

SSNC Report

Stockholm (Sweden), January 18-21, 2015



The first day of the Stockholm visit began with a meeting with Sara Nilsson, Programme Officer, Sustainable Consumption, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) and our nodal person for the ongoing partnership with SSNC, at the Hotel Scandic Malmen, at 8.45 AM and the schedule of two-day meeting was reviewed. Cheriyan and Sara visited the SSNC office.

SSNC: An Overview

Founded in 1909, SSNC is one of the largest environmental non-government organisation (NGO) in Sweden. SSNC is a charitable environmental organisation, which contributes in generating awareness, charts environmental threats, proposes remedies and influences politicians and authorities greatly, both nationally and internationally. On democratic platforms, SSNC works regionally in 24 county branches and locally in 270 community branches. SSNC impacts politicians, influences legislation, informs – including via own magazines, books and press material – and organises seminars, debates and conferences. Moreover, SSNC has been Sweden’s most influential environmental organisation for decades and has currently around 210,000 members. Climate change, seas and fishing, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins are the specialised functional areas of SSNC, both nationally and globally. CUTS is partnering with SSNC under Green Action Week (GAW) campaign, since 2011 and also under the ‘ProOrganic’ project from November 2013.

Discussions at SSNC

The headquarters of SSNC are in Stockholm and it is having a staff of more than 100 members working at the head office. Around 90 percent of the staff are females. Cheriyan was shown SSNC office and introduced to the unit heads and staff, working on the five areas of specialisation globally. An interesting aspect observed in the office was that the staff was also allowed to stand and work instead of sitting for the whole day. The work station were

constructed and designed accordingly as prolonged sitting results into many health-related issues.



Day I Proceedings

Timings: 10.30 AM

Eva Eiderström, Head of Department for Green Consumerism and Jessica Andreason, Project Coordinator Swedish Green Action Week, provided a video presentation.

Timings: 11.30 AM

A Luncheon Meeting was held with the key SSNC staff: Maria Rydlund, Policy Officer, Tropical Forests; Anna Axelsson, Policy Officer, Climate (Global); Jens Reutercrona, Finance Officer, Department for Global Coordination and Sara joined Cheriyan during the lunch.

Timings: 14.00 PM

Presentation of Moa Aspero Lind, Department for Member Development and Internal Democracy.

Timings: 15.00 PM

Presentation of Karin Höök, Expert of Global Issues, Department for Agriculture.

In all the discussions, Cheriyan spoke about the CUTS' work in various Centers, ground realities in India and the scope for scaling up the partnership with SSNC. The meetings on day one concluded around 5.00 PM.

Day 2 Proceedings (January 20, 2015)

Visit to SIDA and consultations

The second day commenced with a visit to SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) along with Sara. As per appointment, Cheriyan met Elizabeth Montgomery, Advisor Market Development, Support Unit for Asia and Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and Esse Nilsson, Sr. Programme Manager, Regional Water Programmes, Unit for MENA. Esse Nilsson was earlier looking after SIDA supported financial inclusion programmes in India and shared a report entitled 'Training to Address Attitudes and Behaviour of Rural Bank Managers in Madhya Pradesh, India: A Programme to Facilitate Financial Inclusion'.



Cheriyan provided an overview of CUTS, its various programmatic areas and the work done in the past with SIDA to Elizabeth and Esse Nilsson. The recent work in India being the Traffic Calming Strategies (TCS) project. Cheriyan specifically inquired of the possibility of collaboration in the areas of Financial Inclusion and literacy, Urban Governance and Road Safety.

Elizabeth elucidated that the bilateral funding cooperation with India phased out in December 2013. But at present also SIDA Head Office in Stockholm and the SIDA Asia Hub based in Bangkok is supporting and can continue supported Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in developing countries. Besides, she also stated at present the focus is on the MENA region, and will concentrate work in Africa and countries like Afghanistan. Cheriyan at this point explicated about CUTS' work in the MENA region and also mentioned about the earlier discussions and concept note prepared as per the interest of French Agency for Development (AFD) to work in Afghanistan for setting up a vocational training centre in Kabul, since Afghanistan and Rajasthan are having lot of similarities.

Elizabeth also said that she would share with the coordinates regarding the people dealing with Private Sector Collaboration in Bangkok Office, the Division for Environment, Energy and Urban, and the concerned associates for private sector development and infrastructure based in Kabul. Elizabeth also informed that SIDA is having a Global Innovation Fund managed at Head Office (Stockholm) and provided the relevant links.

Consultations at SSNC

Timings: 11.00 AM

Agneta Nilsson, Global communication officer, SSNC, interviewed Cheriyan for a Facebook post and for some SSNC publications. Victor Åström, Head of Department for SSNC Department for Global Coordination: During the luncheon meeting the progress of present partnership with SSNC and future possibilities were discussed. Andreas Prevodnik, (Expert, Ph. D, Global issues) Department for Environmental Toxics, SSNC. The theme for GAW 2015 is Chemicals/Toxins and AP discussed the ground realities in India and several possible activities for the GAW 2015.

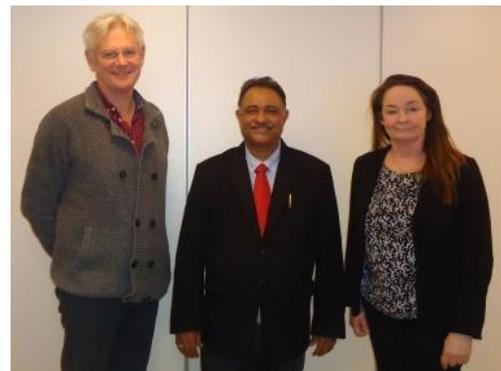
Mini Seminar at SSNC



The internal seminar was scheduled from 1.30 to 2.30 PM for Global Department staff. Participants from other departments and department heads also attended the seminar. About 18-20 staff people attended the seminar. Cheriyan gave a presentation on ‘*Organic gaining ground in India – how strategic interaction between consumers, producers and authorities creates change*’. Cheriyan covered issues commencing from a snap shot of Agriculture sector in India and Green Revolution to signs of organic gaining momentum in India to the state of Sikkim declaring it as organic state in 2015.

Meeting ICLD Officials

Two senior staff from International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD), Maria Larsson and Christer Akesson, Training Manager, visited SSNC to meet Cheriyan. Maria had earlier also visited CUTS in April, 2011. ICLD as part of Swedish Development Co-operation, aims to promote local democracy in low and middle-income countries.



For the ICLD, local democracy principally concerns strengthening local institutions, issues regarding decentralisation, local autonomy, citizen influence and collaboration between various participants. CUTS has partnered with ICLD earlier also. Few staff members had undergone International Training Programme (ITP) on ‘Decentralisation and Good Governance with a Gender Perspective’ in Sweden and in one of the developing countries. CUTS referred a few of the elected representative for the ITP on ‘Political Leaders’, who were included in the training. Cheriyan discussed with Maria and Christer key issues, such as participation in ITP on ‘Decentralisation and Good Governance with a ‘Gender Perspective’, Municipal Partnerships Programme and CUTS’ role, as a resource organisation.



‘Shop and Act Green’ Local Network Meet

Consumers have a lot of power to make an impact with regard to tackling climate changes. This could be acquired through simple tasks, such as making right choices and following sustainable consumption approach. For instance, choosing and using energy efficient electrical appliances and bulbs; using environment-friendly transportation means; disposing waste appropriately or carrying woven shopping bags in place of polythene bags. ‘Shop and Act Green’ is an initiative of SSNC to increase environmental awareness in consumption patterns. About 15-20 local members of the ‘Shop and Act Green’ network from Stockholm were present in the meeting. Cheriyan elucidated in detail about the organic scenario in India and responded to the queries raised. The meeting came to an end at 7.00 PM.