

## Impact of Cross Border Electricity Trade on Livelihoods and Gender Concerns: Focus on India, Nepal and Bhutan

### Background and Rationale

Cross Border Electricity Trade (CBET) in South Asia region has brought in a sense of shared benefits and prosperity amongst the neighbouring nations. With Indian investors showing interest in investing and utilising the extensive resource potential for electricity generation in the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) region, several large and small projects have been built or are in the developmental phase in the region.

Research suggests that in addition to creation of new jobs due to increased energy access, various other job opportunities arise for both women and men in the project development and construction activities. Further, electrification of local region brings in a change in the gender roles in the community, especially in case of women.

With better supply of electricity and mechanical power for income-generating activities and reliable supply to households, the household burdens of women are at ease as they no longer have to waste their time and energy to fetch firewood for lighting and cooking, which in turn leads to an increase in their incomes. It also contributes to education of women and girls and results in safety for women in public places. The overall resultant provides a major impetus to the local economy.

In case of South Asia, there have been studies analysing the overall socio-economic benefits to the local communities owing to regional energy cooperation. However, little emphasis has been laid over the impact of CBET on livelihoods and gender roles. Therefore, an impact assessment study will effectively assess such existing benefits and advocate for further potential benefits through CBET in the BBIN region.

Given the background, CUTS International with support from Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe), New Delhi and *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)* aims to prepare a Case Study on Impact of Cross Border Electricity Trade on Livelihoods and Gender Concerns (focussing on India, Bhutan and Nepal) and sharing findings of the Study through a regional energy workshop.

### Objectives

- Understanding the socio-economic impact on livelihoods of local people owing to setting up of Tala and Rahughat Hydropower Plant in Bhutan and Nepal respectively
- Studying the impact of CBET on gender roles in local communities in the region owing to increased energy access
- Understanding the potential of replicating socio-economic benefits through CBET in BBIN and other regions

### Brief Methodology

The study will entail four major components: Literature Review, Scoping Visits, Developing Research Tools and Field-based Impact Assessment Study. The methodology is given below in brief:

**Literature Review:** Analysing the available data on similar studies in the region, news, reports etc. and



extrapolating data from indirect sources, such as government data on income levels of population in the year's pre and post CBET. Further, the literature available on the impact of CBET on the lives of women and its socio-economic impact in other regions, such as South East Asia, Africa and Europe will be referred in order to understand the methodology to undertake assessment of potential benefits. A guiding note for Scoping Visits would be prepared based on the literature, covering all relevant information about the issues significant to livelihoods and gender concerns.

**Scoping Visit:** Involvement with the local project partners for defining their roles responsibilities regarding the project, and their effective implementation. Further, based on the interaction with the local partners, a refined list of relevant stakeholders would be prepared for conducting interviews and FGDs. Brief one-to-one interviews will be conducted with the community leaders, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) active in the region, industry players and relevant government officials. The field notes guiding the formulation of indicators and questionnaire for undertaking the impact study would be prepared.

**Developing Research Tools:** The relevant impact assessment studies of national and international organisations will be referred and experts will be consulted to develop measurable parameters to quantify the extent of development in the region owing to improved supply of electricity through CBET. Questionnaires specific to *ex post* Study in Bhutan and *ex ante* Study in Nepal will be framed along with the list of stakeholders for interviews and Focussed Group Discussions (FGDs).

**Field Research:** Perception surveys and personal interviews with community members, community leaders, government officials, CSOs, etc. will be conducted for understanding the base line and end line scenario. For an appropriate understanding of base-line scenario based on perceptions, a recall period will be established. FGDs staggered across communities, policymakers, consumers and a combined FGD will also be conducted in order to

extract the maximum results. In addition, secondary data will be obtained from research organisations and government departments.

## Expected Outputs

- Impact Assessment Report based on the field research
- Opinion Editorials on shared socio-economic benefits owing CBET in the South Asian Region would be published
- Proceedings of the regional energy workshop
- Impact Briefs for more effective advocacy
- Policy Brief summarising key recommendations

## Expected Outcomes

- Creating a strong evidence for potential socio-economic benefits through CBET in BBIN Region
- Greater buy-in for political support to attract more investments in the region
- Advocating for cross border energy cooperation in the region on the basis of identified potential benefits
- Learning from the study will be useful for policymakers to undertake similar nature of studies in other areas to accelerate the agenda of broader regional economic integration in the BBIN region
- Spreading awareness among stakeholders about benefits of regional energy cooperation and
- Sensitise state and non-state actors (NSAs) on issues pertaining to political economy dimensions *vis-à-vis* cross border electricity trade

## Development Partners

New Delhi-based Integrated Research for Action and Development (IRADe), a fully autonomous advanced research institute, a non-governmental, non-profit organisation is acting as the Implementing Agency (IA) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the leading U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty, and enable resilient democratic societies to realise their potential is the funding agency of this project.

