



# CUTS International *Global Affairs*

March 2024

## **Synergising Efforts** *Pioneering Australia-India Collaborations*

### Contents

Background	2
Interventions	3
Events/Roundtables/Discussions	8
CUTS 40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events	9
CUTS 30 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event	13
Other Highlights and Visits	14
Media Commentaries & Opeds	15
About CUTS International	15

## Background

Australia and India share a multifaceted relationship marked by an increasing level of economic collaboration and shared democratic values.

Recent developments in the world order have catalysed significant shifts in the Indo-Pacific dynamic, prompting Australia and India to bolster their strategic partnership. With a focus on enhancing economic relations leading to prosperity, both countries are intensifying economic, strategic, people-to-people and educational collaboration.

This evolving landscape necessitates a recalibration of their course of action, emphasising deeper engagement in all verticals of cooperation.

Similarly, joint efforts such as the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) and others, including collaborative research, technology sharing, promoting open and fair trade, among others signify a proactive approach to addressing regional challenges and fostering global stability.



Furthermore, with converging interests and complementary capabilities, the two countries have the potential to play a pivotal role in shaping the geo-strategic landscape and more resilient partnership of the Indo-Pacific. Towards this end, CUTS has worked on various interventions, as highlighted below.

## INTERVENTIONS

### 1. Assessment of New and Emerging Issues in ASEAN Plus One FTAs

**Client:** ASEAN-Australia Development Cooperation Programme (AADCP) Phase 2

**Budget:** A\$448,879

**Duration:** January, 2023 to December, 2023

The project aimed at an assessment of new and emerging issues (NEIs) in the realm of international trade and investment architecture, in order to prepare a study which can serve as a guide for ASEAN trade negotiators. The project was implemented in partnership with the Institute for International Trade, University of Adelaide.

The project created a more informed, evidence-backed understanding of the multi-dimensional aspects of NEIs, and their institutional, policy and possible economic impact on ASEAN and ASEAN Member States (AMS).

### 2. Ethical 6G – Identifying Elements of Ethical Framework for 6G and Creating Opportunities for India and Australia

**Client:** Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia

(This project is being undertaken under the Australia-India Cyber and Critical Technology Partnership - AICCTP)

**Budget:** A\$369,750

**Duration:** July, 2022 to- June, 2023

The project highlighted the escalating importance of cyber security due to increased technological penetration and the emergence of cyberspace as a zone of modern warfare. It emphasised the necessity for governments to secure their Information and Communication



Technology (ICT) systems, particularly with the deployment of 5th Generation (5G) and upcoming 6G telecommunication technologies. The development of 6G is currently led by a few countries, shaping international discourse.

The project aimed to identify areas of cooperation between India and Australia in developing 6G technologies, contribute to global policy discourse on cyberspace security, and strengthen understanding of ethical frameworks for 6G deployment. Through research, advocacy, and networking, it sought to foster collaboration among stakeholders and provide guidance for creating a secure cyberspace in the Indo-Pacific region. The

envisioned outcomes included institutional collaborations and an ethical framework for 6G development, enhancing regional cyber security.

The project has contributed to the strengthening of India-Australia strategic partnership and increased collaboration between Indian and Australian firms in 6G technology, in particular.

### 3. **Ethical Framework for 6G: Australia-India Cooperation**

Concluding Meeting under a DFAT project

*University of Queensland, Brisbane, Risk Policy Institute, Melbourne, and CUTS International, India*

Date: January 29, 2024

The Australia-India Cyber and Critical Technology Partnership (AICCTP) convened a collaborative effort between CUTS International, Australian Risk Policy Institute (ARPI), and the International Institute of Information Technology, Bangalore (IIITB) to explore the ethical dimensions of emerging 6G technology.

Supported by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the project aimed to identify elements of an ethical framework for 6G, focusing on safety, security, trust, sustainability, consumer protection, and competition.

The initiative sought to foster bilateral cooperation, enhance cyber resilience, and facilitate discussions among policymakers, academics, and industry experts from both countries, addressing potential risks in the 6G landscape. It also contributed to the contribution of global standards at the International Telecommunications Union. The Concluding meeting was organised in partnership with University of Queensland.

### 4. **Improving City Governance Through Enhancing Knowledge of Urban Local Bodies in Rajasthan**

**Client:** Australian High Commission under Direct Aid Programme

**Budget:** A\$ 24,098

**Duration:** April, 2022 to April, 2023

The objective of the project was to foster knowledge, information and capacity building about issues like solid waste management, public transportation system, and water supply and financial instruments within Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in Rajasthan.

It led to enhanced communication, awareness and understanding among ULBs of Rajasthan on the importance of close coordination among departments, financials instruments to effectively use such tools for meeting infrastructure financing needs.

## 5. Women Traders in the Borders of North-East India

**Client:** Australian High Commission under Direct Aid Programme

**Budget:** A\$ 33,554

**Duration:** June, 2018 to Sept, 2019

The project sought to empower women traders in North-East India by enhancing their awareness of trade opportunities and building their capacity to participate in cross-border trade. Through interactive dialogues, workshops, and interviews, the project addressed key issues such as lack of market information, limited access to finance, and socio-economic constraints.

By disseminating information on available schemes and presenting evidence-based findings to policymakers, the project aimed to create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs, fostering their participation in formal cross-border trade and contributing to the holistic development of the region.

As a result of the project, women traders are now more aware about issues viz. trade facilitation, cross border trade opportunities and prospects that they can explore. As a result, it created an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs in the region to participate more and more in cross border formal trade.

## 6. Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP)- Promoting Water, Food and Energy Security in South Asia

**Client:** Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**Budget:** A\$1,375,000

**Duration:** Nov, 2013 to June, 2016 (Phase 1)

The objective of the project was to address the issues of water, food and energy security in South Asia through better regional cooperation, policy reforms, technology transfer and capacity building targeting the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls through developing a Sustainable Development Investment Portfolio (SDIP)

The project aimed to enhance regional cooperation in South Asia for sustainable development in water, food, and energy security. Through policy research, advocacy, and capacity building, it sought to address gaps hindering cooperation, engage stakeholders, and disseminate findings. By strengthening networks, conducting policy dialogues, and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation, the project aimed to increase understanding, awareness, and policy action towards improved regional cooperation and sustainable development outcomes.

## 7. Trade and Transport Facilitation Audit in South Asia

**Client:** SAWTEE with the support of Australia AID

**Budget:** A\$82,000

**Duration:** Nov, 2013 to June, 2015

CUTS International along with Centre for Policy Dialogue, Sustainable Development Policy Institute and Institute of Policy Studies, acting as partner organisations to South Asian Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment implemented a project titled “Trade and Transport Facilitation Support (South Asia)”.

The project targeted to assess the costs arising from poor trade and transport facilitation which obstruct the smooth intra-regional trade in South Asia. The main objective of the study was to identify the bottlenecks related to trade and transport in the South Asian Region and assessment of the benefits of removing these bottlenecks.



The project led to enhanced regional economic growth through the seamless cross-border trade and poverty alleviation in South Asia by enhancing economic integration in the region.

## 8. Linkages and Impact of Cross Border Informal Trade in Agricultural Inputs in Eastern South Asia

**Client:** Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR)

**Budget:** A\$60,000

**Duration:** July, 2016 to June, 2017

The project was implemented with the aim to understand the dynamics of informal trade in agricultural inputs across the border of India-Bangladesh and India-Nepal, and its impact on livelihoods of farmers, including the gender dimension of those impacts.

The project aimed to quantify informal trade in agricultural inputs along India-Nepal and India-Bangladesh borders, focusing on its impact on small and marginal farmers, especially women-led farms. Through primary data collection and consultations, it identified drivers of informal trade and assessed its implications.

By engaging policymakers and disseminating the findings, the project sought to raise awareness about the benefits and challenges of formalising such trade, potentially leading to improved local economies, tax revenues, and stable market supply chains for farmers.

Lastly, it enabled a better understanding of key drivers of informal trade in Eastern South Asia and its socioeconomic impact.

## **9. Stakeholders Consultation on Participatory Approaches to South Asian Regional Integration and Connectivity**

**Client:** Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID)

**Budget:** A\$ 25,000

**Date:** April 12, 2013

Realising that an inclusive and participatory approach is necessary to achieve progress on development issues in South Asia, the Stakeholders meeting had two objectives: to gain civil society inputs on AusAID's strategy supporting South Asian regional integration and connectivity; and to develop a shared understanding of the big issues affecting progress towards regional economic integration and identify priority actions.

The South Asian stakeholder's consultation aimed to foster inclusivity and participation in South Asia's development process through the Stakeholders Consultation on Participatory Approaches to Regional Integration and Connectivity. It engaged diverse stakeholders, including civil society, industry, academia, and international partners, bridging micro-macro policy gaps. Incentivising civil society contributions, it promoted a multi-stakeholder approach and initiated regular dialogues to prioritise actions for regional economic integration. Overall, the project aimed to cultivate collaborative decision-making, advancing sustainable development across South Asia.

## EVENTS /ROUNDTABLES/DISCUSSIONS

### Bolstering Australia-India Defence Relations

February 21, 2024 | New Delhi



The event titled "Bolstering Australia-India Defence & Security Relations" organised by CUTS International discussed the strengthening strategic partnership between Australia and India in the Indo-Pacific region with **Justin Bassi, the Executive Director of Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and Former Indian Ambassador Anil Wadhwa** as the keynote speakers. The panellists also included expert speakers like Harinder Sekhon and Cmde. Anil Jai Singh.

Key areas of cooperation highlighted in the event include joint defence research, technology sharing, and joint exercises to ensure maritime security, freedom of navigation, to counter assertive behaviour, with a focus on containing China's maritime expansion.

Panellists stressed the importance of revitalising defence collaboration and expanding cooperation in advanced technologies, maritime domain awareness, space technology, and assistance to Pacific Island states for addressing regional challenges effectively.

Link: <https://cuts-wdc.org/bolstering-australia-india-defence-relations-february-21-2024.htm>



## CUTS 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events

### Fire Side Chat on Australia-India Bilateral Relations

February 04, 2024 | Jaipur



CUTS International organised a Fire Side Chat on “Strengthening Bonds: Australia-India Bilateral Relations” with **Ambassador Philip Green, High Commissioner of Australia to India.**

The event highlighted the multifaceted relationship between Australia and India, focusing on their increasing economic collaboration, shared democratic values, and commitment to regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Bilateral trade and investment have seen significant growth, with ongoing negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement. Cultural and educational exchanges strengthen people-to-people ties, while diplomatic efforts explore new cooperation opportunities, including in emerging sectors like critical minerals.

Link: <https://cuts-international.org/strengthening-bonds-india-australia-bilateral-relations/>

**Leaders Roundtable Discussion**  
**Looking Ahead:**  
***Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement***  
**Consulate General of India, Sydney | Newland Global Group | CUTS International**  
**February 02, 2024**



In February 2024, discussions unfolded on transforming the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) into a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). Till February, 2024 seven negotiation rounds have been conducted, focusing on diverse areas including goods, services, digital trade, and government procurement.

Emphasis of this discussion was placed on addressing challenges such as agricultural trade sensitivities and cultural barriers. Insights from the bilateral fact-finding roundtable highlighted growth in agricultural and industrial exports to India, while underscoring the need for enhanced business literacy and cultural awareness. Additionally, leveraging the Indian diaspora's potential emerged as a strategic imperative for fostering economic ties and mutual prosperity.

Link: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-australia-partnership-expansion-cepa-in-focus/articleshow/107484016.cms>

**Critical Minerals for Security and Prosperity:  
*The Role that Quad Should Play***

Australia India Institute, Melbourne | January 31, 2024



Seabed mining, with its promise of vast mineral resources, presents both economic potential and environmental risks. While Australia and India are eager to tap into this opportunity, concerns over environmental impact loom large due to limited scientific understanding. However, collaboration through initiatives like the Australia-India Critical Minerals Research Partnership offers a pathway to address these challenges. By jointly developing technology, conducting research, and formulating regulations, both nations can unlock the benefits of seabed mining while ensuring sustainability and responsible resource extraction.

With the development of deep-sea technology, there has been a renewed interest in critical minerals and how this will help Australia and India to foster new commercial partnerships. The Australia India Institute with CUTS International delved deep into to the role Quad should play in building a prosperous and secure region.

Link: <https://aii.unimelb.edu.au/critical-minerals-for-security-and-prosperity-the-role-the-quad-should-play/>

**Roundtable Discussion**

**Australia and India: Trade Strategies in an Era of Great Power Competition**

**Crawford School, Australian National University, Canberra and  
CUTS International, India | 30 January 2024**

Mutually beneficial trade is the lodestar of the India–Australia relationship in both traditional and emerging economic spheres. New Delhi and Canberra are steadily pursuing economic and people-to-people cooperation in areas such as critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, sports, space and organic goods.

Yet the Australia–India relationship cannot be examined in isolation. Great power competition is increasingly driving economic realignments in the Indo-Pacific, which has led to the emergence of international frameworks for regulatory cooperation and to Australia and India engaging differently with regional multilateral agreements and organisations. Despite their differing approaches, however, it will be necessary for Canberra and New Delhi to develop holistic trade strategies in this divisive era.

The CUTS 40th Anniversary Event took a deep dive into the trade strategies that India and Australia are adopting in an era of increasing great power competition. Leading experts discussed how Canberra and New Delhi are engaging with multilaterals while at the same time creating a future-focused bilateral economic relationship.

Link: <https://crawford.anu.edu.au/news-events/events/21814/australia-and-india-trade-strategies-era-great-power-competition>

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**Australia-India Relationship and the India Economic Strategy 2035  
Talk by H.E. Harinder Sidhu, Australia's High Commissioner to India**

**January 25, 2019 | Jaipur**

**Australian High Commissioner to India, Harinder Sidhu**, visited Jaipur to bolster cooperation between Rajasthan and Australia. Addressing a gathering hosted by CUTS international, she emphasised the importance of "mini-lateral ties" involving smaller groups of nations to enhance trade and strategic relations.

Sidhu highlighted India's significance in Australia's foreign policy, aiming to expand trade opportunities beyond South Australia. The new policy focuses on 10 states and sectors for trade improvement, with efforts to strengthen cooperation in niche sectors like water management and skill development in Rajasthan.

Link: <https://cuts-wdc.org/Media-interview-dna-conversation-india-is-very-important-to-us-says-harinder-sidhu.htm>

## CUTS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event

### **Linkages between Trade & Domestic Reforms – the Australian Experience**

**February 03, 2014 | Canberra**



The event focused on the interplay between trade and domestic reforms, particularly in the context of Australia's experience. Peter Varghese Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade highlighted the significance of sustained domestic reforms for fostering competitiveness and prosperity, emphasising the pivotal role of India's economic policies in shaping trade relations.

The event also included remarks from other experts, shedding light on various aspects of trade policy, competition, and regional cooperation. Margaret Harding, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the Australian National University, chaired the session, facilitating an engaging discussion on trade-related development issues.

Throughout the event, speakers underscored the need for synergistic efforts between governments, academia, and think tanks like CUTS International to advance trade policy and economic cooperation agendas, both bilaterally and regionally.

Link: <https://cuts-international.org/linkages-between-trade-domestic-reforms-the-australian-experience/>

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS AND VISITS

### Participation in the 7<sup>th</sup> Indian Ocean Conference in Perth

February 9 and 10, 2024 | Perth



The 7th annual [Indian Ocean Conference](#) (IOC), was co-hosted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Perth USAsia Centre and the India Foundation, marking the first time it was held in Australia. Drawing over 400 delegates from the region, including Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International, the conference focused on addressing climate and strategic challenges to establish a stable and sustainable Indian Ocean.

It served as a platform for thought-provoking discussions on regional security and cooperation, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering dialogue and collaboration among nations in the Indo-Pacific.

Link: <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/indian-ocean-conference-2024>

### Leaders Lead On-Demand Program Exchange

February 9 to 18, 2024 | Canberra and Sydney, Australia

Leaders Lead On-Demand is an Exchange programme for think tank opinion leaders from Quad countries in Canberra and Sydney, Australia, organised on February 9 to February 18, 2024.

This event, funded by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and implemented by World Learning, aims to create a network of think tank opinion leaders with the goal of harmonising messaging on key areas of Quad cooperation and leveraging the network to promote the tangible benefits of the Quad partnership and its role in the Indo-Pacific strategy. The event was attended by Sucharita Bhattacharjee representing CUTS International.

## Accessing Climate Finance

February 19 to March 02, 2024 | Canberra and Sydney, Australia

Accessing Climate Finance is a short course organised and funded by Australia Awards South Asia & Mongolia held in Brisbane, Canberra and Sydney. Sankalan Dey, representative of CUTS International attended this course. The course was an insightful look into diverse financing mechanisms, stakeholder engagement strategies, and practical skills in proposal writing.

Additionally, discussions with industry experts and government representatives enriched understanding of policy development and local contexts. Notably, exploration of blended finance options highlighted potential avenues for funding climate solutions, fostering collaboration with civil society organisations.

### MEDIA COMMENTARIES & OPEDS

#### Our articles on India-Australia:

- [India-Australia defence nexus hinges on trust, technology transfer](#)
- [Australian envoy says ties with India at historic high](#)
- [Building a win-win India-Australia Defence Partnership](#)
- [Indians in Australia: New Delhi must leverage the diaspora to its advantage](#)
- [Defence cooperation hardens the India–Australia relationship](#)
- [India-Australia relations: Preparing for CECA](#)
- [Engaging the Indian-Australian diaspora](#)
- [Bolstering Australia-India Defence cooperation](#)

### ABOUT CUTS INTERNATIONAL

CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) began in 1983 from a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper, Gram Gadar (Village Revolution). It has been instrumental in providing a forum for the oppressed classes to get justice.



The mission of the organisation is: *Consumer Sovereignty in the Framework of Social Justice, Economic Equality and Environmental Balance Within and Across Borders*. CUTS is a global research, public education and networking organisation working in various fields, including international trade, competition policy and law, economic regulation, consumer protection, strategic issues including defence and sustainable development issues.

From a humble beginning in 1983-84, the organisation now has three resource centres in Jaipur, each in Calcutta, Chittorgarh and New Delhi in India. It works internationally, especially in the developing world, through its resource centres based in Nairobi, Lusaka, Accra, Vietnam, Switzerland, and Washington DC.

More information about the organisation and its centres can be accessed here:

<https://cuts-international.org/>