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cosmetics, shoes, biscuits, soaps, hair-oil, orange, cumin, tea, pineapple, jackfruit, cashew, bay leaf, black pepper, ginger, turmeric, tomato, pumpkin, betel nut	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish (dry, live), vegetables, poultry products, plastic products, pharmaceuticals, melamine, ceramics,

		electronic goods, poultry products.
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cosmetics, shoes, biscuits, soaps, hair-oil, orange, cumin, tea, pineapple, jackfruit, cashew, bay leaf, black pepper, ginger, turmeric, tomato, pumpkin, betel nut	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish (dry, live), vegetables, poultry products, plastic products, pharmaceuticals, melamine, ceramics, electronic goods, poultry products.
Commodities those can be traded through the border haat	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Orange, grape, jackfruit, onion, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic, cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these products being informally traded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shibbari is a remote location and access to nearby markets is complex and cost-intensive. It takes a day to go to Tura or Ampati to buy regular use commodities and return to Shibbari. On the other hand, Bangladesh is nearby and people from Bangladesh would come there, easily carrying the essential commodities for sale. Farmers prefer selling to Bangladeshis directly since they get a better price than the prices offered by the traders in Mankachar or Tura. Many of the villagers have their relatives residing on the other side of the border. They communicate easily over the phone (Bangladeshi Sim Cards used since their Indian Telecom Service is very weak in the region). 	
Status of the border haat	Location identified, but construction is yet to start.	Location is finalised after meetings with India. But, still, no construction work has been started yet.
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exchanges (informal) are already happening between Indians and Bangladeshis in this location. Hence they are already aware of each other's requirements. People are coming and going to and fro nearby villages in Bangladesh to attend the haat. As of now, no security threat has been encountered. Thus even if Haat is established, the risk of a security breach is minimum. 	

	<p>Note: It was observed that wherever BSF and BGB officials allow people from Bangladesh or India to cross the border to attend haats, security threats are minimal or cease to exist. One of the reasons being the local residents know if at any point in time they jeopardise the peace in the border, their movement will be stopped and then will not be able to either meet their relatives across the border or they will lose access to cheaper and/or essential commodities available on the Bangladesh side.</p>
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Annexure XI

Proposed Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Satrasal - Bhurungmari

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Ramraikuti part 1 (Pillar no 1001-1003), Satrasal GP, Dhubri, Assam	Bahalguri, Char Bhurungamari union, Bhurungamari Upazilla, Kurigram
Topography	Plainland	Plainland
Population Density	Low density	Densely Populated
Livelihood	Primarily agriculture (Paddy, maize, Jute, wheat, maize, Mustard seed, potato, cauliflower, cabbage, betel nut, <u>betel</u> leaf, chilli. Remittance is also a major source of income for them. Many also work as school teachers in government schools.	Primarily agriculture (Paddy, vegetables, maize, peanuts, watermelon, pumpkin)
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Ramraikuti part I, Ramraikuti part II(A, B), Ramraikuti, Jhaskal Pt.I, Jhaskal Pt.II, Jhaskal Pt.III, Tolli Pt.I, Tolli.II, Paborchara, Jhapusabari Pt. IV, Jhoukuli (in Balbhut Panchayat, Cooch Behar, West Bengal)	Velliguri, Bahalguri, Sadartari, Chorowatari, Baniatari, Pashchimpara, Tukkarchar, Khasergram, Charbhurungamari
Major Markets and distances	Satrasal Bazar, Satrasal Haat (operates on every Monday, Thursday), Kaldoba bazar (7km- it is a whole sell market) and Gologonj (a wholesale market)	Char bhurungamari Bazar (3 km)
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cattle, cumin, orange, apple, cosmetics, sundari tree-wood, spade, salt, onion	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Kerosene, vegetable, handicrafts, paddy seeds (hira 2, bd-28, bd-29), soap (keya brand), poultry products, hilsa fish, garment, goat.
Products those could be traded in the border haat	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, orange, grapes, malta onion, cumin, cardamom,	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Paddy seeds, vegetable seeds fish and poultry products,

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
	cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these products being informally traded.	Lower price and good quality. This being a fenced and a strict border, informal trade is low in this area. However, informal trade in paddy seeds (China boro variety) is quite evident in this area as its taste complements the cuisine of Bengalis and Assamese, its productivity is higher and also the duration of cultivation is shorter (till May /June) over Indian variety whose duration is longer (till June / July).	
Status of the border haat	The concerned government officials visited the proposed location on January 18, 2020. A joint team of India-Bangladesh has visited the place near pillar no. 1001 to 1003 in Dhubri. Both sides have agreed to set up a border haat as early as possible on the proposed site.	
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The local market in Bangladesh is far from the proposed haat site. • Limited livelihood opportunities for residents in both side. 	

Annexure XII

Proposed Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Changrabandha-Patgram

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Changrabanda, Mekhliganj Block, Cooch Behar, West Bengal	Patgram, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur (pillar no. 842 close to Burimari BGB camp)
Topography	Plainland	Plainland
Population Density	Medium	500 people per square kilometre
Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture (Potato, Betel leaf, paddy, tobacco, maize, jute, banana and other vegetables for mostly self-consumption only) Different kinds of professions associated with the export-import trade through Changrabanda LCS (such as transporter, truck driver, labourer, Customs House Agents, exporter) 	Business (Export-import business, supply of crushed stone, tobacco business) and agriculture (paddy and maize).
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Changrabanda, Bhotbari, Ranirhat, Panisala	Munglibari, Tatipara, Vangapara, Palpara, Fakirpara, Amtali, Burimari, Islampur
Major Markets and distances	Changrabanda Haat	Burimari market (about 2 km far from the location)
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cosmetics, cooker items, fruits (date, pomegranate), spices (cumin, cardamom, turmeric), potato, mango.	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Plastic items, hilsa fish, mosquito nets, garments products, jamdani saree, juice items, soap (a particular brand “keya”), vermicelli, jaggery, radish.
Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Products those could be traded in the border haat	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, grape, orange, pomegranate onion cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Paddy seeds, vegetable seeds fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
	milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits, potato chips, sugar shoes, sugar	
Reason for these products being informally traded.	Substantial demand in India due to relatively low prices and quality products Few items such as paddy seeds, hilsa, jaggery are of better quality in Bangladesh. Port restriction on most of the commodities. High duty on most of the commodities if imported into India through formal border points. Further, many of the products are not available in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people's fascinations for these products are the main reasons for the informal trade.	
Status of the border haat	It is one of the locations proposed by India. Custom officials from India and BSF have visited a plot adjacent to Changrabanda LCS to analyse the potential of establishing a border haat in this area. But, nothing moved after that.	
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited income opportunities for border residents • There exists sufficient demand for each other's commodity. • Informal trade, which is predominant, will reduce income post establishment of border haat. • Border haat could be aligned to the concept of border tourism which the Mekhliganj block is planning to generate livelihood opportunities for the locals. • The location close to the Changrabanda-Burimari LCS, an immigration point, will receive significant tourist attraction and customers. 	

Annexure XIII

Proposed Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Latu-Beyanibazaar

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Latu, Karimganj, Assam	Nayagram, Muriya, Biyanibazar, Sylhet
Topography	Low lying	Plainland
Population Density	Medium to High.	1200-1300 households per square km
Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture (mostly paddy and some vegetables) is predominant. • Trading in agricultural items (mostly retail). • Small shops selling grocery and or construction materials. • One person from every family is working in Dubai or other countries in the Middle East. 	Primarily agriculture and fishing. Few are involved with the service sector, and many families depend on remittance earning (earnings of the members working abroad).
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Kurikhala, Nayabazaar, Dasgram, Noyamora, Cheliadih, Malaygram, Gobindapur (this village is beyond the fence on the Bangladesh side), Balidara, Teshua, Mahishashan, Patu, Shorigram, Sajpur, Deuli, Fatehpur, Phurahuria.	Nayagram, Astaghor, Saypor, Borda Mahakokapon, Patharipara, Tajpur, Chatalpur, Atua, Islampur, Abhongi
Major Markets and distances	Pramodnagar-Bartol Bazaar, (2km from Latu, and operates Saturday and Sunday); Gandhi Bazaar, (1km from Latu, and operates on Monday and Friday); Neelambazaar, 3km from Latu, and operates on Wednesday and Saturday); Latu Bazaar (operates on Saturday and is operating since the British time).	Sarpara Bazar (about 1km from the Nayagram Village).
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country)	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cosmetics, clothing, shoes, spice items, apple, grape, pomegranate,	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish (dry & live), vegetables, plastic and melamine products,

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
and are also informally traded	strawberry, chocolate, motorcycle and car parts, jackfruit, garlic, and FMCGs	soaps, toilet washing liquid, soft drinks, bakery items, etc.
Products that could be traded in the border haat	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, grape, orange, pomegranate onion, bean cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these products being informally traded	The mentioned products are not available in India and the prices of the products such as plastic items, bakery items, vegetables are high. People in remote locations are eager to consume such products at relatively lower prices. High demands in Bangladesh exist due to relatively low prices and quality products compared to available local products.	
Status of the border haat	Joint survey of the location (Pillar No. 1363) has been done and a meeting between representatives from India and Bangladesh happened. But the location is yet to be finalised and awaiting a response from Bangladesh.	
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The location is well connected with Karimganj and Sutarkandi in Assam. The Latu Bazaar has been happening since the British period. There is a memorial called “Malegarh Tila” for soldiers who died during Sepoy Mutiny. Thus it can also serve the purpose of tourism. In Bangladesh too communication network up to the location is available In Bangladesh, though, a market is available within 1km only limited products are available in the market, so they generally have to depend on Tajpur bazar, which is located about 4km away. 	

Annexure XIV

Proposed Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Nunsuri-II - Thegamukh

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Nunsury II, Lunglei District, Mizoram	Tegarmukh, Barkal Upazila, Rangamati District, Chittagong Division
Topography	Hilly terrain	Hilly area along with riverine terrain
Population Density	Low to Moderate	Sparsely Populated.
Livelihood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily agriculture (Eggplant, gourd (sweet), radish, sesame, flat beans, chilli, pumpkin, lady's finger, potato, tomato, carrot, cabbage, paddy). Few people have their boats and it help them to gain some part of their earnings. Few also work as building/construction labourer in nearby places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture (paddy, turmeric, Banana, watermelon and zinger) is the main profession in the locality. Tree Plantation (especially Teak, <i>segun</i>) in the hill for hardwood is very popular. There are also businessmen associated with Thegamukh market.
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Borapansury-I, Borapansury-II, Bornasuri, Korpobathora, Ugulchuri, Satapanchuri, Thurgachora, Nunsury-I	Andarmanik, Karolachuri, Boatek, Ulusuri, Perachora, Guisuri, Goihatchora, Noapara, Kalmonchora, CM Para, Dajarpur, Denuchora, Memberpara, Dulongbonya, Damaipara, Goihatchora
Major Markets and distances	Major markets by the nearby location is Kamlanagar I, and Borapansury II market, Demagiri (6-7 km away from Nunsury II) and Tiperaghat III in Lunglei district (All these markets source products informally from Bangladesh). People from nearby villages purchases goods from Thegarmukh (situated in Bangladesh) and sell the commodities in the nearby Demagiri	Response from UNSY: Thegamukh market is located opposite the proposed border haat site. Besides that, there is only one market near the area 5 km away from the Indian side, called Demagri Bazara. Another famous Bazar called Choto Harina is around 30 KM away (Waterway distance) from Thegamukh.

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
	market. Though, transportation is an issue. Thegamukh (just 2 km away from Nunsury II and 5 mins. by boat) is the nearest market from the Bangladeshi side.	
Land Rights	Low to Medium (Average family income varies from US\$58.91 per annum to US\$261.822 per annum)	There are two types of income groups in the area. Those who are engaged with informal border business are relatively rich. Those who are farmers are relatively poor. The average income is US\$10.57 per day, which depicts the good financial ability among the locals.
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	Forest area – CADDC Other cultivable areas – the landowner	It is a hilly area and an ethnic community habitation. The land rights are not the same as those on the mainland. Usually, the chief of the community called ‘Headman’ distributes land to their subject for farming. But there is no formal land ownership here. But any outsiders are not allowed to buy land here.
Products that could be traded in the border haat	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Mobile phone (specially Smartphone), ginger, turmeric, onion, tea leaves, cigarette, kerosene, cosmetics, daily toiletries, juice, biscuit, bamboo, broomstick, sesame, spices (like cumin and, cardamom, etc.)	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Melamine products, cement, plastic products, peas, mobile phone (classic), medicine, vegetables, dry & live fish, rice, lentil, electronic products (television, radio etc.), solar home lighting systems, gas cylinder and vegetables, garlic.
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, orange onion cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate,	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Garlic, fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
	biscuits, potato chips, shoe socks, bed sheets	
Commodities that can be traded through the border haat	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, orange onion cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits, potato chips, shoe socks, bed sheets	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Garlic, fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these products being informally traded	Some produce is low in cost on the Bangladesh side. Some regular commodities are not available in local markets and its time consuming to get the same. The same products are easily available on the other side of the Border. For e.g. small cooking Gas Cylinder is easily available from Bangladesh, which is challenging to get from the Indian side.	
Status of the border haat	Proposed by the Government of Mizoram and currently, it's under consideration by both India-Bangladesh Government.	Land has been proposed but not formally
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The location is very remote and from the Indian side, far away from the State capital of Mizoram. Local people are primarily dependent on local produces and partly on the other side of the Tegarmukh market for everyday household usages; some come from Borapansuri to sell their commodities near the location. If the Border Haat happens, it will be helpful for the locals in terms of minimising time, cost, legal trade and easy accessibility of regular goods. Interestingly, no one could give a proper justification regarding the rationale for choosing the location. Even the People's Representatives (Member of Parliament, member of the Legislative Assembly, Chairman of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) were unaware that a Border Haat has been declared. The nearest market from Thegamukh is more than 20km, and the only communication way is a river. Inhabitants of this area are mainly dependent on Indian products and currently, these products are being informally traded under a mutual understanding with BGB and BSF. If this understanding breaks, people will deprive of their demanded products. So, the introduction of border haat can be a sustainable solution. Notably, people from the Indian side are also very much dependent on the products of Bangladesh. 	

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
	<p><i>(Interestingly, no one could give a proper justification regarding the rationale for choosing the location. Even the People's Representatives (Member of Parliament, member of the Legislative Assembly, Chairman of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) were unaware that a Border Haat had been declared. Stakeholders in Bangladesh were also completely unaware that Nunsuri-II has been proposed as a suitable location for establishing border haat.)</i></p>	

Annexure XV

Proposed Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Sahebganj-Bhurungmari

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Sahebganj, Cooch Behar, West Bengal	Khamar patranabish (Ward no 2, near Baghbhandar BGB camp 4), Bhurungamari Sadar Union Parishad, Bhurungamari, Kurigram.
Topography	Plain Land	Plain Land
Population Density	High density	High density
Livelihood	Agriculture (mainly Jute, select vegetables, paddy, maize, mustard seeds), local business and informal trade.	Mainly agriculture (Paddy, vegetables, maze, tobacco, watermelon, pumpkin).
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Bamonhat I, II; Sahebganj I, II; Kalmati, Durganagar, Kalaghati,	Khamar patranabish, Baghbhandar, Bhot Haat, Manik Kazi, Isshwar Barua.
Major Markets and distances	Sahebganj haat (1 KM)	Bhurungamari Bazar (about 4 Km)
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Spices (cumin, cardamom, cinnamon), shoes, Indian saree, onion, garlic, toiletries, jute seeds, salt, betel leaf and nuts, rice (not local) tea leaves, potato, ginger & other vegetables, medicine, cosmetic and onion seeds, fertilisers, apple, mango, tobacco leaf.	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish, plastic product, readymade garments, jamdani saree, nokshi katha, hybrid paddy seeds (29, 28, hira, china boro), FMCGs, jaggery, dry fish, ceramic utensils, melamine utensils, fertilizers, gold, chili, garlic
Products that could be traded in the border haat	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, orange, grapes, spring onions cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Paddy seeds, vegetable seeds, fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these	Price difference, Difference in Quality, Border not fenced, High demand	

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
products being informally traded	for commodities in each other's countries.	
Status of the border haat	India customs officials and BSF have visited a location in Sahebganj for the establishment of a border haat. Their feedback is the border should be fenced first.	Recently a plot of land has been demarcated by a government surveyor for the establishment of border haat.
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient employment opportunities apart from agriculture in both the sides. • High informal trade and demand for cross-country products. • High out-migration in Sahenganj. 	

Annexure XVI

Proposed Border Haat: Some Basic Facts about Silsury-Bagaichari

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
Location of the Sanctioned Haat	Sahebganj, Cooch Behar, West Bengal	Khamar patranabish (Ward no 2, near Bagbhandar BGB camp 4), Bhurungamari Sadar Union Parishad, Bhurungamari, Kurigram
Topography	Plainland	Plainland
Population Density	High density	High density
Livelihood	Agriculture (mainly Jute, select vegetables, paddy, maize, mustard seeds), local business and informal trade	Mainly agriculture (Paddy, vegetables, maize, tobacco, watermelon, pumpkin)
Villages within 5 kms of the haat	Bamonhat I, II; Sahebganj I, II; Kalmati, Durganagar, Kalaghati	Khamar patranabish, Baghbhandar, Bhot Haat, Manik Kazi, Isshwar Barua
Major Markets and distances	Sahebganj haat	Bhurungamari Bazar (about 4 km)
Land Rights	Private ownership	Private ownership
Commodities in demand (origin wise country) and are also informally traded	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Spices (cumin, cardamom, cinnamon), shoes, Indian saree, onion, garlic, toiletries, jute seeds, salt, betel leaf and nuts, rice (not local) tea leaves, potato, ginger & other vegetables, medicine, cosmetic and onion seeds, fertilisers, apple, mango, tobacco leaf	<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Fish, plastic product, readymade garments, jamdani saree, nokshi katha, hybrid paddy seeds (29, 28, hira, china boro), FMCGs, jaggery, dry fish, ceramic utensils, melamine utensils, fertilizers, gold, chili, garlic
Products that could be traded in the border haat	<u>India to Bangladesh</u> Apple, orange, grapes, spring onions, cumin, cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and garlic cosmetics, soap, diapers, powder milk, tea, chocolate, biscuits and potato chips	<u>Bangladesh to India</u> Paddy seeds, vegetable seeds, fish and poultry products, items of plastic and melamine
Reason for these	Price difference, Difference in Quality, Border not fenced, High demand	

Parameters	India	Bangladesh
products being informally traded	for commodities in each other's countries.	
Status of the border haat	India customs officials and BSF have visited a location in Sahebganj for the establishment of border haat. Their feedback is the border should be fenced first.	Recently a plot of land has been demarcated by a government surveyor for the establishment of border haat
Rationale for choosing the location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient employment opportunities apart from agriculture in both the sides. • High informal trade and demand for cross country products. • High out migration in Sahenganj. 	

Annexure XVII

Findings from addition four locations in India

Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
Location of the Proposed border Haat	Fulbari, near border pillar no.893/8-s (Name of the mirror location in Bangladesh-Banglabanda)	Khurka, near border pillar no.358/4-R (Name of the mirror location in Bangladesh-Haripur)	Doradabri, near border pillar no.849/1-s (Name of the mirror location in Bangladesh - Awliarhat, Patgram Subdivision)	Tin Bhiga Corridor, Mekhliganj, Cooch Behar (Name of the mirror location in Bangladesh-Kuchulibari, Dahagram)
Topography	Plain area	Plain area	Plain area	Plain area
Population Density	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium to High	Medium to High
Type of the people residing (tribe, religion)	Muslim majority	Majority Hindu	Hindu, Muslim	Hindu, Muslim
Livelihood	Agriculture, labourer in tea cultivation	Main livelihood is agriculture Cultivation of Paddy (Amon, Boro), Jute, Wheat, Potato, Tomato In winter vegetables like Cauliflower, Cabbage.	Main livelihood is agriculture (Cultivation of Potato, Maize, Jute, Tea, Paddy)	Main livelihood is agriculture (Cultivation of Paddy, Mustard, Potato, Jute, and Tea)
Villages within 5 kms. of the haat	School Dangi, Dhajaganj, Pradhan Para, Lokasthan and Bhina Bari.	India: Khurka, Bhatandangi, Khikri Basti (Adibasipara), Madhupur, Pachabari, Bhagat Bari,	Ratanpur, Bora Kumor, Jamalda (157), Doradabri (161), Panishala, Bakuabanda.	Tinbigha, Fulkadabri, Andaram Kharkharia, Kuchlibari, Dangarhaat, Bhulardanga,

Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
		Jamdangi, Jhar Basti, Dangipara, Kakarmoni, Bardhoi, Jelepura, Mousinra, Roumoti, Bhariadangi. Bangladesh: Haripur, Kandal, Bujrup, Kadosokha, Bongaon.	Average household is approximately 250 per village.	Nakherkari etc. Average household is approximately 200 - 250 per village.
Major Markets	Fulbari (5 kms.), Jhuitakhali (3 kms.), Behruhat (5-6 kms.), Siliguri (10 kms.)	Rasakhowa (10 km - Only Sundays), Khurka (1 km.- everyday evening)	Changrabandha (9km.), Jamaldah (9 km.), Ranihat (8 Km.) Local Doradabri market has approximately 60 shops.	Mekhliganj (10 kms.), Maynaguri (40 kms), Jalpaiguri (60 kms), Siliguri (95 kms.)
Income	Average income here varies from INR.1, 08,000/- - INR.4, 00000/-.	Average income here varies from INR.84, 000/- - INR.1, 20, 000/- per annum.	Average income here varies from INR.96, 000/- - INR.1, 20, 000/-.	Average income here varies from INR.75000 - 1, 20, 000
Land Rights	Individual lands (Land acquired here by an individual on an average 5-7 acres).	Individual lands (Land acquired here by an individual is on an average 4-5 acres).	Individual lands (Land acquired here by an individual is on an average 5-7 acres).	Individual lands (Land acquired here by an individual is on an average 3 - 4 bigha).
Commodities in demand (origin wise)	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cattle	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Salt, Sugar.	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Cattle (Few	<u>Products of Indian Origin:</u> Rice, Cosmetic

Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
country) and are also informally traded		<u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Cosmetics (soap), Hilsa fish, Biscuits, Garments.	days before our visit, one shootout happened near the border fence as per the locals to resist smuggling), FMCG, cosmetics <u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Cloth, PRAN Food products.	Products, FMCG <u>Products of Bangladesh Origin</u> Cloth, PRAN Food products. Fish
Potential Commodities (other than those mentioned above)	<u>Products of Indian Origin (Demanded in Bangladesh):</u> Cosmetics, Vegetables <u>Products of Bangladesh Origin: (Demanded in India):</u> Vegetables, melamine, cosmetics (Keya soap etc.), garments, hilsa fish.	<u>Products of Indian Origin (Demanded in Bangladesh):</u> - <u>Products of Bangladesh Origin: (Demanded in India):</u> Vegetables, melamine	<u>Products of Indian Origin (Demanded in Bangladesh):</u> Vegetables <u>Products of Bangladesh Origin: (Demanded in India):</u> Vegetables, melamine, cosmetics (Keya soap etc.), hilsa fish.	<u>Products of Indian Origin (Demanded in Bangladesh):</u> Vegetables, Rice, Tea <u>Products of Bangladesh Origin: (Demanded in India):</u> Fish, plastic products, melamine, Shree etc.
Reason for informal trade	Cattle are in demand in Bangladesh and there is no formal channel available to bridge the	No informal trade happens here, as per the locals.	Though agriculture is the main source of income here, people who don't have their land find	Because of the porous border, it is easier to trade informally between India and Bangladesh through this

Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
	demand and supply gaps.		smuggling the easiest way to earn sufficient money.	area.
Status about the proposed location	Nothing significant, the BSF commandant assured us that he would talk to his higher officials and let us know about the future progress and prospects.	Nothing significant.	Nothing significant, the Border haat concept was very new to the locals and they were excited. Changrabandha LCS is close by.	This can be a good idea to build up new border haats in Tin Bigha Corridor and with new border haats the informal trade between the two countries will be reduced.
Rationale for proposing establishment for border haat in this location	Here most of the population is dependent on agriculture and also a large part is involved in as labourer in tea cultivation. A male tea labourer gets at around INR.250/- - INR.300/- as daily wage, whereas a woman labourer gets around INR.150/- as daily wage. The nearest tea factory is at Jhutiakhali, which is almost	If a Border Haat comes up in this location, it will help the male members earn some extra money to sustain themselves. The women tobacco labourers will have some alternate opportunities to earn by other profitable means.	Here most of the population is dependent on agriculture. People who don't have their land, migrate (10%-15% of the population) to the other neighbouring states or to Kolkata. This haat may increase the overall income of the residents of the nearby locations and through Border haat this out migration issue can be	Local people are mostly dependent on agriculture. A large number of people are migrating to a different part of the country for their livelihood. Opening a new border haat will allow at least a few people to find an alternate livelihood from the border haat.

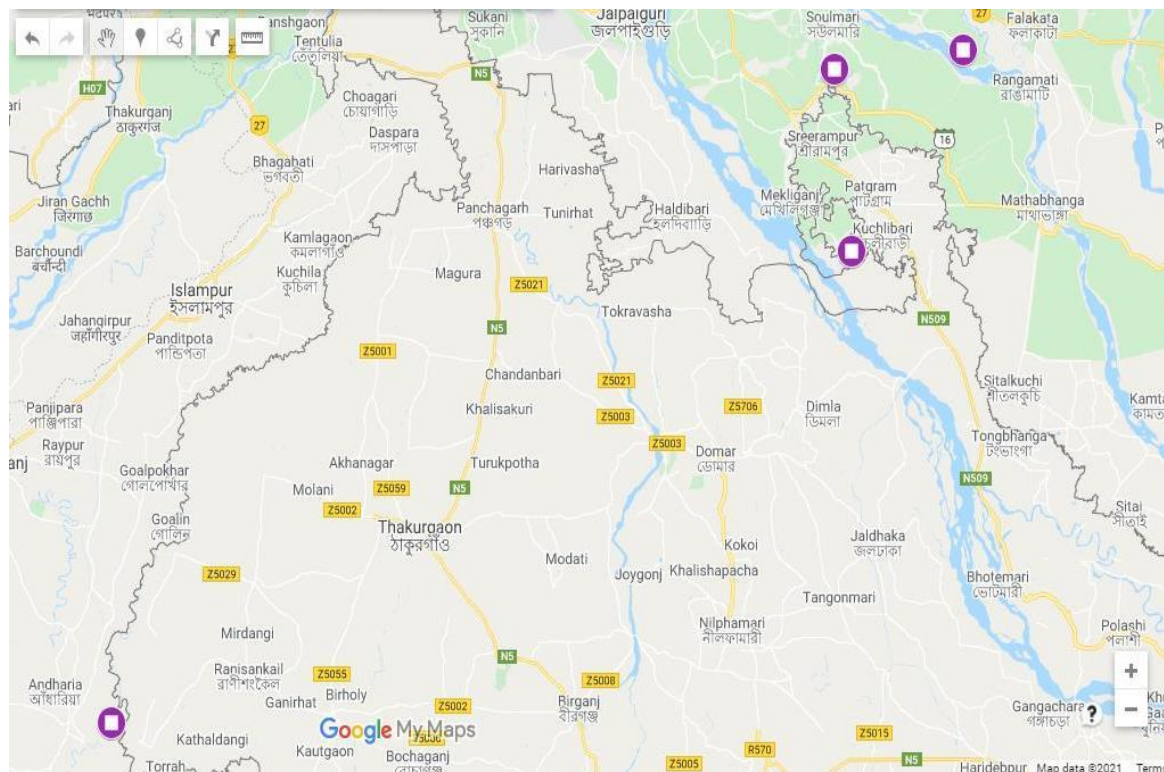
Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
	3 km. away from sardar para. They suffer from losses due to the borders. Most of the land for the farmers from the Indian side is at zero points. They think border haat may develop a good relationship with Bangladeshi people, ultimately reducing the loss of their agricultural products and getting the opportunity to sell them in the haat. This haat may increase the overall income of the residents of the nearby locations.		addressed.	
People's perspective about the establishment of border Haat in this place	They are very excited about the concept of border haat.	They are very excited about the concept of border haat.	They are very excited about the concept of border haat.	Local people are very enthusiastic about the concept of border haats. A few of them

Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
				have already heard about the border haats. According to them, with a new border haat, the entire socioeconomic status will change in this area.
Suitability of the place to establish border haat	The surveyed location named Sardar para at Fulbari is just 4-5 km away from Fulbari land customs station. Mostly stone moves from this border, so border haat will help the locals to sell local produce, which will uplift local livelihood.	A place is a suitable place for IBBH. This place doesn't have access to a good market to sell their products, the nearest Khurka market is not profitable to sell the local produce.	A place is a suitable place for opening a new border haat. Though local farmers are selling their agricultural products to the nearest local markets, they will get a chance to sell at the border haat. As per the survey, the establishment of Border Haat in this area may improve the standard of living and fulfil local needs.	Yes this place is a suitable place for opening a new border haat. Though local farmers are selling their agricultural products to the nearest local markets, they will get a chance to sell at the border haat. As per the survey, the establishment of Border Haat in this area may improve the standard of living and fulfil local needs.
Challenges in establishing border haat in that place	None	None	None.	None.
Scope of	Women	Women	The scope is	Since this area is

Parameters	Location: Fulbari	Location: Khurka	Location: Doradabri	Location: Tin Bigha Corridor
involvement of women in border haat	participate mostly as tea cultivation laborers, agricultural help to men farmers, and some SHG groups (viz. Meghna, Mamata). The SHG groups are involved in small dairy and poultry businesses. We haven't found any local handicrafts or handlooms, which can flourish with SHG loans.	participate in household activities, agricultural help to male farmers and some SHG small groups are there. The SHG groups are involved in preparing fried Muri and packaging businesses. We haven't found any local handicrafts or handlooms and a significant number of labourers involved with tobacco (Biri) industries at a very low wage.	there. At present the local women are mostly handling the household activities and also help in agriculture. Local SHG groups are there, however they don't engage with any activity related to handicraft, handloom production etc. The SHG groups are involved in small poultry businesses.	a male-dominated area, hence women's participation might not be very significant. However, the endeavour would be to engage different SHG groups and sell their produce at the border haat.
Existence of informal activities	-	-	Some illegal activities occur there since the habitations are very close to borderline and due to demand daily usable products on both sides.	Some illegal activities are there since the habitations are very close to borderline and due to the demand of daily usable products on both sides.

Annexure XVIII

Showing location of four additional locations



Annexure XIX

Location-wise commodities that are informally traded

Haat Type	Locations	Commodities informally Traded (as per their country of origin)	
		Indian Products	Bangladesh Products
Sanctioned Haat	Nolikate - Sayedabad	Betel nut, Ginger, Pineapple, Jackfruit, Orange, Bay leaf, Black pepper, Cumin (Zira), Biscuit, Chocolate	Plastic and Melamine products, Vegetables, Fish (fresh and dried) and Poultry products
		<i>Note: These products have demand but not informally traded</i>	<i>Note: These products have demand but not informally traded</i>
Sanctioned Haat	Ryngku – Baganbari	Pineapple, Orange, Jackfruit, Banana, Guava, Bay leaf, Black pepper, Ginger, Turmeric, Tomato, Pumpkin, Betel nut, Warm clothes, Cosmetics, Sarees, Milk powder, Shoes, Fruits, Spices, Tea, Betel leaf	Fish (Dry, Live), Vegetables, Poultry, Plastic products, Pharmaceuticals, Melamine, Ceramics, Electronic goods, Melamine products, Poultry products.
Sanctioned Haat	Bholaganj – Bholaganj	Pineapple, Orange, Jackfruit, Banana, Bay leaf, Black pepper, Betel nut, Squash, Soap and cosmetics, Footwear	Vegetables, Fish (Dry & Live), Plastic and Melamine products, FMCG items (mostly products manufactured by PRAN)
Sanctioned Haat	Shibbari – Bhulyapara	Cosmetics, Shoes, Biscuits, Soaps, Hair-oil, Orange, Cumin, Tea, Pineapple, Jackfruit, Cashew, Bay leaf, Black pepper, Ginger, Turmeric, Tomato, Pumpkin, Betel nut	Fish (Dry, Live), Vegetables, Poultry products, Plastic products, Pharmaceuticals, Melamine, Ceramics, Electronic goods, Poultry products.
Sanctioned Haat	Kamalpur-Kurmaghat	Jackfruit, Litchi, Pineapple, Lemon, Tamarind, Herbicide, Lemon, Chilly, Rubber, Vegetables, Bamboo, Bitter gourd, Cosmetics, Chocolate, Biscuit, Spices (Especially Cumin), Saree, CNG Tyre, Hosiery items, cardamom, fruit, Onion, Sugar, Lentil, Kerosene, Machinery parts, Thread, Shawl	Dried Fish, Melamine products, Plastic products, Seeds, Herbicides, Hilsa Fish, Prawn, Tea, Garments, and Soap

Haat Type	Locations	Commodities informally Traded (as per their country of origin)	
		Indian Products	Bangladesh Products
Sanctioned Haat	Palbasti-Pashchim Batuli	Salt, Sugar, and Cattle. <i>Note: Cattle smuggling is very rampant in the area and that is their main source of livelihood. However, no one spoke about it.</i>	FMCG Items, Fruit Juice, Cold drinks, Garments, Plastic Product. Keya soap, Tobacco (Biri).
Proposed Haat	Chagrabanda - Patgram	Cosmetics, Cookeries items, Fruits (Date, Pomegranate), Spices (Cumin, Cardamom, Turmeric), Potato, Mango	Plastic items, Hilsa Fish, Mosquito nets, Garments products, Jamdani saree, Juice items), Soap (a particular brand “Keya”), Vermicelli, Jaggery, Radish.
Proposed Haat	Latu - Beniabazar	Cosmetics, Clothing, Shoes, Spice items, Apple, Grape, Pomegranate, Strawberry, Chocolate items, Motorcycle and Car parts, Jackfruit, Garlic, and FMCG	Fish (Dry & Live), Vegetables, Plastic and melamine products, Soaps, Toilet Washing Liquid, Soft drinks, Bakery items, etc.
Proposed Haat	Nunsuri II - Thegarmukh	Mobile phone (specially Smartphone), Ginger, Turmeric, Onion, Tea leaves, Cigarette, Kerosene, Cosmetics, Daily Toiletries, Juice, Biscuit, Bamboo, Broomstick, Sesame, Spices (like Cumin and, Cardamom, etc.)	Melamine products, Cement, Plastic Products, Peas, Mobile phone (Classic), Medicine, Vegetables, Dry & Live fish, Rice, Lentil, Electronic Products (Television, Radio, etc.), Solar Home Lighting Systems, Gas Cylinder and Vegetables, Garlic
Proposed Haat	Sahebganj - Bhurungamari	Spices (Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon), Shoes, Indian Saree, Onion, Garlic, Toiletries, Jute seeds, Salt, Betel leaf and nuts, Rice (not local) Tea leaves, Potato, Ginger & other vegetables, Medicine, Cosmetic and Onion seeds, Fertilizers, Apple, Mango, Tobacco leaf	Fish, Plastic product, Readymade Garments, Jamdani saree, Nokshi katha, Hybrid paddy seeds (29, 28, hira, China boro), FMCG products, Jaggery, Dry fish, Ceramic utensils, Melamine utensils, Fertilizers, Gold, Chili, Garlic

Haat Type	Locations	Commodities informally Traded (as per their country of origin)	
		Indian Products	Bangladesh Products
Proposed Haat	Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	Cattle, Cumin, Orange, Apple, Cosmetics, Sundari tree-wood, Spade, Salt, Onion	Kerosene, Vegetable, Handicrafts, Paddy seeds (Hira 2, BD-28, BD-29), Soap (Keya brand), Poultry products, Hilsa fish, Garment, Goat
Proposed Haat	Silsuri - Baghaichari	Diapers, Grocery, Slippers, Garments (Burmese top Jackets,), Toiletries (Soap, Hair oil, Shampoo), Sesame seed, Ginger, Turmeric, Teak, Bamboo, Litchi, Pineapple, betel nut. There is demand in Bangladeshi side for Rice, Medicine, Soaps, Sesame seeds, paddy seeds, grass Broom grass, betel nuts, Cosmetics items, Biscuits items, etc.	Electronic items, Plastic items, Solar Panels, Bulbs, Chargers, Mobile, Garments, Vegetables (Cucumber, Gourd, Green Chilis, Ladies finger, Tomato, Potato, Beans, Brinjal), Dry and fresh fish, Water purifier and Cereals, food items (Cold drinks, Biscuit, Chips, Chocolate), Medicines (Pain relief injections, Syrups, Pain killers, Gastric medicines and Contraceptive pills, Medicines for ulcer), Traditional Chakma dress, Fruits (Grapes, Apples, Orange, Papaya, Mango, Malta etc.), Blanket, Melamine utensils, Sithole Dalda, Garments

Annexure XX

Location-wise reasons for the prevalence of informal trade

Haat Type	Locations	Reasons for Informal Trade
Sanctioned Haat	Ryngku – Baganbari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ryngku is a remote location and access to nearby markets is difficult. It takes 4–5 hours to go to Shillong, the wholesale market, and the capital city of Meghalaya to buy commodities of regular use. Road condition is poor and only shuttle car service is available twice a day to reach Shillong. On the other hand, Bangladesh is nearby. Essential commodities can be brought from Bangladesh easily. ▪ There is a strong intention by the local people of Rynku to sell their local produce to the Bangladesh market, which is adjacent to getting a better price compared to the prices offered by the traders/aggregators from Shillong.
Sanctioned Haat	Bholaganj (India) – Bholaganj (Bangladesh)* <i>(Name of this location is same in both India and Bangladesh side)*</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the border villages in India, Bangladesh is, demand for essential commodities from Bangladesh is always there, however, people from Bholaganj mostly depend on Indian goods rather than on Bangladeshi goods. In Bholaganj, there is a land customs station for exchanging goods. Still, other than limestone from India to Bangladesh, no other commodity is allowed through this port, especially no Bangladesh export to India takes place through this LCS. This is one of the major reasons behind informal trade. ▪ Since no trade is allowed through LCS, there is a propensity to exchange goods illegally across the area. ▪ There is a strong intention by the local people to sell their local produce to the adjacent Bangladesh market and get a better price than the prices offered by the traders/aggregators from Shillong.

Haat Type	Locations	Reasons for Informal Trade
Sanctioned Haat	Shibbari – Bhulyapara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shibbari is a remote location and access to nearby markets is difficult and cost-intensive. It takes a day to reach Tura or Ampati to buy regular use commodities and come back to Shibbari. On the other hand, Bangladesh is nearby and people from Bangladesh would come there easily carrying the essential commodities for sale. It saves the time and money of the consumers. ▪ Indian farmers prefer selling to Bangladeshis since they get a better price than the prices offered by the traders in Mankachar or Tura. Additionally, travelling to Mankachar or Tura to sell their products also involve high cost. ▪ Many of the villagers have their relatives residing on the other side of the border. They communicate easily over the phone (Bangladeshi Sim Cards used since their Indian Telecom Service is very weak in the region).
Sanctioned Haat	Kamalpur-Kurmaghat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good quality products, relatively low price and demand from the Indian side
Sanctioned Haat	Palbasti - Pashchim Batuli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These products are either costly or unavailable on the Bangladesh side, so Bangladeshi sources these products from India. For example, <i>Sathkora</i> (a fruit) is not available in Bangladesh, but they prefer it. In Indian cosmetics and toiletries, there is a perceptible demand for these products in Bangladesh. They are either not available in border areas or sold at premium prices in Bangladesh.
Sanctioned Haat	Nolikate - Sayedabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Informal trade does not happen in this area (Informal trade between India and Bangladesh is a common phenomenon. No one can claim that this has stopped; however, as per local people's local administration and opinion, no informal trade is happening in this area. We may consider and say that the trend of informal trade is relatively low in this area).

Haat Type	Locations	Reasons for Informal Trade
Proposed Haat	Chagrabanda - Patgram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantial demand in India due to relatively low prices and quality products Few items such as paddy seeds, hilsa, jaggery are of better quality in Bangladesh. Port restriction on most of the commodities. High duty on most of the commodities if imported into India through formal border points. Further, many of the products are not available in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people's fascinations for these products are the main reasons for the informal trade.
Proposed Haat	Latu - Beniabazar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mentioned products are not available in India and the prices of the products such as plastic items, bakery items, vegetables are high. People in remote locations are eager to consume such products at relatively lower prices. High demands in Bangladesh exist due to relatively low prices and quality products compared to available local products.
Proposed Haat	Nunsuri II - Thegarmukh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some produce is low in cost on the Bangladesh side, and some regular commodities are not available in local markets and its time consuming to get the same. The same products are easily available on the other side of the Border. For e.g. small cooking Gas Cylinder is easily available from Bangladesh, which is challenging to get from the Indian side.
Proposed Haat	Sahebganj - Bhurungamari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price difference, Difference in Quality, Unfenced Border, High demand for commodities in each other's countries
Proposed Haat	Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower price and good quality. This being a fenced and a strict border, informal trade is low in this area. However, informal trade in paddy seeds (China boro variety) is quite evident in this area as its taste complements the cuisine of Bengalis and Assamese, its productivity is higher and also the duration of cultivation is shorter (till May /June) over Indian variety whose duration is longer (till June / July).

Haat Type	Locations	Reasons for Informal Trade
Proposed Haat	Silsuri - Baghaichari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Easy to source from Bangladesh than from Aizawl (Capital of Mizoram) or Dharmanagar (in Tripura). Moreover, few items are cheaper and of better quality in Bangladesh. Additionally, few items are not available in India. ▪ Prices of spices in Bangladesh are high. Further, the haat at Silsuri is nearest to the villages in India for Bangladeshi residents. Thus, they prefer purchasing products from the haat at Silsuri. It is a remote area and surrounded on the west, north and east by the Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram while the south is mostly wildlife sanctuary and hilly terrains; hence people can easily connect with India instead of Bangladesh. Besides, their historical connectivity and cultural ties prod them to engage in trade across the international border lines.

Annexure XXI

Reasons for a reduction in Informal Trade in
locations where border haats are operational

Row Labels	No. of Responses
Balat – Dalora	31
Border Haat Increases Local People Income	25
Strict Border Security and Barb Wire	1
Goods That were earlier Traded Informally Have Been Allowed to Be Traded Through the Border Haats	5
Kalaichar – Baliamari	30
Border Haat Has Created Employment for The Locals.	1
Border Haat Increases Local People Income	20
Goods That Were Earlier Traded Informally Have Been Allowed to Be Traded Through the Border Haats	9
Kamalasagar – Kasba	32
Border Haat Increases Local People Income	20
Due to Secure Borders	5
Strict Security Measures, Barbed Wire	3
Goods That Were Earlier Traded Informally Have Been Allowed to Be Traded Through the Border Haats	4
Srinagar – Chhagalnaiya	30
Border Haat Increases Local People Income	19
Goods That Were Earlier Traded Informally Have Been Allowed to Be Traded Through the Border Haats	11
Grand Total	123

Annexure - XXII

**Commodities Need to Be Included for Trading Through Border Haats
(Given as Per Demand in Each Country)**

Row Labels	Fruits		Vegetables		Spices		Cosmetics, Toiletries and FMCG Products		Others	
	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India
Bholaganj - Bholaganj	Apple, Grapes, Orange		Onion	All vegetables	Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits and Potato Chips			Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Chagrabanda - Patgram	Apple, Grape, Orange, Pomegranate		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits, Potato Chips, Sugar	Paddy Seeds, Vegetable Seeds	Shoes, Sugar	Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Kamalpur - Kurmaghat	Grapes, Orange, Apple, Pineapple, Jackfruit		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits, Potato Chips		Cycle, Thread, Shawl or Woolen Products	Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Latu - Beniabazar	Apple, Grape, Orange, Pomegranate		Onion, Bean		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits and Potato Chips			Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Nolikata - Saydabad	Grapes, Orange, Apple		Onion	All vegetables	Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits and Potato Chips			Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine

Row Labels	Fruits		Vegetables		Spices		Cosmetics, Toiletries and FMCG Products		Others	
	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India
Nunsuri II - Thegarmukh	Apple, Orange		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric	Garlic	Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits, Potato Chips, Shoes		Socks, Bed sheets	Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Palbasti - Paschim Batuli	Grapes, Orange, Apple		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits, Potato Chips, Cycle, Thread, Shoes			Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Ryngku - Bagan Bari	Orange		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits			Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Sahebganj - Bhurungamari	Apple, Orange, Grapes		Spring Onions		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits and Potato Chips	Paddy Seeds, Vegetable Seeds		Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	Apple, Orange, Grapes, Malta		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits and Potato Chips	Paddy Seeds, Vegetable Seeds		Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine

Row Labels	Fruits		Vegetables		Spices		Cosmetics, Toiletries and FMCG Products		Others	
	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh	India
Shibbari - Bhulyapara	Orange, Grape, Jackfruit		Onion		Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric and Garlic		Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits and Potato Chips			Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine
Silsuri - Baghaichari			Onion	Cauliflower, Carrots, Radish, Potato, Cucumber	Cumin, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Ginger, Turmeric	Garlic	Cosmetics, Soap, Diapers, Powder Milk, Tea, Chocolate, Biscuits, Potato Chips, Shoe, Sandal, Bed Sheets, Blanket		Socks, Bed sheets	Fish and Poultry Products, Items of Plastic and Melamine

Annexure XXIII

Reasons for Increase /Decrease in Haat Income: Feedback from Vendors

Name of the Operational Border Haat	Bangladesh		India	
	Reasons for Increase in Income	Reasons for Decline in Income	Reasons for Increase in Income	Reasons for Decline in Income
Balat - Dalora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in the number of buyers ▪ Increase in sales due to increase in demand (2 vendors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BSF allows only a limited number of buyers from India (1 vendor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in sales due to increase in demand (3 vendors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less number of vendees from Bangladesh are allowed to enter the haat (1 vendor)
Kalaichar – Balimari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in sales due to increase in demand (5 vendors) 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in sales due to increase in demand (5 vendors) 	-
Kamalasagar - Kasba	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in the number of buyers (1 vendor) ▪ Increase in sales due to increase in demand (1 vendor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decrease in sales owing to reduction in the number of buyers due to restriction by BGB (2 vendors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in the number of buyers (2 vendors) ▪ Increase in sales due to increase in demand (2 vendors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decrease in the number of buyers due to restriction by BSF (1 vendor)
Srinagar - Chhagalnaiya	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less number of vendee's participation from India (1 vendor) ▪ Tourists from Agartala and other major tourist destinations are not allowed to participate at the haats (2 vendors) 	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less number of vendee's participation from Bangladesh (5 vendors)

Annexure XXIV

Labourers: Border Haat Country Wise Segregation of Average Annual Income, Average Annual Income from Haat, Average Annual Income from Non-haat Work

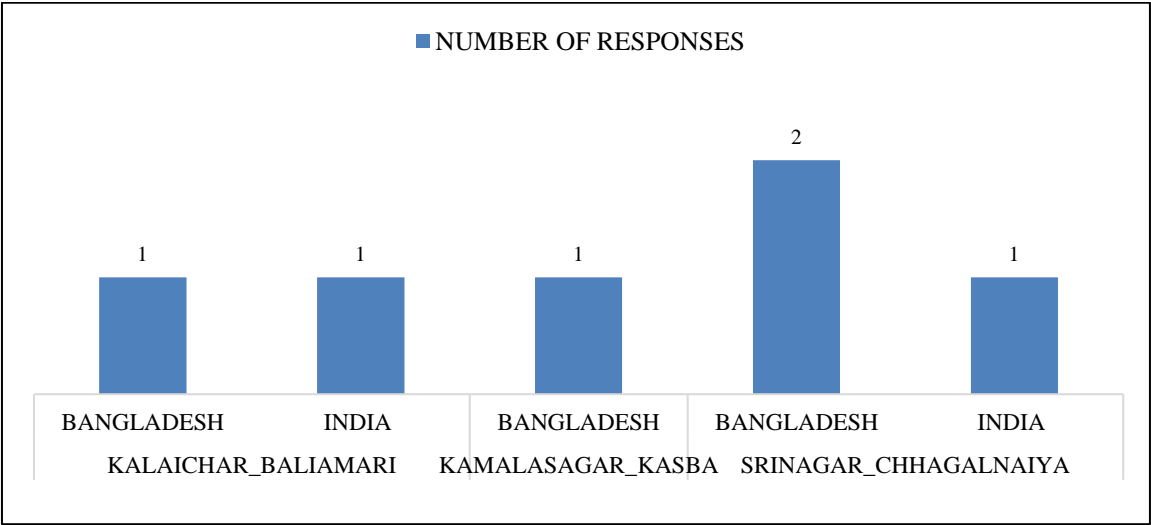
Border Haat	Country	Average Annual Income in 2019 (USD)	Average Annual Income from Haat (USD)	Average Annual Income from Non-haat Work (USD)
Balat – Dalora	Bangladesh	837	340	497
	India	834	255	579
Kalaichar – Balimari	Bangladesh	1,050	413	637
	India	908	317	591
Kamalasagar – Kasba	Bangladesh	1356	236	1120
	India	833	288	545
Srinagar – Chhagalnaiya	Bangladesh	1342	426	916
	India	750	288	462

Annexure XXV**Border Haat Wise Breakup of Average Annual Income of the Transporters**

Border Haat	Country	Average Annual Income	% GE Income from Border Haat	% GE Income from Non-haat Activities
Balat – Dalora	Bangladesh	USD 1,694	25%	75%
	India	USD 2,732	15%	85%
Kalaichar – Balimari	Bangladesh	USD 2,856	24%	76%
	India	USD 2,856	13%	87%
Kamalasagar – Kasba	Bangladesh	USD 2,096	22%	78%
	India	USD 2,616	15%	85%
Srinagar – Chhagalnaiya	Bangladesh	USD 2,096	22%	78%
	India	USD 2,938	13%	87%

Annexure XXVI

Support service providers who mentioned Decrease in Income



Annexure XXVII**Breakup of the Income of the Support Service Providers**

Border	Country	Average Annual Income (USD)	Average Annual Income from Border Haat (USD)	Average Annual Income from Non-haat (USD)
Balat – Dalora	Bangladesh	1005	295	710
	India	699	222	476
Kalaichar – Balimari	Bangladesh	760	182	578
	India	811	152	660
Kamalasagar – Kasba	Bangladesh	1038	245	792
	India	697	202	495
Srinagar – Chhagalnaiya	Bangladesh	946	153	792
	India	1053	229	824

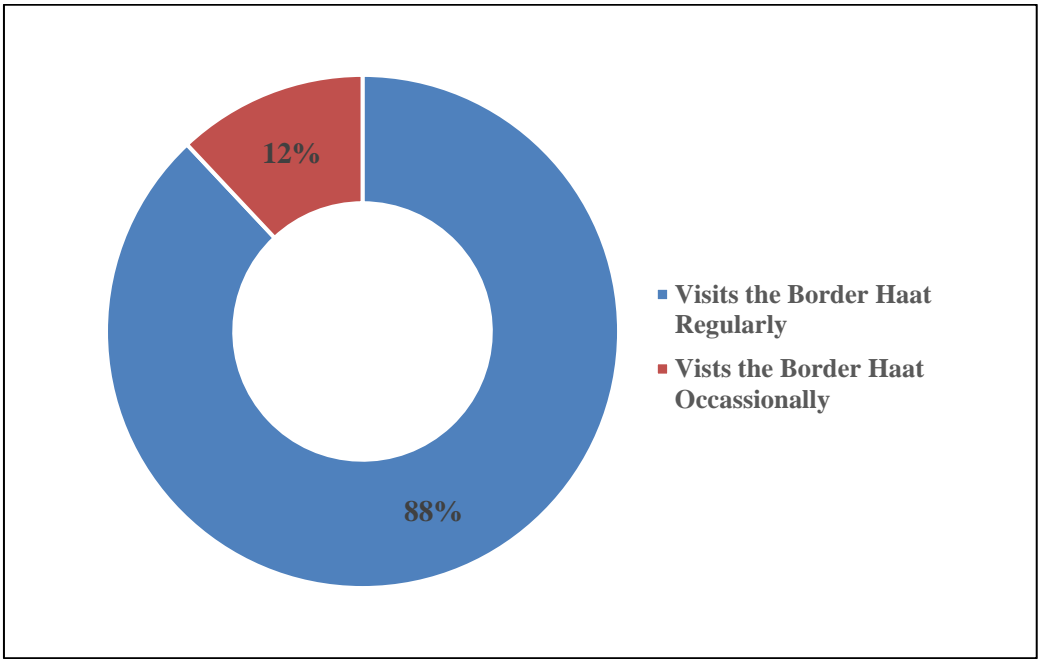
Annexure XXVIII

Stakeholder Group and Income wise breakup of data explaining which category of Stakeholders sell the products purchased from Border Haats

Row Labels	Primary source of income	USD330 - USD650	Greater than USD650
Self-consumption & sale in local markets	Traders (Especially betel nut traders) / Local businesses having own shops	4 (24%)	-
	Salaried job	-	1 (6%)
Sale in local markets after adding a premium	Agriculture	-	3 (18%)
	Non-agriculture (only dependent on border haat)	-	1 (6%)
	Traders (Betel nut trader) / local businesses	-	7 (40%)
	Salaried job	-	1 (6%)
Grand Total		4 (24%)	13 (76%)
Note: Percentages were calculated on the total number of people who are purchasing products for self-consumption and sale in local markets; and those who are purchasing solely to sell in local markets.			

Annexure XXIX

Frequency of visit of to the border haats by vendees



Annexure - XXX**Border Haat and Country Wise Segregation of Goods Purchased by the Vendees**

Balat – Dalora	
Products bought by Bangladeshi Vendees	
Cumin	1
Orange, Cumin, Soap	1
Orange, Pear, Cumin, Cardamom, Raisin	1
Orange, Pear, Cumin, Cardamom, Toiletries	1
Plastic Products, Chips, Toiletries, Fruits, Spices	1
Products Bought by Indian Vendees	
Plastic Products, Chips, Vegetables	5
Kalaichar – Balimari	
Products bought by Bangladeshi Vendees	
Banana, Potato, Drumstick, Lichi, Orange, Ginger	1
Orange, Banana	1
Orange, Pomegranate, Ginger	1
Vegetables, Orange, Coconut, Ginger, Cucumber	1
Vegetables, Orange, Apple, Grapes, Ginger	1
Products Bought by Indian Vendees	
Biscuit, Chips	1
Biscuits, Chips	3
Chips, Litchi drink	1
Kamalasagar – Kasba	
Products bought by Bangladeshi Vendees	
Chocolate	1
Chocolate, Orange, Pomegranate	1
FMCG items, Toiletries	3
Products Bought by Indian Vendees	
Pomelo fruit, Lungi, Gamcha	5
Srinagar – Chhagalnaiya	
Products bought by Bangladeshi Vendees	
Soap, Powder, Shampoo, Lungi, Gamcha, Cauliflower, Potato, Brinjal,	1

Jackfruit	1
Soap, Powdered Milk, Tea, Betel Leaf, Almond, Biscuit, Cummin	2
Soap, Shampoo, Hair-oil	1
Products Bought by Indian Vendees	
Soap, Lotion	1
Soap, Powder	1
Soap, Powder, Shampoo, Lungi, Gamcha, Cauliflower, Potato, Brinjal	2
Soap, Powder, Shampoo, Lungi, Gamcha	1
Grand Total	40

Annexure XXXI

Commodities purchased by vendors for their consumption

Balat – Dalora	
Bangladesh	No. of respondents
Orange, Pear, Cumin, Winter Garments, Cosmetics	2
Potato, Aromatic Rice, Orange, Apple, Cumin	2
Vegetables, FMCG Goods	1
India	
Cauliflower, Biscuits, Chanachur, Pran Lichi, Chips	1
Cauliflower, Biscuits, Chanachur, Pran Lichi, Chips, Potato	1
Vegetables, FMCG Goods	2
Kalaichar – Balimari	
Bangladesh	
Fruits	1
Orange, Banana, Ginger	1
Orange, Grapes, Banana, Ginger	1
Vegetables, Fruits	1
India	
Biscuits, Chips	2
FMCG Items	1
Kamalasagar – Kasba	
Bangladesh	
Cosmetics & Toiletries	1
Cumin, Cosmetics	1
Fruits, Cosmetics, Toiletries	1
India	
FMCG Products, Fruits, Jamdani Saree, Lungi, Gamcha	5
Srinagar – Chhagalnaiya	
Bangladesh	
Cosmetics & Toiletries	2
Spices, Cosmetics & Toiletries	2
Spices, Fruits	1

India	
Dry Fish, Vegetables	1
Dry Fish, Vegetables, Lungi	1
FMCG Items, Dry Fish	1
Grand Total	32

Annexure - XXXI

Reasons why the Vendors and Vendees are either not at all satisfied or, are moderately satisfied with the Border Haats

Stakeholder Group / Feedback	Total Number of Responses
Vendors	26
Moderately Satisfied	8 (19%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope of improvement in terms of proper participation with profitable products; the amount of taking products to be increased from Rs. 100000/-; due to the high price of products, options get limited, affecting profit margin. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earlier many Bangladeshi customers used to come, so income was high. Now per haat maximum, 300 vendees are allowed. Therefore, income has reduced significantly. However, the haat still provides an alternate source of income. 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expected more profit 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goods are often seized by security personnel without justification. Many vendees have stopped/reduced the quantum of purchase. 	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are restrictions on the number of vendees allowed per haat day 	1
Not at all Satisfied	18 (43%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of infrastructure like washroom, limitation on the entry of vendors, limitation on purchase and sales, seizure of goods by the security personnel 	18
Vendee	28
Moderately Satisfied	10 (25%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enough goods cannot be bought, restriction by the BGB 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branded products not available 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates are reasonable, good quality 	6
Not at all Satisfied	18 (45%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of infrastructure like washroom, limitation on the entry of vendors, limitation on purchase and sales, seizure of goods by the security personnel 	18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Branded products not available 	
Grand Total	54

Annexure XXXIII

**Reasons behind people supporting the idea of opening of
Border Haats in sanctioned and proposed locations**

Bholaganj – Bholaganj

- Will earn more profit as transportation costs will be lowered

Changrabanda – Patgram

- It will help the local farmers to get better prices for their produce as no transportation cost will be involved. Also, many vegetables and fruits fetch a better price in Bangladesh than in India due to their high demand.
- The wholesale markets are located at a distant place. The border haat will be nearer.

Kamalpur – Kurmaghat

- Can sell new items at a good price
- Market will be available in the vicinity
- Market will be nearby, so no commuting expenses will be incurred
- Will get higher prices for many commodities.
- Will be able to meet relatives
- Local ethnic group (Monipuri tribe) can sell their garments items

Latu – Beniabazar

- It will help the local farmers to get better prices for their produce since no transportation cost is involved. Also, many vegetables and fruits fetch better prices in Bangladesh than in India.
- Will get high prices for products
- Will be able to meet with relatives

Nolikata – Saydabad

- Will earn extra income
- Will earn more profit since the transportation cost will be less
- Will expand the customer base
- New products will be available

Nunsuri II – Thegarmukh

- Will earn extra income
- It will be easier for residents to buy necessary products from the Bangladesh vendors.
- People will no longer have to go to the Thegamukh market, maintaining a safe distance from the prying eyes of the BSF personnel.
- No need to go to distant markets for daily necessities

Palbasti - Paschim Batuli

- It helps in getting higher prices for various products.
- It will help the local farmers to get better prices for their produce since no transportation cost is involved. Also, many vegetables and fruits fetch better prices in Bangladesh than in India.
- A market will be available in the vicinity.
- Will be able to purchase different products at a lower price.

Ryngku - Bagan Bari

- It will create a sale point closer at hand
- Indian side can procure vegetables from Bangladesh.
- It will help the local farmers to get better prices for their produce since no transportation cost is involved. Also, many vegetables and fruits fetch better prices in Bangladesh than in India.
- Local market doesn't absorb all that is produced and those could be sold in border haat.
- Will open new employment opportunities
- Will get higher prices for products

Sahebganj - Bhurungamari

- Incomes will increase.
- It will help the local farmers to get better prices for their produce since no transportation cost is involved. Also, many vegetables and fruits fetch better prices in Bangladesh than in India.
- Will reduce informal trade.

Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari

- Earn more profit since the transportation cost will be less.
- Incomes will increase.
- Will create new livelihood opportunities

Shibbari - Bhulyapara

- It will help the local farmers to get better prices for their produce since no transportation cost is involved. Also, many vegetables and fruits fetch better prices in Bangladesh than in India.
- It will expand the customer base.

Silsuri - Baghaichari

- Incomes will increase.
- It will be easier for local residents to buy necessary products from each other's country.
- It will help the local residents get good quality products at lower prices. A formal arrangement will help people on either side to carry out business without fearing the border guard personnel.

Annexure - XXXIV

Reasons for Vendees to Reduce Their Frequency of Visits at the Haat

Border Haat	Country	Frequency of visit at the haat	No. of respondents	Reasons
Balat – Dalora	Bangladesh	Thrice in a month	1	It is sufficient for my and my family’s need. Moreover, branded products are not available.
Kalaichar – Balimari	India	Only 3- 4 times in a year	1	The haat is only used for trading betel nuts and has hardly anything to offer that is of interest. The vendees look forward to buying plastic & melamine products, but that is no longer available at the haat. ¹⁰
Kamalasagar – Kasba	Bangladesh	Two times in a month	2	It does not offer any branded product.
		Every alternate month	1	It is sufficient for my domestic need. Moreover, branded products are not available.
Grand Total			5	

¹⁰ Earlier trade in plastic ware and melamine products was predominant at the Kalaichar-Balimari border haat. The Indian vendors and vendees used to buy these products in bulk and sell them in the local markets. Since purchase through border haats does not attract any taxes and duties, these vendors and vendees are able to sell these at lower prices compared to the existing market rates. Gradually, the sale expanded to markets in Mankachar, Tura, and as far as Guwahati. This resulted in loss of business for traders who used to export these products through the formal land ports after paying mandatory taxes and duties and hence could not undercut prices. Later, the traders complained about this to the Department of Customs who then put an embargo on trade in plastic and melamine products through the Kalaichar-Balimari border haat.

Annexure XXXV

**Responses of Vendees about their Change in Spending at the
Border Haats by Vendees in the Last few years**

Responses about Change in Spending at the Haat	Men	Women	Grand Total
Could not recall	6%	33%	13%
Increased	68%	56%	65%
Decreased	23%	11%	20%
No change	3%	-	3%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%

Annexure XXXVI

**Location and Country Wise Perceptions of Respondents
on the Level of Involvement of Women in Agriculture**

Locations	Country	Level of Involvement of Women in Agriculture		
		Poor	Medium	High
Bholaganj - Bholaganj	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	-	67%	33%
Chagrabanda - Patgram	Bangladesh	93%	7%	-
	India	-	100%	-
Kamalpur - Kurmaghat	Bangladesh	40%	53%	7%
	India	13%	40%	47%
Latu - Beniabazar	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	33%	67%	-
Nolikata - Saydabad	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	-	40%	60%
Nunsuri II - Thegarmukh	Bangladesh	67%	-	33%
	India	-	33%	67%
Palbasti - Paschim Batuli	Bangladesh	87%	13%	-
	India	33%	-	67%
Ryngku - Bagan Bari	Bangladesh	80%	13%	7%
	India	-	93%	7%
Sahebganj - Bhurungamari	Bangladesh	75%	25%	-
	India	33%	67%	-
Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	-	33%	67%
Shibbari - Bhulyapara	Bangladesh	93%	7%	-
	India	7%	53%	40%
Silsuri - Baghaichari	Bangladesh	47%	47%	7%
	India	-	33%	67%

Annexure XXXVII

**Location and Country Wise Perception of Respondents on the
Level of Involvement of Women in Purchase Decisions**

Sanction and Proposed Locations for Setting Up Border Haats	Country	Level of Involvement of Women in Purchasing Decisions		
		Poor	Medium	High
Bholaganj – Bholaganj	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Chagrabanda – Patgram	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Kamalpur – Kurmaghat	Bangladesh	40%	60%	-
	India	80%	20%	-
Latu – Beniabazar	Bangladesh	67%	33%	-
	India	100%	-	-
Nolikata – Saydabad	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Nunsuri II – Thegarmukh	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	100%	-	-
Palbasti - Paschim Batuli	Bangladesh	67%	33%	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Ryngku - Bagan Bari	Bangladesh	67%	33%	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Sahebganj – Bhurungamari	Bangladesh	75%	25%	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	Bangladesh	-	100%	-
	India	100%	-	-
Shibbari – Bhulyapara	Bangladesh	79%	21%	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Silsuri – Baghaichari	Bangladesh	87%	13%	-
	India	100%	-	-

Annexure XXXVIII

Location, Country and Gender Wise Perception of Respondents on the Level of Involvement of Women in Local Haats as Seller of Products

Sanction and Proposed Locations for Setting Up Border Haats	Country	Level of Involvement of Women in Selling Produce/product at the Market		
		Poor	Medium	High
Bholaganj – Bholaganj	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	100%	-	-
Chagrabanda – Patgram	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	100%	-	-
Kamalpur – Kurmaghat	Bangladesh	80%	20%	-
	India	93%	7%	-
Latu – Beniabazar	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	67%	33%	-
Nolikata – Saydabad	Bangladesh	87%	13%	-
	India	40%	13%	47%
Nunsuri II – Thegarmukh	Bangladesh	-	-	100%
	India	33%	-	67%
Palbasti - Paschim Batuli	Bangladesh	80%	20%	-
	India	100%	-	-
Ryngku - Bagan Bari	Bangladesh	93%	7%	-
	India	53%	7%	40%
Sahebganj – Bhurungamari	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	100%	-	-
Satrasal - Char Bhurungamari	Bangladesh	100%	-	-
	India	100%	-	-
Shibbari – Bhulyapara	Bangladesh	79%	21%	-
	India	100%	-	-
Silsuri – Baghaichari	Bangladesh	40%	40%	20%
	India	33%	33%	33%

Annexure XXXIX

Key point emerged from the awareness generation meeting

Following are the key points that emerged from Operational Border Haats -

- Bangladeshi vendors in Kalaichar-Baliamari border haat complained that Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) enforced a rule where vendors can only take up to 5 bags of processed (*Moja*) betel nut. They argued that the products which they sell would fetch profit only if they trade in larger volumes.
- Though Balat-Dolora Border Haat is supposed to commence from 10:00 am on every Haat day, it was learnt that the BGB opens the gate of the haat at 12:00 am and closes the gate for vendors' pushcarts at 01:00 pm. Vendors complained that due to this arrangement, they are sometimes unable to cater to customers' demands. Locals proposed that BGB should strictly maintain the timetable of opening and closing the Border Haat as per the regulation.
- Vendors in Balat-Dolora Border Haat claimed that authority on the Indian side doesn't allow more than 250 Indian vendees in Border Haats, which means that the market for Bangladeshi vendors shrinks down, hurting their profit margins.
- Though a healthy practice of allowing local farmers to sell their produce in small quantities without vendor's licence was observed at Dolora Border Haat previously, it was learnt that this practice was abolished by BGB. Locals urged to bring a permanent provision in the regulations to allow small-scale farmers to sell their produce in the Border Haat without vendor's license. Vendors also proposed that they should also be allowed to buy their necessary goods from the Border Haat, which currently they are not allowed to do.
- Vendors in Kasmalasagar-Kasba border haat urged that when the Border Haat will resume their Lease fee (Fee which Vendors pay to Government for their allocated space in Border Haat) for that financial year should be waived as they could do business for only 2 months in 2020 after paying the Lease Fee for the entire year, due to the COVID-19 enforced lockdown.
- Vendors demanded that a money exchange officer be appointed in the Kamalsagar-Kasba Border Haat. They complained that Indian Vendors take advantage of them (Bangladeshi Vendors) when they exchange currencies after the day's trade. The Indian Vendors' ability to decide on the exchange rate was pinned to the fact that most Bangladeshi Vendors have very little capital, forcing them to cycle the cash much faster than their Indian counterparts, making them vulnerable to exploitation. They felt that Indian vendors make a margin of around 3-4 percent during the money exchange.

- It was also learnt that Border Security Force (BSF) objects to Indian Vendees buying products worth more than 3000-4000 BDT despite the much larger 200 USD or (17,000 BDT) cap on buying limit of Vendees.
- Vendors also demanded a designated gate to use only vendors as it becomes difficult for them to return from the Haat with their leftover products amidst the chaos. They also wanted permission to transport their products on vehicles directly inside the Border Haat premises, which was allowed earlier.
- Bangladesh Border Guard, in most of the operational haat has restricted Bangladeshi buyers from buying Indian goods, particularly FMCGs, and as a result, the Bangladeshi buyers have to return the goods even after purchasing from Indian vendors. Indian traders were suffering because of this practice. Indian vendors mentioned that no solution has emerged even after informing the border haat management committee about this.
- Prolonged shutdowns of border haats have created a food crisis in local villages near to Balat border haat. Due to the closure of the border haat, the trend of bringing vegetables and other food items from Bangladesh informally has grown among the local people. But, few residents are apprehensive that re-opening the border haat spread of the virus might increase as the outbreak of the virus was more on Dolora than on the Balat side.
- The stakeholders are border haats suffering due to the closure of the border haats due to COVID-19.
- As per local haat management regulations, Bangladeshi vendors in Srinagar-Chagalnaiya are allowed to hire a maximum of 3 assistant helpers/labourers to enter the border haats, as opposed to 6 approvals in India. This needs a revision and at least five helpers should be allowed with one vendor inside the haat premises.
- Although there are roof-shades to store goods at the Srinagar-Chagalnaiya haat premises, the same is not enough considering the volume of goods that the vendors usually carry regularly at the haats. The situation worsens during the rainy season. Hence, it would be useful if covered spaces (including 2/3 existing rooms inside the premises assigned for money exchange counters, BGB/BSF rest areas, etc.) can be used to pile up at least perishable items on an emergency basis, especially during the monsoons. It is also necessary to construct a shed outside the haat premises on both the Bangladeshi and Indian sides to find solutions to these issues.
- People demanded that a shed for vendees be constructed in Border Haat premises to rest and take shelter in case of rain.
- The local authority was collecting INR 300 from all the Indian vendors in Kamalasagar on each haat day. No clarity was given to them why the money was collected from them. According to them, they need not pay any money while participating at border haat.

Following are the key points emerged from sanctioned and proposed locations

- Locals from Laurer Garh, Tahirpur, Sunamganj, demanded that a permanent Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) post should be constructed at the entrance of the Border Haat. They also mentioned that the Laurer Garh Border Haat entrance stairs are expected to be a bottleneck in transporting goods to and from the Border Haat. Therefore, they urged to install a ramp in place of the stairs.
- It was learnt that women's participation in the upcoming Kamalpur-Pashchim Batuli Border Haat and is expected to be moderately vibrant from the Bangladesh side as they are not expected to undergo hindrance in terms of social and religious regulations. Moreover, an exciting women empowerment pointer was observed in the meeting as a local trader urged to keep a provision of a quota of 5-10 per cent for women as vendors in the Border Haat.
- Local people from Sajek, Banghaichhari, Rangamati, and Bangladesh feel road connectivity is the most important precondition of 'border haat' sustainability. Local representatives of the region strongly stated that a border haat in Udaypur without an adequate approach road will be of no use. Moreover, better road connectivity will lead to better access to much-needed healthcare services.
- Local people from Sajek, Banghaichhari, Rangamati, Bangladesh are expecting Border haat centric government services. Due to the difficulty in travelling from one place to another across the hilly terrain, inhabitants of the region expect that government will set up health care facilities capitalising the proposed infrastructure to be built around the border haat.
- The conflict between Tribal and Non-tribal is very prominent in the Bholaganj area. Therefore, the vendor and vendor selection process must be very comprehensive and practical to avoid any conflict. It needs to be balanced between two communities proportionately.
- Due to lack of clarity, there is confusion among the local peoples in Sahibganj (a proposed location) in Cooch Behar about the spot identified for establishing a new border haat at Sahebganj. A group of people has chosen a place of their own choice and is demanding to build a border haat there; another group is claiming to establish the border haat in the location of their choice. CUTS informed the participants in the awareness generation meeting that the government of both the countries has the right to identify and finalise any place for the border haats, but before that government may discuss with the local people, administration for feasibility etc.
- Nayagram, Muriya, Biyanibazar, Sylhet was known for their informal trading activities in the earlier days, which have reduced to some extent in recent times. According to the local stakeholders, border haat will reduce informal trade in that

area. The local Indian Market, right on the edge of the border, named Fakirer Bazar, sells Bangladeshi products in abundance, most of which are still traded informally.

- Women's participation from Bangladesh in the proposed border haat in Kurigram is expected to be vibrant without much hindrance from social and religious restrictions. A Female Union Parishad (Reserved Seat) Member informed that women already participate in the domestic haat. Moreover, women of the region produce handkerchiefs, bags, table clothes, vanity bags, Putir Mala (Bead Jewellery) and those are expected to find a better market through the haat.
- Road connectivity to the sanctioned Bagan bari Border Haat is inadequate as the 2 Kilometre approach road to the border haat has not been paved yet. Locals complained the approach road becomes unusable during monsoon as the dirt road turns into mud pool. Moreover, there is a culvert at the middle of the road between Bogla Bazaar and Baganbari Border Haat which is in poor condition, hindering the movement to and from this area.
- In Burimari, almost 30% of the villagers are engaged in informal trade. Border haat will surely reduce informal trade to some extent.
- In the past, the prevalence of informal trade in the Kurigram region was striking as locals claimed that around 80 percent of the population used to be associated with informal trade. Though most respondents feel that the percentage of informal trade has drastically come down in recent times, the number of people associated with informal trade in this region is still sizable. As there are few employment and trade opportunities in Bangladesh, locals feel that Border haat will create the much-needed employment opportunity to divert people from trading with India through unfair means.
- In the sanctioned border haat in Bholaganj, there are considerable prospects of women's involvement in the haat as vendors, labourers and support service providers from India and Bangladesh.
- Bholaganj has been a predominant hub of informal trade between Bangladesh and India for a long. Earlier, a local level agreement between BGB and BSF to exchange goods was prevalent once a week through an Indian market called Boropunji Bazar. However, it has been closed for over a year. Therefore, it is expected by locals that Border haat will reduce informal trade in that those areas.
- As the Bholaganj area (on the Bangladesh side) is a tourist attraction, it will help attract more buyers and visitors to the haat when it is operationalised.

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About the Project

CUTS International with the support of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK and in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh is implementing a project entitled 'Border Haats between India and Bangladesh as a tool to reduce informal cross-border trade'.

It aims at understanding the prospects of establishing border haats as a tool to reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh; and analysing its impact on gender and livelihood.

There would be greater awareness and consensus among stakeholders on the prospects of establishing border haats as a tool to reduce informal cross-border trade between India and Bangladesh; and preliminary feasibility assessment in select locations where the establishment of border haat has been proposed.

For details, please visit:

<https://cuts-crc.org/border-haats-between-india-and-bangladesh-as-a-tool-to-reduce-informal-cross-border-trade-between-the-two-countries>

CUTS International

Established in 1983, CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) is a non-governmental organisation, engaged in consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and economic equality and environmental balance, within and across borders. More information about the organisation and its centres can be accessed here: <http://www.cuts-international.org>.



D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India

Ph: 91.141.228 2821, Fax: 91.141.228 2485

Email: cuts@cuts.org, Website: www.cuts-international.org

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