

Addressing Barriers to Rice Seeds Trade between India and Bangladesh (RISTE Project)

Media Outreach Strategy in Bangladesh and India

1. Background

1.1 Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), Jaipur, India and Unnayan Shamannay (US), Dhaka, Bangladesh are implementing a project entitled “Addressing Barriers to Rice Seeds Trade between India and Bangladesh” (RISTE Project, in short). It is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Details about the RISTE Project including its Results Framework (Goal, Assumptions, Objectives, Activities, Outputs, Expected Outcomes and Key Stakeholders) are available at: <http://cuts-citee.org/RISTE/>.

1.2 Media plays an instrumental role in raising policy debate and awareness on public policy issues, and can bring policy changes to desired direction. Formal trade in rice seeds, particularly high yielding varieties (HYV) and the need for knowledge sharing between Bangladesh and India on larger issues of agriculture development is a new subject of policy analysis, field study and advocacy. A strong association with print and electronic media is expected to lead to an effective dissemination of the research findings, stimulate policy debate, promote endorsement of research findings, and create conducive environment for the necessary policy and practice changes in enhancing rice seeds trade and knowledge sharing between Bangladesh and India on larger issues of agriculture development.

1.3 Therefore, the development of a good relationship with local and national media in Bangladesh and India is an essential element to generate a positive image about the RISTE Project and to disseminate key messages of the RISTE Project to the relevant stakeholders and groups of stakeholders. This will also help in creating a more positive environment for addressing larger issues of bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and India – in areas of trade and economic relations in general and agriculture development in particular.

2. Objectives of Media Outreach

2.1 Given this Background, the main objectives of Media Outreach are to:

- Increase interaction between and among selected local and national media in respect to general information about the RISTE Project activities, its research findings and advocacy messages/outcomes
- Sensitise the local and national media about the significance of the RISTE Project for formalising rice seeds trade between Bangladesh and India, and for knowledge sharing between Bangladesh and India on larger issues of agriculture development
- Disseminate the general information about the RISTE Project activities, its research findings and advocacy messages/outcomes to local and national media in Bangladesh and India

- Help raise policy discussion and debate on the findings and recommendations of the RISTE Project, particularly among the relevant stakeholders including parliamentarians and policy-makers
- Promote endorsement of the research findings of the RISTE Project, and influence policy and practice changes through encouraging media professionals to do analytical reporting on the need for rice seeds trade between Bangladesh and India and knowledge sharing on larger issues of agriculture development
- Help CUTS and US in conducting training of media personnel in Bangladesh and India on the need for rice seeds trade between India and Bangladesh and to facilitate bilateral cooperation on larger issues agriculture development

3. Type of Media

3.1 Given this Background and Objectives of the RISTE Project, CUTS and US will engage two Media Outreach Consultants (one in Bangladesh and the other in India) with the RISTE Project for reaching out to the popular media at large and for their interaction with the following media:

- Print media in Bangladesh and India, primarily prominent capital-based English/Bangla dailies but including Bangla, Hindi and Oriya dailies in Eastern India and local print media in Western and North Western districts of Bangladesh, which are sharing border or close to four Eastern Indian states (viz. Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal)
- Electronic media, primarily prominent capital-based television and radio channels including private electronic channels

4. Materials for Media Outreach

4.1 Through email, telephone and in-person meetings, CUTS and US will share research findings and other relevant information from their activities under the RISTE Project with the Media Outreach Consultants as per the following documents:

- Project Brief, Briefing Papers, Discussion Papers, Policy Briefs and Media Brief, which are to be used by the Media Outreach Consultants for doing as well as catalysing/facilitating analytical reports/stories in local and national print and electronic media
- One Pagers and Fact Sheets on key findings, messages and recommendations for their quick transmission in local and national print and electronic media by using them as news items
- Press Releases which will be issued after conducting advocacy and/or dissemination meetings in Bangladesh and India so as to disseminate updates of the RISTE Project activities on regular basis to local and national print and electronic media

4.1 These materials will be available at: <http://cuts-citee.org/RISTE/>. CUTS and US will be in regular touch with the Media Outreach Consultants so as to draw their attention to these materials in this web page.

5. Identification and Use of Policy Champions in Media

5.1 There are a number of influential and relevant media professionals in Bangladesh and in India who could raise policy debates on the need for rice seeds trade between India and Bangladesh and to facilitate bilateral cooperation on larger issues agriculture development.

5.2 Media Outreach Consultants will have regular but optimal interaction with a selected number of such influential media professionals in Bangladesh and in India so as to convince them to raise the ante on the need for rice seeds trade between India and Bangladesh and to facilitate bilateral cooperation on larger issues agriculture development through their writing in popular media. As necessary, the Media Outreach Consultants will involve designated representatives of CUTS and US in these interactive meetings.

5.3 The Media Outreach Consultants will facilitate the participation of influential and relevant media professionals in Bangladesh and India in advocacy and dissemination meetings to be conducted under the RISTE Project.

6. Identification and Use of Other Policy Champions

6.1 Since advocating the need for rice seeds trade between India and Bangladesh and to facilitate bilateral cooperation on larger issues agriculture development will involve some other larger issues of bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Bangladesh and India and some of them are sensitive in nature, there is an imperative for regular interaction with selected number of influential parliamentarians, policy-makers (relevant, senior-level government officials) and other relevant stakeholders (such as representatives of seed trade associations and seed traders).

6.2 Being senior media professionals, the Media Outreach Consultants will be in a position to facilitate interactive meetings between such influential policy champions and CUTS and US. CUTS and US will approach the Media Outreach Consultants to facilitate such interactive meetings on a regular basis but as per felt-need.

7. Deliverables, Timeline, etc.

7.1 CUTS and US will facilitate regular interaction (through email, phone and in-person meetings) between the Media Outreach Consultants in Bangladesh and in India.

7.2 CUTS and US will have regular interaction with the Media Outreach Consultants and they will be acquainted with all details and activities of the RISTE Project in order to:

- Create an e-mail directory for networking with a wide range of selected and influential policy champions in media and other relevant policy champions in Bangladesh and in India (October 2013)

- Share the objectives, activities and outputs of the RISTE Project activities with selected and influential policy champions in media and other relevant policy champions in Bangladesh and in India (October 2013 to September 2014)
- Organise and/or facilitate programmes in selected television and radio channels in Bangladesh and India (October 2013 to September 2014)
- Facilitate CUTS and US to invite and ensure the participation of selected and influential policy champions in media and other relevant policy champions in Bangladesh and in India to advocacy and dissemination meetings under the RISTE Project (October 2013 to September 2014)

7.3 CUTS and US will have regular and periodic meetings (preferably but not necessarily once in a month) with the Media Outreach Consultants so as to facilitate media outreach activities under the RISTE Project in a mutually agreed manner, keeping in mind the Results Framework (Goal, Assumptions, Objectives, Activities, Outputs, Expected Outcomes and Key Stakeholders) of the RISTE Project.

7.4 CUTS and US will invite the Media Outreach Consultants to advocacy and dissemination meetings to be conducted in Bangladesh and India under the RISTE Project. Furthermore, Media Outreach Consultants will be invited to attend other advocacy and dissemination meetings to be conducted by CUTS and US on their future work on Bangladesh-India trade and economic relations in particular and regional economic cooperation in South Asia in general.