

CUTS CITEE IN ACTION

JANUARY-MARCH 2021



WEBINARS

Mainstreaming Shepreneurs in International Trade

CUTS International organised a webinar on ‘Mainstreaming Shepreneurs in International Trade’ on February 04, 2021, to launch animation videos produced by CUTS to educate women entrepreneurs on trading procedures and motivate them to participate in the global market. This initiative is a part of a project entitled “Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal” supported by the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) under its Asia Regional Trade and Connectivity Programme.



The speakers and moderators of the webinar were Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director of CUTS International; Mia Mikic, Permanent Adviser, ARTNeT; Anoush der Boghossian, Head of Trade and Gender, World Trade Organisation (WTO); Nandita Baruah, Country Representative, India, The Asia Foundation; and Jahnabi Phookan, National President, FLO & Director, JTI Group.

Stressing on the importance of ‘access to information for trade’, Anoush der Boghossian, Head of Trade and Gender, WTO, said that better and proper knowledge helps women to dispose-off middlemen while doing business.

In the concluding remarks, Bipul Chatterjee stated that as governments have limitations in reaching out to a large number of micro, small and medium entrepreneurs, there is a need for a large-scale, decentralised engagement of the private sector, civil society and community-based organisations. More than 100 from the BBIN sub-region and beyond participated in it.

<https://cuts-citee.org/cuts-webinar-on-mainstreaming-shepreneurs-in-international-trade/>





Role of Bhutan and Nepal in Multimodal Connectivity in the BBIN Sub-region

CUTS International organised a webinar based on Emerging Multimodal Connectivity in the BBIN Sub-region Possibilities for Competitive Linkages and Aviation Logistics in the BBIN Sub-region: Pathways for greater resilience on December 16, 2020,. These were recently published under the project on multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region, which is supported by the FCDO of the United Kingdom with the Asian Development Bank as its knowledge partner. This webinar was attended by more than 50 participants, including academicians, non-profits, civil societies, multilateral development banks, among others.

The speakers and moderators of the webinar were Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International; Bhimlal Suberi, Former Chief Planning Officer, Policy & Planning Division, Ministry of Information and Communications, Government of Bhutan; Azhar Jaimurzina, Chief, Transport Facilitation and Logistics Section, Transport Division, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific; Purushottam Ojha, Former Commerce Secretary, Government of Nepal; Tadateru Hayashi, Unit Head, SASEC, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, South Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB); Purushottam Ojha, Former Commerce Secretary, Government of Nepal; and Pritam Banerjee, Independent Trade and Logistics Specialist.



Chatterjee opined that as countries of the BBIN sub-region adapt to COVID-19 shocks, infrastructure investments that facilitate greater interoperability among railways, inland waterways, coastal shipping, highways and aviation networks are needed for a robust, sustainable and resilient recovery. Not only will that make the movement of their goods as well as people resilient to future shocks but also increase the sub-region's transport and logistics competitiveness, along with expanding connectivity prospects for Bhutan and Nepal.

Speaking on occasion, Bhimlal Suberi, Former Chief Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division in the Ministry of Information and Communication, Royal Government of Bhutan, said that the scope for Bhutan in building multimodal transport connectivity domestically seemed very limited due to the geographical limitations. However, prospects for cross-border rail linkages between Bhutan and India, and usage of inland waterways of India and Bangladesh are expanding its connectivity prospects and access to markets elsewhere. Bilateral agreements seem to offer an advantage in negotiating favourable terms to address specific challenges in the particular context of Bhutan.

<https://cuts-citee.org/cuts-webinar-on-role-of-bhutan-and-nepal-in-multi-modal-connectivity-in-the-bbin-sub-region/>



Bringing Mountain Women Across Borders: A Case of Women Traders in the Hindu Kush Himalaya

CUTS International and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) jointly organised a webinar on Bringing mountain women across borders: A case of women traders in the Hindu Kush Himalaya on March 11, 2021. More than 50 participants from these transboundary landscapes in Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Tajikistan participated.

Kamala Gurung, Gender & Natural Resource Management Specialist, ICIMOD; Pema Gyamtsho, Director General, ICIMOD; Janita Gurung, Programme Coordinator, Kailash Sacred Landscape, ICIMOD; Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow, CUTS International; Maryam Iqbal, Founder, Scherzade, Pakistan; Priyasha Gurung, Entrepreneur, Samtse, Bhutan; Manju Kotiyal, Dharchula, Uttarakhand, India; Mozammil Shinwari, Executive Director, Organisation for Economic Studies and Peace Bhutan; Khunzang Lhamu, Director General, Department of Employment and Human Resources, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan India; Pankaj Tewari, Executive Director, Aarohi, Uttarakhand Nepal; Reeta Simha, President, Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs' Associations of Nepal, Executive Member and Chairperson of Women Entrepreneurs Development Committee, Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry; and Chanda Gurung Goodrich, Senior Gender Specialist, ICIMOD.

Chatterjee said that cross-border trade is an important source of income for many poor families, especially women in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region. Evidence shows that there is a cross-border exchange of goods and socio-cultural exchange across this region, which provides great potential for women traders to explore economic possibilities.

In his opening remarks, Pema Gyamtsho, Director General, ICIMOD observed that women mostly carry out informal trade in these transboundary landscapes but they face challenges in customs clearance and poor storage and transportation facilities. He said that

women's participation in economic activities should not be limited to trade alone and expanded to include tourism as well, which can be enabled through joint ventures or partnership arrangements.

Veena Vidyadharan, Fellow at CUTS International presented the findings of the study and highlighted major external shocks that affect business activities of women – seasonal nature of business, extreme events and natural disasters, geopolitical tensions, poor transportation, and the recent pandemic. She recommended the capacity building of women entrepreneurs and traders for promoting niche products such as *chiuri* ghee (from the Indian butter tree), large cardamom, beeswax, sea buckthorn, and scorpion grass, and local art and handicrafts such as Aipan art and handmade carpets.

<https://cuts-citee.org/building-a-regional-network-for-women-traders-across-borders-in-the-hindu-kush-himalaya/>





WEBINARS

BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement: Will it be an instrument for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic transformation?

CUTS International organised a webinar on BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement: Will it be an instrument for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic transformation? on March 22, 2021. It discussed two CUTS publications on the potential of BBIN MVA in economic recovery in the sub-region and linking waterways with industrial and logistics clusters. More than 50 participants from think tanks, multilateral development banks, international organisations, business and industry associations, among others, attended the webinar

The speakers and moderators of the webinar were Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International; Absar Alam, Assistant Professor Economics, MKS College, LN Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar; Arun Roy, Former Chief Engineer, Inland Waterways Authority of India; Syed Manowar Hussain, Former Secretary, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority; Satish Reddy, Consultant, Regional Cooperation and Trade Facilitation, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, Asian Development Bank; Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue; and Aatur Rahman, Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh.



Chatterjee said that the BBIN group of countries should now fast-track implementing measures such as the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement. While Bhutan is yet to ratify the MVA, the country has given its consent to the other three to operationalise the MVA among the three countries. One possible method of operationalising the same is through a Memorandum of Understanding with Bhutan's option to join later.

Alam opined that as the sub-region is experiencing diversification of transport and transit options while multimodal logistics parks are created, the implementation of the MVA can spur the revival of economic activities in the sub-region.

Monowar and Arun, who jointly co-authored the paper on Linking Waterways, stated that while efforts in the sub-region for the revival of inland waterways are evident, it is time to link industrial and logistics centres of the BBIN countries to make inland waterways transport a vibrant mode of transport.

<https://cuts-citee.org/cuts-webinar-on-bbin-motor-vehicles-agreement-will-it-be-an-instrument-for-a-sustainable-inclusive-and-resilient-economic-transformation/>

WTO's Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking Event 2021

CUTS Session on Impact of COVID-19 on Women Traders in BBIN

Drawing insights from the on-going projects 'Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation Agreement: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (GeTRaF)' and 'Border Haats between India and Bangladesh as a tool to reduce informal cross-border trade', supported by the United Kingdom's FCDO under its Asia Regional Trade and Connectivity Programme, CUTS International hosted a session as part of WTO's Aid-for-Trade Stocktaking Event from during March 23-25, 2021. A research report titled 'Shepreneurs in International Trade: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal' was released on this occasion.



AID FOR TRADE
Stocktaking Event

23-25 March 2021

The eminent moderator and panellists were: Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International; Anoush der Boghossian, Head of Trade and Gender, WTO; Selima Ahmad, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh and President, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Kunzang Lhamu, Director General, Department of Employment and Human Resources, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan; Kamala Gurung, Gender and Natural Resource Management Specialist, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal; Mandakini Kaul, Senior Regional Cooperation Officer for South Asia, The World Bank; Cyn-Young Park, Director, Regional Cooperation and Integration Division, Economics Research and Regional Cooperation Department, Asian Development Bank.

Chatterjee said that women are disproportionately affected by the COVID pandemic because of the nature of their business and prevailing uncertainties. A positive agenda in favour of women entrepreneurs is required for a post-pandemic economic recovery.

Kaul stated that though there is extensive evidence to show that countries that are open to trade have reduced gender inequality in terms of opportunities and wages, the link between gender equality and trade is still largely missing.

Boghossian echoed with previous panellists and stated that women entrepreneurs are the hardest hit because of the enterprise's scale and that they work in low-return sectors like agriculture and food processing.

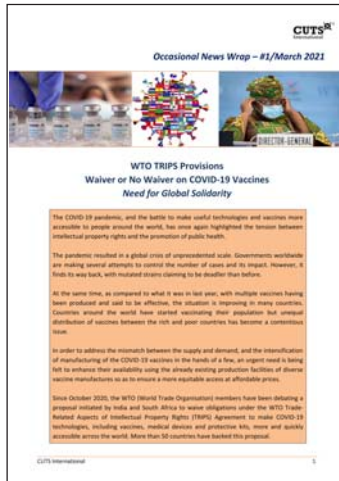
<https://cuts-citee.org/cuts-internationals-session-at-wtos-aid-for-trade-stocktaking-event-2021/>



PUBLICATION

Occasional News Wrap – #1/March 2021

**WTO TRIPS Provisions
Waiver or No Waiver on COVID-19 Vaccines
– Need for Global Solidarity**



The COVID-19 pandemic and the battle to make useful technologies and vaccines more accessible to people worldwide have highlighted the tension between intellectual property rights and public health promotion. The pandemic resulted in a global crisis of unprecedented scale. Governments worldwide are making several attempts to control the number of cases and their impact. However, it finds its way back, with mutated strains claiming to be deadlier than before.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/onw-1-wto.pdf>

RESEARCH REPORT

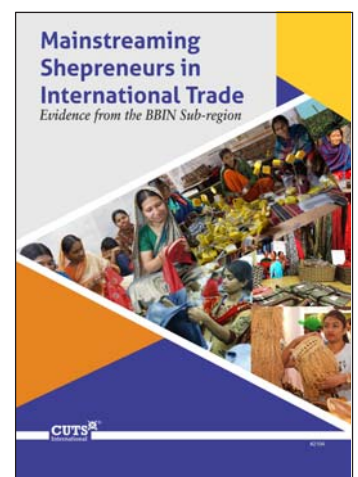
**Mainstreaming Shepreneurs
in International Trade
Evidence from the BBIN Sub-region**

Gender dimensions of international trade, and the related fields of economics, trade law, and public policy, have gained increased attention from researchers, policymakers, academics, media and civil society groups over the past few years. Social expectations, traditional patriarchal norms, and inadequate access to resources are common challenges affecting women’s economic activities. This holds true for the sub-region covering BBIN which conspicuously lack women entrepreneurs in the export-import (EXIM) business.

In this context, CUTS International along with its country partners, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Dhaka, Bangladesh), Bhutan Media and Communication Institute (Thimphu, Bhutan), and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (Kathmandu, Nepal) with the support from the United Kingdom’s FCDO undertook a project titled ‘Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal’. The aim of the study was to prepare cases in favour of gender-inclusive trade policies to enhance participation of women from the sub-region, in trade and trade-related income-generating activities.

This report highlights the significant challenges women entrepreneurs face when they attempt to step into the export sector and how simple methods can resolve those hurdles.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/research-report-mainstreaming-shepreneurs-in-international-trade.pdf>





PUBLICATION

COMPENDIUM

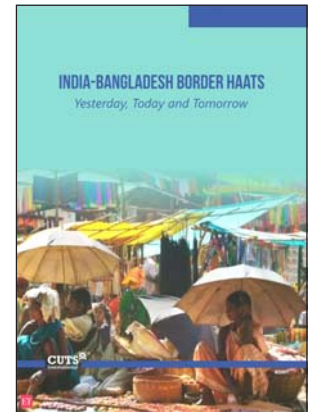
India-Bangladesh Border Haats Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

The border haats have been transformational in the management of the India-Bangladesh border. Traditionally, border management was perceived from the prism of security; therefore, restrictions were imposed on the people in the bordering areas, thus hampering development.

In view of the importance of the border haats for the lives and livelihood of the local communities, there is an urgent need to re-open the border haats, but with necessary on-the-ground measures for the health and hygiene safety of the participants. In this regard, there is a need to include an addendum to the existing protocols for their functioning on the ground.

Given this backdrop, CUTS International has prepared a compendium, which is a collection of briefing papers by a group of eminent experts as an output of a project entitled 'Border Haats Between India and Bangladesh as a Tool to Reduce Informal Cross Border Trade', which is being implemented with the support of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom and in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh.

<https://cuts-crc.org/pdf/Compendium-India-Bangladesh-Border-Haats-Yesterday-Today-and-Tomorrow.pdf>



DISCUSSION PAPERS

BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement Scope for developing integrated logistics and transport infrastructure and other related services



The BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) was signed in 2015 with a similar goal. The objective of the agreement was to enable smooth and efficient cross-border transport in the sub-region. It has been additionally identified that the framework holds the potential to encompass intermodal linkages and networks in the sub-region, which is a pivotal step in harmonising and simplifying trade and connectivity prospects. However, MVA continues to face operational challenges due to Bhutan's environmental concerns.

With this backdrop, this Discussion Paper discusses the developments with regard to multimodal transport, logistics networks and services to further the regional production links while suggesting a phased execution of the MVA as a catalytic measure to advance that.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/discussion-paper-bbin-motor-vehicles-agreement.pdf>

Linking Inland Waterways with Industrial Corridors and Logistics Parks for Economical and Ecological Freight Movement in BBIN Sub-region

Historically, waterways were the most preferred mode of transport between West Bengal and East Pakistan. After the emergence of independent Bangladesh, Protocol on Inland Water Transit & Trade (PIWTT) was signed between India and Bangladesh to revive the waterways but a lot of focus was placed on developing roadways and railways hence waterways were left behind due to non-utilisation.

To promote multi-modal connectivity in the BBIN region, the role of waterways should be examined. Also, several industrial hubs have developed around the inland waterway protocol or international sea trade routes due to rapid industrial growth in Southeast Asia.

In this context, this Discussion Paper aims to analyse the state of current infrastructural facilities in the IWT network and nearby industrial hubs lying close to the river network so that an integrated multi-modal corridor can be established within the BBIN sub-region. It will not only benefit trade but also help employment generation for the local communities and reduce the impact of multiple handling costs and procedural delays.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/discussion-paper-linking-inland-waterways-with-industrial-corridors-and-logistic-parks-bbin-sub-region.pdf>





WORKING NOTES

Learning from CAREC Corridors and Connectivity Prospects for BBIN Sub-region

This Working Note takes a comprehensive look at the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) corridors and derives lessons from it for the BBIN sub-region, along with figuring out multi-modal connectivity potentials between them. It gives a special focus to the CAREC Corridor 2 while also looking into the competing and complementary features of the CAREC Corridors 5 and 6 in establishing connectivity between the BBIN sub-region and the CAREC region.

The significant progress of infrastructure development and connectivity initiatives in CAREC corridors, despite the presence of a large number of landlocked countries, makes the BBIN sub-region look into the initiative and learn from it. The BBIN sub-region misses the presence of a central knowledge-sharing institution like the CAREC Institute, to help in the evidence-based decision making and quality initiatives in the sub-region. This Working Note highlights several lessons that the BBIN sub-region can learn from the CAREC Programme.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/working-note-learning-from-CAREC-corridors-and-connectivity-prospects-for-BBIN-sub-region.pdf>



Multimodal Connectivity in BBIN Sub-region Lessons from the ASEAN Framework

The concept of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) sub-regional integration and connectivity, an offshoot of the South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) formed in 1985, stands in sharp contrast to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Since 1967, ASEAN has been working to create a fully integrated functional bloc of nations having a shared vision for growth and development through cooperation and connectivity. It has an updated Master Plan for ASEAN Connectivity 2025 to strengthen intra-regional transport connectivity further. But, the BBIN continues to struggle.

The BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), signed in June 2015, is yet to see the light of the day. It would be interesting to understand what the BBIN sub-region needs to do and learn from ASEAN to expedite economic integration and transport connectivity.

Given this background, this Working Note attempts to discern policy guidance for multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region, taking reference from ASEAN. It focuses on the emergence of ASEAN and lessons for the BBIN sub-region. The ASEAN Framework initiatives for multimodal connectivity provide an overview of the frameworks adopted by ASEAN.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/working-note-multimodal-framework.pdf>



PUBLICATION

FIELD DIARIES

A series of Field Diaries were published under the project entitled, ‘Enabling a political economy discourse for multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region (M-Connect).’ The project is implemented by CUTS International in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh, Bhutan Media and Communications Institute and Nepal Economic Forum. It is supported by the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) under its Asia Regional Trade and Connectivity Programme. The Asian Development Bank is a knowledge partner.

Siliguri Corridor

A team from CUTS International visited the Siliguri Corridor in November 2020. Their field diary discusses the scope for socio-economic transformation of this Corridor while keeping in mind trade logistics, infrastructure and transport challenges and opportunities. It also provides a glimpse into the scope for alternative investment opportunities and livelihood generation and women’s economic empowerment.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-siliguri-corridor.pdf>



Petrapole-Gede-Durgapur Triangle

A team from CUTS International visited Petrapole-Gede-Durgapur Triangle in November. Their field diary discusses the scope for improving trade logistic infrastructure and policy framework between India and Bangladesh by highlighting railways and roadways connectivity between the two countries. It also provides a glimpse into the status as well as scope for digitalisation, private sector participation as well as gender sensitive infrastructure provisions.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-petrapole-gede-durgapur-triangle.pdf>



Dhubri-Jogighopa-Guwahati Landscape

A team from CUTS International visited Dhubri-Jogighopa-Guwahati Landscape in November 2020. The field diary discusses the ground realities of the landscape while keeping in mind trade logistics, infrastructure, and transport challenges and opportunities. It also provides a glimpse into the scope for improving stakeholder engagement, livelihood generation and women’s economic empowerment.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-dhubri-jogighopa-guwahati-landscape.pdf>





PUBLICATION

FIELD DIARIES

Kolkata-Haldia-Kolaghat Triangle

A team from CUTS International visited Kolkata-Haldia-Kolaghat Triangle in November 2020. This field diary discusses the potential of developing inland waterways and the practical difficulties of integrating them with other modes of transport in the region. The purpose of the visit was to assess and investigate the infrastructure and undertake stakeholder consultations for exploring ways and means of encouraging and promoting multi-modal connectivity in the region.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-kolkata-haldia-kolaghat-triangle.pdf>



To the heights of Shillong and Dawki

A team from CUTS International visited Shillong and Dawki in January 2021. The purpose of the visit was to assess and investigate the infrastructure, trade logistics, and conduct stakeholder consultations to explore ways and means to encourage and promote multimodal connectivity among BBIN countries. This field diary discusses the immense potential of Shillong and Dawki in Meghalaya for facilitating cross border trade between India and Bangladesh. The diary also brings out how the geographic positional advantage of the Meghalaya state is under utilised. Meghalaya has Dawki LCS, one of the oldest LCS in India which was established in 1948. But Dawki LCS lacks facilities such as internet connectivity and basic infrastructure, which prevents it from adopting the paperless connectivity initiatives in India. This diary mentions similar issues while it also points out the latest developments in the area of multi-modal connectivity and infrastructure development in the region.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-to-the-heights-of-shillong-and-dawki.pdf>



Bihar to Facilitate Connectivity in the BBIN Sub-region

In January, 2021, a team from CUTS International visited Bihar. The purpose was to assess and investigate the infrastructure, trade logistics, and conduct stakeholder consultations to explore ways and means to encourage and promote multi-modal connectivity among BBIN countries. This Field Diary discusses the immense potential of ICP Raxaul and ICP Jogbani in Bihar for facilitating cross border trade between India and Nepal. The diary also brings out the importance of Ghai Ghat and Kalu Ghat in reviving inland waterways. The diary elicits Bihar's positional advantage in enhancing connectivity in the BBIN Sub-region, initiatives taken by the government to boost multimodal connectivity, stakeholders' perspectives along with some infrastructural challenges the region faces.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-bihar-to-facilitate-connectivity-in-the-bbin-sub-region.pdf>





PUBLICATION

FIELD DIARIES

Sahibganj Corridor: Emerging Inland Waterway to Link India-Bangladesh

In December, 2020, a team from CUTS International visited several places in Jharkhand and West Bengal along the river Ganga. The purpose was to assess and investigate the infrastructure, trade logistics, and understand stakeholders' perspectives along with some infrastructural challenges the region faces in multi-modal connectivity. This Field Diary discusses the immense potential of the Sahibganj Multi-modal Terminal for facilitating cross-border trade between India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. The diary also brings out the importance of several initiatives taken up under the India Bangladesh protocol route with the objective of diverting traffic from roadways to inland waterways. With the implementation and awareness of the policies and infrastructure, the face of the region would improve to a large extent socio-economically.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-sahibganj-corridor-emerging-inland-waterway-to-link-india-bangladesh.pdf>



Karimganj: A Strategic Location for India-Bangladesh Trade

In January 2021, a team from CUTS International visited Karimganj in Assam. The purpose was to assess and investigate cross-border trade infrastructure and trade logistics between India and Bangladesh through Karimganj and conduct stakeholder consultations to explore ways and means to encourage and promote multimodal connectivity among BBIN countries. This Field Diary discusses the immense potential of Mahisashan railway station and ICP Sutarkandi for facilitating cross border trade between India, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The diary also brings out the importance of Mahisashan railway station in reviving trade through the rail route. With significant road and rail connectivity, Karimganj also has water connectivity through Kushiara River, thus posing an opportunity for being an important mode of multimodal connectivity in the BBIN sub-region.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-karimganj-a-strategic-location-for-india-bangladesh-trade.pdf>



Uttar Pradesh: Emerging as a Hub for Multimodal Connectivity in the BBIN Sub-region

A team from CUTS International visited Uttar Pradesh in February 2021. The purpose of the visit was to understand and gather information relating to connectivity, trade logistics, infrastructure and transport challenges and opportunities through stakeholder consultations focussing on understanding their views and perception on ways and means to promote multimodal connectivity within India and in the BBIN sub-region as a whole. This Field Diary discusses the potential of the upcoming multimodal terminal that has connectivity with road, rail and waterways; and the importance of the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor for India. The diary also highlights the essentiality of an isolated border railway station for cross-border trade between India and Nepal.

<https://cuts-citee.org/pdf/field-diary-up-emerging-as-a-hub-for-m-connect.pdf>





PARTICIPATION

- Bipul Chatterjee spoke on “Activating BBIN Connectivity for Shared Prosperity” at the Annual Meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) Northeast Advisory Council on March 30, 2021.
- Veena Vidyadharan, Saurabh Kumar, Chetna K. Rathore, Shubhi Gaur, Apoorva Lalwani, Deepmala Ghosh, Jithin Sabu, Kajal Sharda, Srijata Deb and attended and prepared daily bulletin for WTO’s Aid for Trade Stocktaking Event 2021 during March 23-25, 2021.
- Bipul Chatterjee spoke at a Session on “Issues of Strategic Cooperation” at a Kolkata-Dhaka Dialogue organised by the H P Ghosh Research Centre, Bandhan-Konnagar on March 25, 2021.
- Bipul Chatterjee spoke at a Roundtable on “Alternative Food Networks and Food E-commerce” organised by the University of Trento, Italy on March 18, 2021.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar titled “India China: The Road from Galwan”, organised by Carnegie India on March 11, 2021. The webinar discussed a paper titled ‘India China: A road from Galwan’ written by Vijay Gokhale.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar titled “Connecting to Thrive: Integrating Transport in South Asia”, organised by World Bank on March 10, 2021. The webinar explored the challenges and opportunities of transport integration in South Asia- with a particular focus on the eastern part of the region
- Srijata Deb attended a webinar titled “Research Network Sustainable Global Supply Chains” organised by “Research Network & Sustainable Supply Chains on March 09, 2021. The webinar focused on establishing a “Research Network on Sustainable Global Supply Chains” that aims to undertake and stimulate new research that helps make supply chains more sustainable and screen the best international research on this topic and make it accessible for policymakers and other societal stakeholders.
- Srijata Deb and Deepmala Ghosh attended a webinar titled “Development of North Eastern Indian Region: Indo-Japan Collaboration for Connectivity, Commerce, Culture and Conservation” organised by Asian Confluence on March 05, 2021. The webinar focussed on the key importance of Indo Japan collaboration for developing a secure and prosperous North Eastern region of India in the convergence of India’s “Act East Policy”, and “Neighbourhood First Policy”, towards a vibrant Bay of Bengal region and a “Free and Open Indo Pacific”.
- Bipul Chatterjee spoke at a Session on “Scaling Digital Interconnection” organised by the World Economic Forum on March 04, 2021.
- Prashant Sharma, Apoorva Lalwani, Deepmala Ghosh, Jithin Sabu, Srijata Deb and Udit Sharma attended the Maritime India Summit 2021 on March 02-04, 2021 that introduced the Maritime India Vision 2030 and facilitated interactions among various stakeholders in the maritime sector including senior and eminent policy planners, domestic and international investors, CEOs of Indian and global maritime companies, industry experts, thought leaders, technology providers, bankers and insurers, representatives of major ports and shipping lines from across the world.
- Srijata Deb, Kajal Sharda and Jithin Sabu attended a webinar entitled “Facilitating India’s Act East Policy: Assessing Gaps in Infrastructure at Land Customs Stations in the North Eastern Region of India” organised by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) on February 25, 2021.
- Bipul Chatterjee moderated a Stakeholder Roundtable on “Systemic, Seamless and Secure Trade and Immigration through Raxaul Integrated Check Post” organised by the Land Ports Authority of India on February 25, 2021.
- Kajal Sharda attended a webinar titled “BIMSTEC in 2021” organised by the Centre for New Economic Diplomacy, Observer Research Foundation (ORF) on February 24, 2021. The webinar focused on the impact of the pandemic on the BIMSTEC countries and the way forward of the countries individually.
- Prashant Sharma attended the Economist’s Asia Trade Week 2021 on February 22-25, 2021 that included a series of online discussions as well as physical and in-person events from Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai to dive deep into the major factors that will shape the future of trade in Asia and beyond.



PARTICIPATION

- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar entitled “An Indo-Pacific Axis: Future of QUAD and Maritime Cooperation in the East”, organised by Ananta Aspen Centre on February 18, 2021. The webinar focussed on Quad’s ability to formalise economic and technology partnerships alongside security cooperation and expansion to Quad-Plus from the Indo-Pacific region.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar entitled “State of US- India Business”, organised by the US Chamber of Commerce on February 17, 2021. The webinar discussed the State of US-India Business and what more can be jointly done to catalyse this crucial and enduring economic partnership.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar titled “The UN@75 and South-South cooperation: evolving roles and responsibilities”, organised by Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and the German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE) on February 16, 2021. This webinar discussed the role of the United Nations, as the largest and most inclusive multilateral organisation, to develop many of the developing nations.
- Bipul Chatterjee spoke at a Discussion Forum on “Ecological Sustainability in the Haldia Industrial Region” organised by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry on February 13, 2021.
- Chetna K. Rathore presented a paper on ‘Impact of COVID-19 on women entrepreneurs in India’ at an International conference on dimensions of a pandemic: The COVID-19 crisis, at St. Xavier’s College, Jaipur on February 11-12, 2021.
- Srijata Deb attended a webinar entitled “Reinventing Processes in the Face of Global Disruption” organised by ET Retail on February 11, 2021. The webinar brought together various retail, FMCG, and logistics sectors to discuss the challenges they faced and their coping responses to the broken supply chains in the COVID-19 induced world.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar titled “China’s Search for ‘National Rejuvenation’: Domestic and Foreign Policies under Xi Jinping”, organised by Observer Research Foundation on January 11, 2021. The webinar was organised to discuss the book titled China’s Search for ‘National Rejuvenation’: Domestic and Foreign Policies under Xi Jinping edited by Jabin T. Jacob and Hoang The Anh.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar titled “The emergence of Asia-centric trade systems”, organised by The Economist on February 22, 2021. The webinar looked into the current trends of an Asia-centric trade system.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar entitled “Digital imperatives”, organised by The Economist on February 23, 2021. The webinar discussed the digital imperatives that will drive globalisation from the current crises brought out by the pandemic.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar entitled “Jab economics: Distribution and vaccine equity”, organised by The Economist on February 24, 2021. The webinar discussed the challenges including vaccine manufacturing to international distribution and vaccine equity, which is of unparalleled scale and complexity that requires coordinated international efforts to address it. He also attended a webinar entitled “In conversation: A new chapter for US-Asia trade relations?”, organised by The Economist on February 24, 2021.
- Bipul Chatterjee spoke at a Roundtable on “Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement in Asia and the Pacific” organised by the Synergia Foundation on January 30, 2021.
- Jithin Sabu attended a webinar titled “Institutionalising the Quad: Can it Seize the Momentum for the Future?”, organised by ISAS-NUS and Sasakawa Peace Foundation on January 20, 2021. The webinar discussed the future of Quad in the current contexts and developments. It also discussed the potential of a Quad plus.



Ensure human dignity for a better Indo-Bangla border management

NorthEast Now, February 09, 2021 • Srijata Deb

The challenges faced by the participants of the informal economy in India remain grave, and a basic solution that can simply protect their dignity remains out of popular discourse. Due to the instability of income and an absence of formal social protection provisions, informal workers face several challenges that put their social dignity and development at risk. These issues multiply when they have to work at volatile locations, such as in border areas.

<https://cuts-citee.org/ensure-human-dignity-for-a-better-indo-bangla-border-management/>

Accelerating women's participation in the BBIN supply chains is an imperative

Artnet, February 09, 2021 • Prashant Sharma and Kajal Sharda

In 2020, the female labour force participation rate was below 50 per cent in Bangladesh and India (36 and 20 per cent, respectively) and 59 per cent in Bhutan. While Nepal recorded 82 per cent women participation, it did not make it much different from the other three countries concerning the quality of female labour participation. In the Eastern-South-Asia sub-region, also known as BBIN, women mostly participate in either agriculture, the informal sector of the economy, or stages of value chains associated with a low value-added and perform informal work in a formal economy.

<https://cuts-citee.org/accelerating-womens-participation-in-the-bbin-supply-chains-is-an-imperative/>

India needs a more assertive policy on Tibet to counter China

South Asia Monitor, February 15, 2021 • Pradeep S. Mehta and Jithin Sabu

The India-China relationship is one of the most complex ones in the world. It is also quite dynamic and continues to change colours like a chameleon. The border area in Ladakh where the 1962 conflict took place is once again embroiled and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) are playing a game of Chinese checkers. In between both Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and Chinese President for life, Xi Jinping has tried to establish peace, but the pow- wows only resulted in platitudes and hortatory statements.

<https://cuts-citee.org/india-needs-a-more-assertive-policy-on-tibet-to-counter-china/>

Enhancing Siliguri corridor for ease of trade and transit in South Asia

The Economic Times, February 20, 2021 • Bipul Chatterjee and Prashant Sharma

Siliguri in northern West Bengal has a natural advantage for accelerating and epitomising inclusive and sustainable transit transport connectivity for the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) sub-region. As a fulcrum of connectivity as well as a transit point between the northeast and the rest of India and with Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal, Siliguri has the potential to accelerate economic recovery and growth for the benefit of the people in this sub-region.

<https://cuts-citee.org/enhancing-siliguri-corridor-for-ease-of-trade-and-transit-in-south-asia/>

Bangladesh to benefit more from cooperation beyond trade and infrastructure connectivity

The Economic Times, March 20, 2021 • Bipul Chatterjee

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh to take part in commemoration ceremonies of the 50th anniversary of its independence and the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. His first foreign visit after the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic! It is expected to boost infrastructure and other connectivity initiatives between the two neighbouring democracies. A number of memorandums of understanding on connectivity and related areas are expected to be signed, which should be looked as a stepping stone for taking this relationship to the next level.

<https://cuts-citee.org/bangladesh-to-benefit-more-from-cooperation-beyond-trade-and-infrastructure-connectivity/>