

CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment and Economic Regulation (CUTS CCIER)

Post Retreat (Mini Retreat) | 05 September 2004

The CUTS CCIER Post Retreat Mini Retreat was held on September 5, 2004. The purpose of the Mini Retreat were:

- *To discuss the CUTS CCIER Business Plan 2004-08 that had been amended on the basis of the feedback received during the Main Retreat.*
- *To debate on 'critical issues' of the center and to identify ways of addressing threats and weaknesses.*

A. Business Plan 2004-08

1. NN welcomed everyone to the Mini Retreat, especially VB and SA, who had recently joined the team. NN was hopeful that the Mini Retreat would give both VB and SA the opportunity to get better oriented with the future activities of the center.
2. The Mini Retreat started with RS3 presenting the salient features of the Draft (amended) Business Plan 2004-08 of CCIER. RS3's presentation was consistent with the structure of the Business Plan 2004-08. He divided his presentation in to the following:
 - General introduction
 - Functional areas of the center
 - Past activities
 - Future projects
 - Human Resource Planning
3. In the ensuing discussion, the following points emerged –
 - ⇒ The chronology of implementation of the projects might change depending on the receptivity and interests of funders
 - ⇒ A 'unified table' needed to be included in the Business plan to give an idea at a glance about the total fund expected (or available, as the case may be) in a particular financial year.
 - ⇒ Sectoral Regulation would be given top priority henceforth among activities of the center.
 - ⇒ Plans of taking up projects in the area of 'consumer policy', a subject that has not received much attention either within our country or outside.
 - ⇒ Activities in the 'services sector' could overlap with those related to sectoral regulation in the services sector.
4. It was decided to discuss the point pertaining to 'human resource planning' during the discussion on retreat note.
5. NN asked SA and VB one by one to provide their own suggestions on the 'Business Plan', especially since both of them were new and had been working with other organisations before.

5.1 SA suggested that efforts should be made to make the consumer aware of their rights. NN clarified that CART had a mandate for such activities, while CCIER was more into policy related activities.

5.2 The suggestion floated by VB was to engage in subjective consumer awareness, e.g. in I.T.

B. Discussion on the Retreat Note

One by one the group took up each point for discussion. The following is a summary of the discussion.

1. NN suggested since SR2 (Sheela Rai) has left CCIER we needed to induct a researcher in law.
2. RS3 felt that the collaborative effort of CCIER's activities with resource centres like CART or CHD were bottom-up in nature, i.e. CCIER took up activities on issues that had ubiquitous bearing at the grass-root level throughout the country, and tried to address the policies that governed/initiated those issues.

At this moment BC joined us for the rest of the meeting.

3. SA raised a question – Is there always a single competition law in each country, as was the case in India?
 - 3.1 NN replied by saying that it's a constitutional provision in India. He added that 'rules of reasoning' was more applicable in case of the competition law, as the spirit of framing the law carried more importance than what was written in the law.
 - 3.2 BC reacted to the question raised by SA saying that it was a very relevant and important one. His reply to the question was – from the legal perspective it was a constitutional provision for India to have a national competition law; while in terms of economics a national competition law dealt with competition concerns of a number of states.
 - 3.3 BC added that sometimes there are regional competition laws also as in case of COMESA (Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa) and the EU (European Union).
 - 3.4 A point raised by NN was that there was no constitutional barrier in case a state government wanted to frame a state competition law. MA pointed out that one of the areas that the FunComp project was looking at was to try and analyse state government policies affecting competition at the national level. He also said that there was a provision of 'regional benches' in the national Competition Act of India.
 - 3.5 NN provided the example of implementation of Competition law in Australia, where each individual state played its part in implementing the law. On the contrary in India, even the level of awareness about the competition act was very poor at the state government level.

4. On the point about Internships and fellowships, VB suggested about the AIESEC exchange program, which enable students to come and work in Indian organisations. RS3 suggested about the Minnesota Studies in International Development programme (MSID), which conducts a study program in India for students from various US Universities to work in India on various aspects of International development. He added that the program was currently being coordinated by an organisation based in Jaipur. RS3 also informed that efforts were being made to get interns/fellows from developing countries also through the ITEC and SCAAP programmes of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.
5. Donor Sensitisation workshop: BC wanted to know from the group about the objectives of the said workshop
 - 5.1 NN suggested that the primary objective of the workshop was to sensitise the donors about the current activities and the future plans of the center, especially in the light of the Business Plan 2004-08. RS3 added that another purpose of the workshop would be to showcase the confidence of CCIER (and CUTS International) in the concept of 'Trilateral Cooperation'.
 - 5.2 Some of the donors CCIER wanted to invite were – DFID, IDRC, DANIDA, USAID, The Ford Foundation, CIDA.
 - 5.3 London was being thought as the venue of the workshop, thereby allowing DFID, UK (especially Roger Nellist) to help organize the event. Roger Nellist had shown interest in the workshop during his discussions with PSM in end July, 2004.
 - 5.4 BC suggested that RS3 should draw a plan for the workshop. He added that the workshop could be piggybacked with some other CUTS's event in London to save costs. The tentative timing would be some time in March 2005.
 - 5.5 AP suggested that in the workshop some of the 'southern recipients' could be asked to share their experience through presentations to make the donors aware of the problems and potentials of 'overseas development assistance'.
6. On the topic of human resource planning, BC reported that CUTS was in the process of institutionalizing efforts towards incorporating 'Management Information System'. MIS would essentially cover– programme planning, H.R. planning and financial planning, with a provision for monitoring its efficiency once every quarter. Monitoring would be undertaken to check for anomalies and imbalances, and address these appropriately. The outcome of a proper MIS, BC opined would be i. Organisational Development Plan and ii. Strategic Plan.
7. This concluded the Mini Retreat of CUTS CCIER

After the Mini Retreat NN, MA, SA, AP, NM, and RS3 met PSM briefly to apprise about the points discussed in the meeting.

1. **PSM asked if there was any discussion on prioritising the 'functional areas' of CCIER.** NN reported that there have been a discussion on the same, and that it was decided to give Sectoral Regulation a high degree of priority henceforth. NN reported

that the issue would be taken up for discussion with the International Advisory Board of CCIER, which was scheduled to meet in Cape Town on September 7, 2004. This meeting would be able to give a finer direction to future activities of CCIER on this topic.

2. **Other major points.** NN informed that the major points that had emerged from the discussion in the Mini Retreat were:
 - Institutionalising MIS
 - Planning the ‘Donor’s Workshop’
 - Exploring possibilities of fellowships/internships
 - Fine tuning the Business Plan

3. **PSM raised the following points at the end of the discussion:**
 - 3.1 He suggested that in order to facilitate the process of financial planning, there should be a ‘rule of thumb’ to ascertain the number of staff who could be supported for a certain budget.
 - 3.2 It was imperative to ensure that MIS is institutionalized in CUTS. CCIER has to follow up the subject with BC.
 - 3.3 The Business Plan should be translated into a ‘functional’/’achievable’ business plan.