

Inception Meeting Report

**Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation Agreement: Evidence from Bangladesh,
Bhutan, India, Nepal**

Cases of Women Led/Managed/Owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

12th-13th December, 2018
Hotel Shambala, Bansbari Road, Kathmandu – Nepal



**Participants at Conference Hall, Hotel Shambala on 12th December 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Country Partners



Day 1: Project Strategy and PAC Meeting

Background

CUTS International organized the project inception meeting in support with DFID, UK under the project "***Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation Agreement: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal***" on 12th-13th December, 2018 at Hotel Shambala, Kathmandu, Nepal. This meeting had the following objectives:

- Discuss the project strategy mentioned in the inception report and take valuable inputs from the country partners' and members from Project Advisory Committee (PAC).
- Discuss the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) plan, communication strategy, and other compliance related activities with the country partners' for achieving objectives of the project and timely output.

As per the criteria, three members from each partner organization and three PAC members from each country were invited for the meeting [see Annexure-I for list of participants]. The meeting started with the welcome remarks and was followed by four main sessions on country-specific project implementation strategies.

Session 1: Rahul Arora, Policy Analyst, CUTS-International presented the overall project outline and implementation strategy to the participants. Presentation includes study's objectives, methodology to collect data and analysis, and activity-wise implementation plan.

Session 2: Israt Jahan, Assistant Coordinator and Senior Researcher, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, presented the project implementation strategy in Bangladesh on behalf of BWCCI – our country partner in Bangladesh for this project.

Session 3: Pushpa Chhetri, Director, Bhutan Media and Communication Institute, presented the project implementation strategy in Bhutan on behalf of BMCI – our country partner in Bhutan for this project.

Session 4: Dikshya Singh, Research Officer, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, presented the project implementation strategy in Nepal on behalf of SAWTEE – our country partner in Nepal for this project.

Issues with Project Strategy and Suggested Revisions

CUTS team specified the objectives of this project as follows:

- The project is all about finding evidence on challenges faced by women in getting license to start their enterprise;
- Finding evidence on challenges faced by women in conducting their business in respective country; and
- Evidence on challenges faced while trading across borders.

Issues and Suggestions

- PAC members suggested engaging country level and regional level apex bodies, particularly those working for women empowerment, particularly to identify and map women entrepreneurs, under specific micro, small and medium enterprise category, from each of the BBIN countries. These apex bodies will be helpful in future under the project for generating awareness among women in BBIN countries.
- PAC members have recommended setting up of a dedicated trade promotion council at national level, providing all the information related to trade procedure and documentation at one place. These councils can also work as a single window system for all clearance related matters for international trade.
- While emphasising on digital inclusion, PAC members highlighted the need to add questions in the interview schedule to assess the level of digital inclusion among the sample units.
- On the question of adding already beneficiary women entrepreneur in our sample, the team decided not to add those again since they already got the benefit under other past projects. CUTS team will soon share the sample unit selection criteria with all country partners. The criterion for choosing border ports for survey work will be prepared by CUTS and shared with all the partners.
- Since secondary data on women centric production centres is not available therefore the project team will be using the existing project reports and project data to locate the relevant sample units.
- Policy gap analysis of the existing policies at country level would be needed to conduct this study, and comparative chart would be prepared under the report analysing the policies of the four countries. This analysis would be based on both

desk research and primary research where the existing policies will be identified first (those who are for empowering women in the state) and then verify its success from the ground through semi-structured interviews of our sample units. The type of such policies considered for the report will be highlighted by CUTS team. Focus would be on financial assistance policies.

- One of the PAC members highlighted the role of preparing short documents/course material to distribute among women for the awareness generation purpose.
- PAC members have also highlighted the role of women in committee set up for trade facilitation at regional as well as international level. Criteria should be prepared for the selection of committee members and this criterion should cater the role of women.
- Nepal has more scope for advocating in favour of TFA because they have only included two articles in category A (*developing Members will implement the measure by 22/02/2017 and LDCs by 22/02/2018*).
- One case study should focus on the factors inducing women to participate in informal trade. We need to follow the sequential approach: first identify barriers, categorize them as per the broader categories given in TFA and then recommend strategy.
- The issue of scaling up women on Regional Value Chains (RVCs) has also been discussed in the meeting. Since this is out of scope of this study so CUTS team proposed to do some desk research on it and prepare a small write-up for distributing in awareness generation programmes.
- PAC members have also discussed some points which are out of scope of present study. Those are: the importance of e-marketing for women economic empowerment and women's role in services sector.

Discussion on View Point Papers

At the end of day 1, CUTS team discussed three broader themes with PAC members for writing view point papers. Those three broader themes are:

- Women Economic Empowerment
- Involvement of Women in Trade & related Activities

- Gender Responsive Trade Policies
- PAC members are requested to articulate one topic for writing view-point paper related to their expertise under the given broader themes. All of them have agreed to write one view point paper each. They have also agreed to guide CUTS and its country partners to smoothly implement the project, review project deliverables, and participate in various activities, meetings and events related to the project, time to time.
- CUTS requested country partners' to organize country-wise one PAC meeting on skype to have discussion on draft interview schedule by the end of January 2019. This meeting will also facilitate in finalising the topics/themes for Project Advisers to write their respective view-point papers. CUTS team will coordinate with country partners to fix the date for these meetings and participate.

Day 2: Deliberations with Partners

On the second day, CUTS team explained the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Log Frame (as mentioned in the Inception report, first deliverable of the project) to all the country partners for effective and timely completion of all project related activities. The proposed M&E plan was discussed in detail by CUTS and was well received by all the country partners. CUTS team has also shown the communication strategy of the project through the project webpage [<http://www.cuts-citee.org/gdtfa/>]. Partners have to make sure that they keep coordinating with CUTS team for timely update of the website, with the activities and outputs that they produce under the project.

Issues with Proposed Plan and Suggested Revisions

- While discussing on criteria to select women entrepreneurs for exposure visits, the team has decided to conduct two such visits – one at regional level (maybe to SAARC trade fair or any other trade fair) and other one as exposure visit to a successfully established women led enterprise in the sub-region. Participants in both workshops would be different. It was decided to select 20 successful entrepreneurs/traders (5 each from BBIN countries) for the regional exposure visit to liaison them with the regional apex body and provide exposure to them at regional/international level. On the other hand, for the second exposure visit, selection criteria would be 20 women entrepreneurs/traders (5 each from BBIN countries) who have just started their business and/or have faced various problems or failures while establishing their business setup. Overall, the target is to provide exposure to 40 women enterprises [10 from each country].
- Country partners will timely submit the reports of each activity conducted by them and specify the output of that activity. On the basis of country-specific reports, CUTS will prepare the consolidated report and submit to the DFID under the given deliverable.
- Each country partner will submit one policy brief each after completing the designated field survey, in accordance to the timeline mentioned in the revised work plan attached as Annexure-I in the inception report. As discussed in the meeting, country partners can submit the refined draft of policy briefs and can

exercise the option of updating the same on the basis of suggestions/comments, if any, from awareness generation programmes and national policy dialogues. CUTS will publish these policy briefs accordingly.

- While discussing on scoping visits, the team came to a consensus that scoping visit will be done in February 2019. The month of March 2019 will be utilised to finalize the interview schedule, on the basis of scoping visits, and prepare & submit the scoping visits report.
- In January 2019, each country partner will do thorough desk research (including country-specific assessment of policies and literature review) and come up with the suggestions on identifying scoping locations and field survey locations to be visited with proper justifications. CUTS team will consider these suggestions while finalising the locations for all the BBIN countries.
- CUTS team will share the base criteria to select sample unit under the category of micro (cottage), small or medium enterprise and on that basis each country partner, in consultation with the respective country PAC members, will identify and select the appropriate sample units. Divergence will be allowed with proper justification.
- Final field survey will start from April 2019 and each country partner should notify the dates for conducting the field research to CUTS team well in advance so that one person from CUTS can accompany their survey team for the field visits. Accordingly, CUTS will decide the survey dates and locations in India. Within 6 months (April to September, 2019), the project team has to complete field survey, field reports and country-specific case studies. Also, partners will be responsible to timely follow up with the respective country PAC members on viewpoint papers, which are to be submitted to CUTS by September-October 2019.
- After submission of the above stated deliverables, CUTS and partners have to prepare country-specific policy briefs, which are to be finalised and submitted by December 2019, which will be circulated in the awareness generation workshops and national policy dialogues in the respective country.

- The final project report will be prepared by CUTS in consultation with all PAC members and country partners time to time and the same will be finalized before organizing regional policy dialogue. Final draft of the report will be circulated at the regional policy dialogue for the collective comments and suggestions by the experts and policy makers from the sub-region.



**Participants at Conference Hall, Hotel Shambala on 13th December 2018
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Way Forward

Overall, the meeting was very productive and provided valuable inputs for updating the project strategy. CUTS team will come up with the revised strategy document and share with all the participants for necessary actions. CUTS team has requested all the participants for their continuous support during the study period to deliver the best quality desired output.

Annexure-I : List of Participants¹

Inception Meeting
 Gender Dimensions of Trade Facilitation Agreement: Evidence from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
 Cases of Women Led/Managed/Owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
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 Hotel Shambala, Bansbari Road, Ward No. 3,
 Kathmandu – Nepal

REGISTRATION SHEET

1st - Dec - 2018
 1st - Dec - 2018

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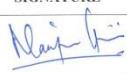
Sr.No.	NAME	CONTACT DETAILS	SIGNATURE
5.	Rahul Arora	Policy Analyst, CUTS Int. India	
6.	Tarannam Agarwal	CUTS International	
7.	Rekha Rummala	AUST (BWCCI) Dhaka Bangladesh	
8.	Nasreen Begum	BWCCI, Bangladesh	 12-12-18.
9.	Kamala Gurung	ICIMOD	
10.	Shiva Raj Chhetri	BMCI	
11.	Khima Maya Ghimirey	BMCI, Bhutan	

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¹ Because of unavoidable reasons, few PAC members have not joined us for this meeting.

12th Dec -2018 & 13th Dec -2018

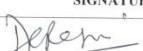
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