

CUTS CITEE in Action

January-March 2012

Events

Cost of Economic Non-Cooperation to Consumers in South Asia

The project entitled 'Cost of Economic Non-Cooperation to Consumers in South Asia' (COENCOSA) was initiated by CUTS International with the Support of The Asia Foundation to enquire into the potential benefits of increase in intra-regional trade to consumers in the South Asian region, based on a hypothesis that ineffective and insufficient trade liberalisation in South Asia is resulting in high cost by way of loss of consumer welfare. The study involved a meta-analysis of existing literature, a quantitative assessment of loss of consumer welfare and a perception survey of key stakeholders.

A dissemination meeting was organised at Kathmandu on February 03-04, 2012 to present the findings of the study and discuss future course of action on its recommendations and further research on intra-regional trade costs in South Asia.



Media Briefings

Five media briefings were organised in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India respectively. The objective was to disseminate the findings of a research project entitled 'Cost of Economic Non-Cooperation to Consumers in South Asia' among the local and national media in the project countries. The project was conducted with an objective of assessing potential benefits to consumers from enhanced trade and economic relations among the South Asian countries. The media briefing, aimed at publishing the project report, was attended by journalists from various news dailies and broadcasters as well as a select group of government representatives in charge of trade policies other than two parliamentarians.



Partners Meeting

The partners meeting was organised at Kathmandu on February 03, 2012. The objective was to collect and discuss views of existing and new partner organisations of the project regarding future course of action with respect to advancing the research and advocacy activities envisaged by the project.

The meeting was attended by representatives of The Asia Foundation, CUTS International (India); South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (Nepal); Inter Press Service (Sri Lanka); Sustainable Development Policy Institute (Pakistan); The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (Bangladesh); and participants representing various stakeholder groups and organisations from five South Asian countries.



Government Procurement: An Emerging Tool of Integration and Governance

CUTS is implementing a project entitled 'Government Procurement – An emerging tool of global integration and good governance', in India with the support of British High Commission under the Prosperity Fund Programme. This project is an attempt to examine various features of the government procurement market of India in three sectors – health including pharmaceuticals/ medical equipment, information technology and IT-enabled services, and rail transport, and is exploring implications of India's possible accession to the WTO Government Procurement Agreement on these important markets and otherwise.



A National meeting was organised at Kathmandu on March 03-04, 2012 to present the findings of this study and discuss future course of action on its recommendations and further research on intra-regional trade costs in South Asia.

Project Advisory Committee meeting

A Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held in New Delhi, on March 05, 2012. The main purpose of the meeting was to take guidance and suggestions from the project team and PAC members and also to take a critical look on the project outputs and suggests improvements.

Assessing Consumer Behaviour on Energy Efficient Products in India

CUTS International with the support of the Climate Works Foundation, US through Shakti Sustainable Foundation, New Delhi organised a final dissemination meeting of the project entitled, 'Assessing Consumer Behaviour on Energy Efficient Products in India' in New Delhi, on January 25, 2012. The meeting was held to disseminate major findings of the study.



The objective of the project was to understand consumer behaviour in respect to energy efficient products. The findings are the result of a survey of over 20,000 consumers, 550 traders and 50 producers of electrical home appliances covering 19 states and 3 union territories, constituting over 90 percent of the population of India. The survey covered consumers in various income brackets and different occupations to generate a better understanding on this subject.

Upcoming Events

Bilateral/Regional Consultations on Intra-Regional Trade in South Asia

CUTS International with support from Friedrich Ebert Stiftung India will organise a regional meeting on India-Bangladesh Trade at Kolkata, West Bengal on May 31, 2012.

The objectives of the regional consultation is to elicit the views and concerns of business community about non-tariff barriers (including procedural) hindering intra-regional trade and how to overcome them and prepare an advocacy agenda for the removal/harmonisation of NTBs between South Asian countries.

Global Economic Governance and Role of Emerging South

Given the contemporary and evolving macroeconomic scenario across the globe, it is imperative that international issues like reforming the World Trade Organisation (WTO), focusing on new trade-related issues, developing new aid architecture, among others, and above all strengthening the multilateral trading system, be considered more seriously. This is what shall set the agenda for inclusive growth and sustainable development in the global South and would define a pragmatic roadmap for global economic governance in days to come.

CUTS will organise a session on *Future Challenges of Global Economic Governance and Role of the Emerging South* during UNCTAD XIII Civil Society Forum at Doha, Qatar on April 25, 2012.



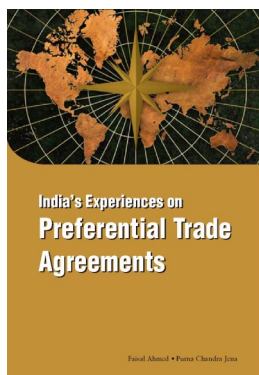
Climate Change, Food Security and Trade

CUTS has initiated a pioneering work on multi-stakeholder capacity building on trade-climate change-food security linkages. This on-going work focusses on Eastern Africa and South Asia but the methodology and outputs will be accessible and useful to relevant stakeholders in developing least developed countries in other regions as well. Given the understanding, CUTS will organise a session on *Climate Change, Food Security and Trade: Challenges and Opportunities* during UNCTAD XIII Civil Society Forum at Doha, Qatar on April 25, 2012.

Latest Publications

India's Experience on Preferential Trade Agreements

This study is a comprehensive extension of CUTS' earlier work and evaluates India's negotiating experiences on preferential trade agreements. It draws lessons from some select engagements such as like India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, India-Thailand Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, India-MERCOSUR Preferential Trade Agreement, India-Singapore Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement.



The focus is on evaluating and analysing India's negotiating process and its preparedness for negotiation. The study makes case based analyses of good practices highlighting ways of preparedness adopted by other countries. Given the advances that India has made in negotiating PTAs, such analytical studies underline the scope for improvement in negotiating preparedness.

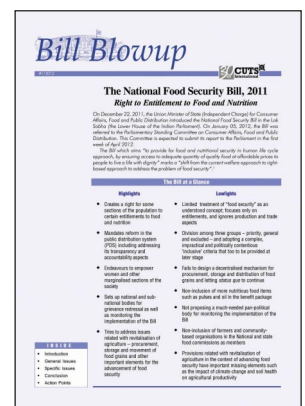
http://www.cuts-citee.org/pdf/Indias_Experiences_On_Preferential_Trade_Agreements.pdf

The National Food Security Bill, 2011 – Right to Entitlement to Food and Nutrition

On December 22, 2011, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution introduced the National Food Security Bill in the *Lok Sabha* (the Lower House of the Indian Parliament). On January 05, 2012, the Bill was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution. This Committee is expected to submit its report to the Parliament in the first week of April 2012.

The Bill which aims "to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity" marks a "shift from the current welfare approach to right-based approach to address the problem of food security".

www.parfor.in/pdf/Bill_Blowup-The_National_Food_Security_Bill_2011_Right_to_Entitlement_to_Food_and_Nutrition.pdf



Participation

- Archana Jatkari participated in a meeting on 'Post TRIPs IPR Regime in India – Opportunities and Challenges' organised by The Energy and Resources Institute, at New Delhi, on March 14, 2012. The objective of the event was to identify opportunities and challenges for India with respect to patent, GI and design protection in the Post-TRIPs IPR Regime in India.
- Bipul Chatterjee attended a meeting on Trade Facilitation organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry at New Delhi, on February 29, 2012.

CUTS on Business World's Panel

From 2012, Business World (the largest circulating business weekly of India) constituted International Business Awards for Indian companies under 10 different categories and constituted a panel of juries to decide those awards. Bipul Chatterjee of CUTS has been invited to that panel. He attended the jury meeting organised by Business World at New Delhi, on February 15, 2012.

In Media

Trade Liberalisation in South Asia could yield consumer welfare gain

The News, Pakistan, March 27, 2012

While sharing the findings of research study 'Cost of economic non-cooperation to consumers in South Asia (COENCOSA)' the speakers lamented South Asia, despite being home to most of the world's poor and conflict-ridden, is the least economically integrated region in the world which results into higher costs to consumers on account of costlier imports from outside the region.

www.newspakistan.pk/2012/03/26/Trade-liberalisation-among-South-Asian-countries-could-yield-a-minimum-consumer-welfare-gain-of-approximately-US-2-billion-a-year-SDPI-CUTS-International-Study/

South Asia the least economically integrated region in the world

The News Today, Bangladesh, March 29, 2012

South Asia is still the least economically integrated region in the world despite having enormous scope for boosting regional economic cooperation for the benefits of its people, says a study, reports BSS.

www.newstoday.com.bd/index.php?option=details&news_id=57330&date=2012-03-29

More trade integration to help South Asian economies

Live Mint, India, March 23, 2012

Further integration of trade among South Asian economies could yield as much as US\$2bn (around ₹10,000 crore) in benefits to consumers in the region, a study released by CUTS International said.

www.livemint.com/2012/03/22232832/More-trade-integration-to-help.html

Bangladesh can save by removing SU goods from its SAFTA sensitive list

The Financial Express, Bangladesh, March 29, 2012

Bangladesh can annually save around US\$398.5mn from imports through removing 50 products from its sensitive list under South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), report of a study revealed.

www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?news_id=124900&date=2012-03-29

Study bats for boost in South-Asian trade

Business Standard, India, March 23, 2012

Trade liberalisation across five south Asian countries would result in a consumer welfare gain of at least US\$597mn to India and US\$2bn to the region, says a study by think-tank CUTS International. Consumer gain is defined as a difference between the total import expenditure and likely import expenditure if that country were to import products at a lower price from the region.

www.business-standard.com/india/news/study-bats-for-boost-in-south-asian-trade-/468751/

Procurement policy will pay

The Hindu, India, March 11, 2012

Health and pharmaceuticals make up a large chunk of government procurement. The Public Procurement Bill could be a positive step towards reforming the system, says a study.

www.thehindu.com/

Action plan to promote energy efficient programme

IANs, January 28, 2012

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) will devise a joint plan of action in cooperation with the Department of Consumer Affairs and consumer organisations to promote energy efficient products in the country. Conducted by CUTS International, the survey says that there is a need to boost investment for energy-efficient products to sustain economic growth in an energy-deficient country like India.

[www.cuts-citee.org/media-](http://www.cuts-citee.org/media-action_plan_to_promote_energy_efficient_programme.htm)

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