

State Level Inception Workshop
Grassroots Reachout and Networking in India on Trade and Economics
GRANITE, Phase 2
Kolkata, September, 27 2007

Background:

The GRANITE project that was initiated in 2005 and continued till March 2007, is implemented in eight states, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, in partnership with civil society organizations (CSOs) working at the grassroots focussing on Agriculture and Textiles of India, given their significance in the generation of employment in India.

Though the first phase has its success and non-success, the most important lesson from its implementation is that a base has been created at the grassroot level to create a sustainable space for the civil society in the context of globalisation and in terms of its effects on the poor, particularly the marginalised and women.

A concerted beginning has been made to expand this space to be sustainable in the long-run. This is the justification for taking the GRANITE initiative forward in its second phase – that is for a period of three years: from July 2007 to June 2010.

The overall objective of the GRANITE project is to create long-term capacity of Indian CSOs and other targeted stakeholders to address complex issues of globalization and international trade to understand how in an increasingly open and evolving environment they are affecting different stakeholders.

With specific reference to globalization, by raising awareness, linking local needs with national and international issues and building capacity, it aims to develop a better-informed constituency to comprehend better the impact of globalization and international trade on people's livelihoods.

The project broadly works towards articulating policy coherence between WTO guidelines and national development policies to reduce poverty levels and adopt distinct methodologies and focus areas.

Context

The GRANITE project Phase-2 in its aim and objective is different from GRANITE project Phase 1 as in this phase the research component is new and demands a detailed and critical analysis of the process, the problems therein and to give an avenue for exploring the prospects for CSOs intervention. It will have one policy focus approach that would be followed *vis-à-vis* Phase-1 which was general. Mainstreaming gender into policy making will also be a parallel activity of this project.

Expected Outcomes of Phase 2:

- An analysis on the process of preparation and implementation of the National Foreign Trade Policy of India, 2004-09.
- Awareness generation of different stakeholders on issues related to globalisation and its effect on the poor and marginalised sections of the society.
- Identification of gaps between the policies and implementation at different levels of stakeholders.

The outcomes of the First Phase of the project have considerably met the expectations of the project and some of them are as follows:

- Eight CSOs (the GRANITE partners) have demonstrated excellent capacity to be able to analyze, articulate and advocate on emerging and relevant issues with respect to globalization and international trade with specific emphasis on agriculture and textiles.
- With inputs from GRANITE partners, CUTS has advocated for pro-poor changes in the National Foreign Trade Policy of India, 2004-09 and many such changes have taken place.
- Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India has formed the Inter-State Trade Council, which is in line with one of the advocacy goals of the GRANITE project, i.e. more involvement of State Governments in the process of trade policy making.

The event:

The State Level Inception Workshop for Phase-II will be held on 27th September, 2007 at Kolkata. It will be a platform to launch the project at the state level. The workshop would be graced by different stakeholders from horticulture and textile, namely, farmers / farmers' organizations, weavers' organisation, government officials and civil society organizations.

While state government officials and business stakeholders will be consulted for doing this analysis, civil society organisations and community-based organisations will be extensively consulted in order to advocate for making the process of preparation and implementation of the National Foreign Trade Policy of India more inclusive – in economic sense as well as in social and political terms.

The main objective of the workshop is:

- To formally launch the project in the state and bring all relevant stakeholders(civil society organizations, local media, state government officials, academia, research institutions) to a common platform to discuss opportunities and challenges in the sectors of agriculture and textiles.
- To take stock of how the State governments and other stakeholders in West Bengal are involved in the process of preparation and implementation of National Foreign Trade Policy.

The workshop is aimed at facilitating interaction between:

- Government officials
- Farmers/ Weavers associations
- Media representatives
- Other stakeholders

The interactions will help to pool in all issues relevant to different stakeholders.