

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

CUTS International with the support of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is implementing a project entitled “Addressing Barriers to Rice Seeds Trade between India and Bangladesh” (RISTE) since January 2013. The project is being implemented in association with four partners in India and one partner in Bangladesh. The coverage of the project is four eastern states namely Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal in India, and Bangladesh. The goal of the project is to develop an enabling environment to promote seeds trade and knowledge-sharing on high yielding varieties (HYV) rice seeds between India and Bangladesh.

In the endeavour to achieve intended project goal, over the last 15 months since the launch of the project, several activities have been completed, resulting in achievement of several milestones and production of outputs. The progress made is briefly summarised below.

Major Activities Completed

All planned activities that were required to produce outputs and expectedly lead to achievement of outcomes have been completed. Some major milestones achieved include:

- Creation of project webpage (www.cuts-citee.org/RISTE/);
- Completion of fact finding exercise;
- Secondary and primary research;
- Successful organising and monitoring of field activities, including 15 farmers’ focus group discussions (FGDs) in four states of India and Bangladesh;
- Interactions with relevant stakeholders, including policymakers and government

officials, seed producers, seed traders (importers and exporters), research institutions, CSOs, media people, seed associations, and others;

- Preparation of advocacy strategy;
- Preparation of media outreach strategy;
- Preparation of draft reports by project partners;
- Preparation of consolidated workshop report by CUTS;
- Preparation of consolidated report;
- Organisation of state/country level workshops both in India and Bangladesh; and
- Organisation of an international conference in Dhaka.

Major Outputs

Resulting from the activities, several outputs have been produced since the launch of the project in January, 2013. These include:

- Report based on fact finding exercise in Eastern India and in Bangladesh, including farmers’ FGDs and interaction with other stakeholders;
- Baseline report update;
- Dynamics of rice seed trade: Need for cooperation between India and Bangladesh;
- Opportunities and Challenges in Rice Seeds Trade between India and Bangladesh;
- Potential for Trade in Seeds between India and other SAARC Countries;
- Harmonisation of seed certification processes in India and Bangladesh;
- Advocacy strategy;
- Media outreach strategy;

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- State/country reports by five project partners;
- State/country consolidated workshop reports by CUTS;
- Consolidated draft report;
- Joint Communique; and
- Recommendatory paper.

All these outputs can be accessed at the project webpage: <http://www.cuts-citee.org/RISTE/>

Dissemination of Major Outputs

Outputs produced under the project have been shared with relevant stakeholders. Some of the channels through which CUTS shares project outputs include, RISTE's Project Forum (created under the RISTE's project), South Asia Forum (a forum of over 2500 people consisting of government agencies, researchers, trade professionals, CSOs, and others in South Asia). Besides, outputs produced under the project were also disseminated through five workshops organised by project partners (four in India and one in Bangladesh).

In addition, an international conference was organised in Dhaka (Bangladesh) to disseminate project findings. The conference was a huge success as it garnered participation from policy makers, and other stakeholders, including academia, industry experts, exporters/importers, media channels. More than hundred people from India and Bangladesh participated in the meeting.

Future Activities

The next phase of the project will focus on research and advocacy on five identified issues. These include, trade facilitation in rice seeds trade; intellectual property rights; knowledge-sharing; certification issues; and harmonisation of standards. Major activities that will be undertaken in pursuance of research and advocacy include the following:

- Joint field visits by CUTS (and US) to Dhaka (and New Delhi) to interact/ gather inputs

from key informants, including journalist and policymakers on macro aspects of research (including five identified issues). Besides, media personals will be invited and taken to the field, so as to understand the real time issues on the grounds;

- Desk and field research by CUTS and its project partner in Bangladesh on the five tentatively identified issues;
- Media training in both India and Bangladesh on the project findings and presenting strong evident based case for bilateral trade in rice seeds and knowledge-sharing;
- Preparation and endorsement of a Memorandum on policy and practice changes to make a case for bilateral knowledge-sharing and HYV rice seeds trade;
- Preparation of a Joint Brief by CUTS and its project partner in Bangladesh and their interaction with India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Indian Industry, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Seed Associations on the need for forming a joint subject expert group;
- Outreach meetings by CUTS and project partners in India and in Bangladesh;
- Preparation of impact stories by project partners and their dissemination;
- Preparation of consolidated advocacy document incorporating impact stories;
- Organising policy dialogue at state/ country level (five workshops, one each in Patna, Ranchi, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar and Dhaka);
- Evidence-based two advocacy/final dissemination meetings (Dhaka and New Delhi);
- CUTS (and US) to jointly participate in 8th ASAE conference (October 15-17, 2014) in Dhaka. Two papers and one poster presentations are proposed. Besides, it is proposed that a Mini Symposium will be organised during this conference.

