

**GRANITE Phase 2 Toolbox Analysis**  
**Kolkata, India, May 28-29, 2007**

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**Objective**

*To deliberate on various aspects of the implementation of the second phase of the GRANITE (Grassroots Reachout & Networking in India on Trade & Economics) project for enabling all of the partners and CUTS to fine tune the expected outcomes, the deliverables of the second phase of the project.*

**Background**

Good governance depends on the ability of citizens to make their voices heard and hold their governments to account. When citizens are unable to assess the decisions of their leaders and/or make informed choices, it fosters an environment in which corruption can flourish (not necessarily in terms of economic corruption but political and social corruption as well). Civil society (including media and other groups promoting accountable governance and transparency) provides an important and requisite space for the citizens to make their voices heard.

The role and responsibility of civil society in fostering good governance through accountability and transparency in decision-making process and content is unequivocal. It encompasses every sphere of life of a citizen, as civil society is defined as a space between a family and the state. However, the development and influence of the civil society in different spheres of life vary from sector to sector and from country to country. For instance, in India while the civil society is very active in social and political spheres of life, it is not so much in the economic sphere. The result is that in India making citizens' voice heard in matters of economic governance is still at a very nascent stage.

This is especially problematic given the changes occurring in the economic sphere of a citizen's life. Over the last decade and half, the new wave of globalisation has spread its wings in every nook and corner of the world. No citizen is insulated from its effects – whether positive or negative. The challenge is to make citizens' voices heard in the sphere of economic governance of a state/country so that their governments (from local to provincial to pan-state level) are accountable to them on issues relating to economic decisions (having political and social ramifications) and to help citizens make informed choices with regard to livelihood opportunities (including finding ways to insulate the poor from short-term adverse shocks).

As stated above, the Indian civil society movement is still at an initial stage to make effective its interventions on matters relating to globalisation, economic governance and their impact on the livelihoods of the poor, particularly the marginalised and women. It is not that interventions are not being made, but often it is observed that many such interventions are being carried out by groups having little/no/distorted knowledge on grassroots realities on the one hand and political aspects of globalisation (including geo-politics of decisions being taken at the top – provincial, national and international level) on the other. Often the result of such interventions was that while the intention was good, its effects were not so good for the lives of the poor.

**Context**

Given this situation, from 2005 onwards CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE) is implementing a project titled "Grassroots Reachout & Networking in India on Trade & Economics" (GRANITE) in eight Indian states (viz. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal – together they account for approximately 61 percent of India's population) with the support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy, New Delhi and Oxfam Novib, The Netherlands. It is being implemented by developing the capacity and comprehensiveness of state-based civil

society organisations on issues relating to globalisation (with World Trade Organisation, its agreements and their implementation as a manifestation of globalisation) and how they are affecting economic governance in India (including its political and social ramifications).

While this project has its success and non-success (including deferred success) with regard to its advocacy efforts, the most important lesson from its implementation is that this is the first of its kind at the grassroots level and a base has been created, which is to be nurtured in order to create a sustainable space for the Indian civil society to make citizens' voices heard on issues relating to economic governance, particularly at the grassroots, in the context of globalisation and in terms of its effects on the poor, particularly the marginalised and women.

In short while the space for the Indian civil society to intervene on issues relating to economic governance at the grassroots in the context of globalisation and in terms of its effects on the poor (particularly the marginalised and women) is limited, a concerted beginning has been made to make this space expand and be sustainable in the long-run. This is the problem and justification for taking the GRANITE initiative forward in its next phase – that is for a period of three years: from July 2007 to June 2010.

### **The Event**

To involve representatives of project partners from eight states across India, representatives from Oxfam Novib, The Netherlands and Oxfam India in a one and half day conference.

The conference will deliberate on issues for implementing the second phase of the GRANITE project. It would enable all of the partners and CUTS to fine-tune the expected outcomes. Detailed discussions would be on the deliverables of the second phase of the project. The deliberations will be organised in a round-table discussion format thereby taking diverse views on board.

### **Venue**

Middleton Inn, Kolkata