

Project Inception Workshop
Mainstreaming International Trade into National Development Strategy
A Pilot Project in Bangladesh and India
February 7-8, 2007, Kolkata, India

Objective

To have a thorough discussion on the issues and research methodology of the project “*Mainstreaming International Trade into National Development Strategy*”. The details of the project research method and issues will be discussed during its inception workshop involving partner organisations and that platform will be used in defining the agenda more precisely.

Background

International trade is increasingly considered as a major mean to reduce poverty in developing countries. This is evident from various estimates that economists have put forward: showing benefits that would accrue to the poor following successful conclusion of the Doha round of trade negotiations under the World Trade organisation. This may be true at a macro level, but will it be equally true at local levels? Will pro-development outcomes of trade negotiations at the international level lead to pro-poor growth outcomes at the local level?

There is no ready answer to these questions. However, evidence from the implementation of the Uruguay round of trade liberalization shows that while some sectors/countries benefited, a large section of the poor were either left behind or adversely affected. One reason for this is that international trade looked at through the prism of WTO rules and procedures is mercantilist in its approach. The human element is missing. Though the Doha Development Agenda mentioned about mainstreaming trade into national development strategy, there is hardly any coherent and cogent initiative to do so at the country level.

On the other hand, a large amount of literature argues that trade can indeed play a major role in poverty reduction, provided right complementary policies and associated institutions are in place. This human development aspect of international trade is largely ignored by policymakers. It is not so much about rules and procedures negotiated at the WTO, but more about initiating policies and exploring institutions at local level, so that the poor are in a position to better avail opportunities of increasing openness (trade being a significant element) and better equipped to face challenges through effective social safety nets.

However, there is an important limitation in this literature. Analysis and policy prescriptions are largely based on macro data. There is hardly any comprehensive micro level analysis on what stakeholders think about social considerations that need to be taken into account for trade policymaking in a country.

Context

Given the above-stated background, CUTS CITEE is implementing the project titled “Mainstreaming International Trade into National Development Strategy: A Pilot Project in Bangladesh and India” with the support of Royal Norwegian Embassy, New Delhi, India. Over a period of two years, this project will be built through scientific consolidation and expansion of the need-based and demand driven agenda for mainstreaming, international trade into national development strategies of two South Asian countries, viz, Bangladesh and India.

The overall goal of the project is to establish upward and downward linkages between the grassroots and the policymakers (both at the local and national level) so as to integrate people’s views and concerns on issues of linkages between international trade and human development into the policymaking process.

The Event

To formally initiate the research project in a close-group interactive workshop of representatives of project partners and few other select experts to give direction to the research work. The meeting would be of two days.

The key researchers from the Bangladesh and India would present the overview of current situation of the selected sector and literature review done in achieving conditions necessary for pro-poor growth. This would be followed by comments and perspective of the partners and their brief presentation on the light of this.

The researchers would present the overall research methodology, starting from the how they would address the research issues and proceed to carry out the exploratory research work in the selected sector, the hypothesis to be tested, methods of collecting data (through questionnaires), techniques applied to draw inferences and other aspects of the research work. This would be followed by expert comments and views from other partner and experts on carrying out the project.

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