

WORKING PAPER **278**

# India and the Agreement on Agriculture: Civil Society and Citizens' Engagement

Shefali Sharma  
March 2007

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## India and the Agreement on Agriculture: Civil Society and Citizens' Engagement

**Shefali Sharma**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores civil society advocacy on the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and how it influences the trade policy process and facilitates citizen engagement in the Indian context. It uses the concepts of actor-networks, discourse and spaces and strategies, to analyse the role five civil society organisation's (CSO) actor-networks play in advocacy on agriculture and trade policy. The empirical cases suggest that CSO advocacy in India has an indirect impact on the state's trade policy process. The cases also indicate that informed citizen engagement on global trade policies is challenging given the process of global trade policymaking and the nature of long-term grassroots mobilisation. Issues of representation and mediation, global-local discourses on economic policies, long-term versus short-term advocacy concerns and capacity constraints shape the extent to which direct citizen engagement can occur on the AoA. The paper concludes with some challenges that CSOs must confront in order to address long-term citizen action on agriculture and trade issues in India.

**Keywords:** trade, agriculture, policy, civil society, advocacy, India, participation

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## IDS Working Paper Series on Civil Society Engagement on Trade

This paper is the third in a series exploring the way a range of development actors view and engage with the arena of trade policy, focusing in particular on the challenges encountered by civil society actors participating in that arena. It forms part of the Power and Development Relations (PDR) programme of the Participation, Power and Social Change Team at IDS. Previous papers in this series include:

*Civil Society Participation in Trade Policy-making in Latin America: Reflections and Lessons* (2006) Peter Newell and Diana Tussie, IDS Working Paper 267. Available to download at [www.ntd.co.uk/idsbookshop/details.asp?id=925](http://www.ntd.co.uk/idsbookshop/details.asp?id=925)

*Mapping Trade Policy: Understanding the Challenges of Civil Society Participation* (2004) Karen Brock and Rosemary McGee, IDS Working Paper 225. Available to download at: [www.ntd.co.uk/idsbookshop/details.asp?id=805](http://www.ntd.co.uk/idsbookshop/details.asp?id=805)

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## Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADECOM	Animation, Development, Employment and Communication
AP	Andhra Pradesh
APMC	Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee
AoA	Agreement on Agriculture
BKU	Bhartiya Kisan Union
CAFOD	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
CII	Confederation of Indian Industries
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CUTS	Consumer Unity and Trust Society
EU	European Union
FIPs	Five Interested Parties
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GOI	Government of India
ICCFM	Indian Coordinating Committee of Farmers Movements
IATP	Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFIA	Indian Farmers & Industry Alliance
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
JJPLA	<i>Jameen Jungle Pani Lokadhikar Andolan</i>
JNU	<i>Jawaharlal Nehru University</i>
KRRS	<i>Karnataka Rajya Ryotha Sangha</i>
MLA	Minister of Legislative Assembly
MNC	Multinational Corporations
MP	Member of Parliament
MSP	Minimum Support Price
NCAER	National Council for Applied Economic Research
NDC	National Development Council
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NTAC	National Trade Advisory Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDS	Public Distribution System

QRs	Quantitative Restriction
TIP	Trade Information Project
TNWC	Tamil Nadu Women's Collective
TRIPS	Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights
US	United States
VC	<i>Via Campesina</i>
WTO	World Trade Organisation

# 1 Introduction

The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Seattle ministerial in December 1999 exhibited the convergence of trade unions, environmentalists and activists who highlighted various social and economic justice issues. The mass mobilisation of thousands of people forced attention on the democratic deficit of global trade policy making and its impact on social issues such as equitable economic development and livelihood concerns.

Most organised actors on the streets in Seattle were engaged in advocacy. *Advocacy* is a contested term that can have a variety of meanings associated with different political values, approaches and end goals (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 17). This study looks at advocacy in India on the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). It examines how civil society organisations (CSOs) impact the trade policy process and enable citizens at the grassroots to engage in these policies which affect their lives.

In this paper, *advocacy* is defined as 'an organized political process to change policies, practices, values, and ideas' that are perceived to perpetuate inequities and injustice (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 22). CSOs<sup>1</sup> engage in a number of short and long term strategies to advocate their political goals. A large number of them use strategies associated with *short term policy advocacy*, such as lobbying and policy research. They also use a style of campaigning linked to short term policy advocacy, such as simple media messages, stunts and public demonstrations to pressurise government institutions towards tangible policy changes (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002; Miller *et al.* 2005). In contrast to these short term strategies, *long term advocacy* around economic and social justice struggles has entailed strategies such as popular education (Freire 1992a; 1992b), grassroots organising and base-building (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002). These strategies include organising at local levels where groups of citizens identify their own struggles and agendas, as well as develop leadership to change systemic injustices affecting them.

In the trade arena, tensions between short term policy changes and long term advocacy goals also exist. The broader advocacy goal for many groups engaged in trade related advocacy is to challenge and replace neoliberal ideology as epitomised by the WTO. Many of these groups target the WTO and engage in short term policy advocacy to address their broader goal of creating an equitable global economic system. Others engage outside the policy arena and challenge the entire global trading system and call for alternatives.

Using certain political spaces many CSOs employ strategies intended to democratise global trade policy so that citizens have a right to not only engage in, but also help design policies that impact their lives (Newell and Tussie 2006; Brock and McGee 2004). This entails pushing governments to exclude certain trade proposals, to

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1 Scholte *et al.* define CSOs as groups that 'pursue objectives that relate explicitly to reinforcing or altering existent rules, norms and/or deeper social structures.' (1998: 3–4) As such they are voluntary associations that include special interest groups like business associations and farmers unions, as well as NGOs (Scholte 2004).

improve existing ones or to remove certain issues from discussion at the WTO. However, the advocacy strategies CSOs use present dilemmas and trade-offs between long term and short term objectives as groups navigate between the global and local arenas, and between state actors and grassroots constituencies on whose behalf they advocate. Deciding where and how to engage citizens and the state poses challenges.

Experience<sup>2</sup> and research shows that the issue of ‘representation’ is problematic in the global trade arena. Unelected officials reside over a relatively opaque process that implicates many national and sub-national government bodies who may or may not be privy to the negotiations (Brock and McGee 2004). These multiple levels of policy processes and political spaces at the international, national and sub-national levels, can lead to a fragmentation of CSO participation on trade policy issues and pose significant challenges for CSOs to effectively link global processes to their own arena of engagement (Brock and McGee 2004).

Therefore, examining how CSOs in different country contexts grapple with advocacy on global trade helps to understand the challenges and opportunities they face in creating real citizen participation on these issues. By using concepts from the policy process and literature on participation, this paper asks a series of questions. What are some of the key civil society *actor-networks* that are engaging on AoA policies? How do the various *discourses/narratives* on agriculture and trade marginalise or strengthen certain actors in relation to the state and citizens? How do these two factors shape the *spaces* and *strategies* they use for policy change? These concepts help to arrive at the central question driving this research: *How does Indian civil society engage with and affect the Indian government’s trade policy-making process and what are the implications for long term citizen engagement on these processes?* In this case, ‘citizen’ refers to farmers’ groups and agricultural labourers represented or referenced by advocacy groups.

## 1.1 Relevance of the question

There is a growing literature on the role of global advocacy networks and social movements in influencing global economic policy (Crook 2006; Perkin and Court 2005; Batliwala 2002; Fox 2001; Edwards and Gaventa 2001; O’Brien *et al.* 2000; Keck and Sikkink 1998). In addition, since Seattle, there has been an increased academic interest in understanding civil society participation in global trade policy processes (Scholte 2004, 2000; Wilkinson 2002; Williams 2001). However, very few studies have focused on trade policy and civil society advocacy in specific regions (some examples are, Brock and McGee 2004 for Africa and Newell and Tussie 2006 for Latin America). Currently there are a handful of CSOs directly engaged with the politics of the AoA within India. These CSOs engage with the state, farmers’ movements and other CSOs at the global, national and local levels.

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2 The author directed the Trade Information Project (TIP) from 2000–2003 for the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). The aim of the project was to liaise with both WTO delegations in Geneva and global trade advocacy networks on the politics of trade negotiations in Geneva.

While some academic literature exists on trade policy processes in India (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming; Sen 2005; Jenkins 2003); the change in discourse of farmers' movements in the 1990s (Brass 1994) and their role as activists against the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (Assadi 1995, 2002), little research has been conducted on CSO advocacy on the AoA that looks at both farmers' movements and civil society actors within India. This paper attempts to address this empirical gap.

This research is timely given that India is now part of a prominent coalition of developing countries in the WTO called the G20.<sup>3</sup> The G20 has been highly acclaimed as a symbol of developing country resistance against dominant WTO members such as the EU and the US (*The Guardian* 2003). Since April 2004, it has also been engaging in exclusive WTO negotiations in agriculture with four other member states referred to as 'Five Interested Parties (FIPs)<sup>4</sup> and on all WTO issues as part of the 'G6'.<sup>5</sup> This significantly increases India's importance in WTO negotiations in general, as well as particularly on agriculture negotiations.

Furthermore, the new round of negotiations has wide ramifications for agriculture policies in developing countries, especially for large agrarian economies such as India. Insights into how the Indian state engages with and responds to civil society within India, and whether CSO actors and their strategies strengthen voices of marginalised farmers and agricultural labourers, is thus critical. This is especially so given that two-thirds of the Indian population still depends on the agrarian sector for their livelihoods.

This paper does not attempt to decipher the reasons for declining growth within the Indian agriculture sector, nor does it analyse the validity of arguments for or against liberalisation of agriculture in India. It attempts to uncover the process and politics of advocacy on the AoA between civil society, the state and citizens. At the same time, given the size and diversity of India, the large number of CSOs engaged on agriculture policy at the sub-national and grassroots level, and the time limitations of the fieldwork, this paper does not claim to present a comprehensive picture of CSO advocacy in relation to trade and agriculture. The current work limits itself to a preliminary understanding of the role that CSO advocacy actors, as intermediaries, play in linking global trade policy to a national context and the grassroots. The strategies these advocacy actors utilise can help inform us about the opportunities and challenges in creating real citizen action on trade and agriculture within India. A comprehensive look at the participatory approaches used by grassroots groups linking trade and agriculture policies at various sub-national levels is also an important area of further research.

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3 Around 20 developing countries came together prior to the Cancun Ministerial to form the 'G20'. Some of the largest agricultural exporters such as Brazil, South Africa and Argentina aligned with China and India to form this grouping in opposition to the United States (US) and European Union (EU) on agriculture.

4 The FIPs comprise of the US, EU, Australia, Brazil and India.

5 The G6 comprises of US, EU, Australia, Japan, Brazil and India.

## 1.2 Research methodology

This study is based on five weeks of fieldwork in India. Primary data was collected through 29 semi-structured interviews and participant observation at two meetings. Interviews were conducted in Sri Lanka, Delhi, Haridwar and Mumbai and included: (1) Domestic and international CSO actors engaged in AoA/WTO advocacy, representatives of a farmers union and an industry association; (2) State officials engaged with the AoA policymaking processes, including the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture and the Planning Commission; (3) Staff of think tanks affiliated to the GOI; (4) Leaders from community-based groups working with agricultural labourers, *dalit* organisations and/or women peasants; and (5) Two journalists (including a former writer for *Frontline Magazine* and *The Hindu*) who have covered the AoA and trade and agriculture issues over the last 15 years in the Indian press. Participant observation included an Asia-wide CSO strategy meeting held in Negombo, Sri Lanka on 6–8 June 2005, on WTO's Hong Kong Ministerial and a regional meeting of a farmers union, the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU), held in Haridwar, Uttaranchal on 16–17 June 2005. The author's experience working on global trade policy advocacy informs this research.

## 1.3 Organisation of paper

Section two provides an understanding of the main concepts used to analyse CSO advocacy in India. These terms provide an analytical lens on how CSO advocacy impacts the Indian trade policy process and citizen engagement. Section three provides a brief background on the AoA and global advocacy and addresses the state's own actors, discourses and formal policymaking spaces. This provides the context within which CSO advocacy takes place. Section four presents four cases of CSO actors and their engagement on the AoA and agriculture and trade issues in India. Through an analysis of their actor-networks, their discourse in relation to the state and grassroots and the spaces and strategies they use to achieve their goals, we arrive at the central question of how their advocacy strategies are able to influence the state and enable citizen engagement. The final section concludes with four major challenges that emerge through the cases on citizen engagement. Firstly, trade related advocacy necessitates intermediaries that link the global to the local. This means that CSOs face the challenge of balancing 'representation' with the need for mass mobilisation on trade issues. Secondly, global discourses on the AoA are complex and overpowering and can overtake local discourses. This presents challenges in framing and linking global policies to local realities to galvanise citizen action. Thirdly, CSO actors must contend between long term and short term advocacy goals. Currently, most of them engage in short term policy strategies which allow little space for strengthening long term political movement building at the grassroots on trade issues. This is also because global trade policy moves at a different pace and through a different discourse than the process of grassroots movement building. Finally, most CSO actors have limited capacity to engage simultaneously in both policy advocacy and long term grassroots mobilisation and this demands an assessment of the types of strategies groups can realistically employ to achieve their advocacy goals. These challenges, along with the systemic democratic deficit of trade policy processes, limit citizen engagement on trade and agriculture policy advocacy within India.

## 2 Linking advocacy to actors, discourse, spaces and citizenship

The central research question explores how CSO actors engage in advocacy with the GOI on global agriculture trade policy and how this engagement facilitates citizen action. Using actor-networks, discourse, spaces, strategies and citizenship as key concepts, we examine who advocates on agriculture trade in India, how powerful their narratives are in relation to the global discourses on trade and how these two factors influence their spaces of engagement and political strategies with the state and citizens.

Underpinning the interrelated concepts of actors, discourses and spaces is the notion of power (Lukes 1974; Gaventa 2004, 1980; Foucault 1980; Brock *et al.* 2001). Though the paper examines the questions through the lens of actors, discourse and spaces; the critical and underlying notion of power cuts across each of these key concepts. Power determines why certain actor-networks and their discourses are considered legitimate and why others are marginalised in the policy process (Keeley and Scoones 2003). It determines what human and material resource actor-networks bring to bear in influencing policies (Fischer 2003). It also determines the spaces through which actors engage with the state (Gaventa 2004). Finally, examination of advocacy strategies helps unpack the type of power CSOs address in their work (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002). These strategies, in turn, help to open or close spaces for citizen action. However, first we look at how these key concepts are treated in existing literature.

### 2.1 Policy process

There are a few main conceptual approaches used to understand policy process in the existing literature. One is the 'linear model' of policymaking, which assumes that decision-makers are rational and instrumental beings who follow the process from agenda setting to decision making to implementation in a systematic fashion (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 22). Another is the political-science approach which narrowly views special interests as the main driving force behind the policy process. However, policy is contested, reshaped and influenced from many locales, through varied political interests and affected by both micro and macro processes (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 22).

This paper uses two approaches but maintains an understanding that special interests remain an important factor in both. The first is an actor-oriented approach that looks at policy processes in terms of the agency of actors; and the second treats policy as discourse where policy is seen as an outcome of the larger power relationship between 'citizens, experts and political authorities' (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 22). Various actors use discourse to legitimise and mobilise support or opposition towards a certain policy position and the legitimacy of their contestation or of their set of assumptions is determined by power (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 24).

## 2.2 Actor-oriented approach

The actor-network approach helps to see how individual actors and their actions help alter policy processes and dominant ideas associated with them. It illustrates the non-linear and dialectic nature of policy processes where individuals can bargain and negotiate outcomes (Mooij 2003: 7–8). It stresses that ‘expressions of agency through repeated practice may result in both intended and *unintended*<sup>6</sup> outcomes ...’ thus, chance is an important element of policy change (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 34). Advocacy also inherently encompasses this notion of agency in that practices of individuals and groups connected to networks, alliances or coalitions of various forms, can shape and alter power relations and hence policymaking processes (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 34).

This approach presents a number of questions that will be explored in subsequent sections. For instance, how do various actors utilise agency to influence the GOI’s position? What alliances and networks do these actors form to strengthen their advocacy? How do their alliances lend legitimacy to local struggles, if at all? How does their role, as intermediaries between the global and local, impact the ability of citizens to articulate their rights and how do they enable these voices to filter up in the trade policy process?

## 2.3 Policy as discourse

Discourse can be defined as ‘a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts and categorizations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices, and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities’ (Hajer quoted in Keeley and Scoones 2003: 37). It defines the world in a certain way which thereby excludes other interpretations of reality. Thus, discourse is an expression of knowledge and power (Foucault 1980) whereby legitimacy of certain concepts can empower some institutions and actors and marginalise others (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 37).

The politics of policy processes are shaped by power where both actors and institutions are submerged in a context of broader narratives and frames of reference. Narratives associated with policy are simplified framings of cause and effect that provide a rationale for both policy decisions and policy advocacy (Keeley and Scoones 2003: 38). Thus, while discourse underpins the wider set of values and ways of thinking, narratives are storylines that add to conventional wisdom and knowledge (McGee 2004: 13; Fischer 2003: 86).

Section three shows that two main discourses compete on the state of Indian agriculture which influences the decisions the GOI takes on external trade liberalisation. The paper explores how the legitimacy of the two narratives influences the state’s policy process and how this shapes the political spaces and strategies which advocacy groups utilise. Moreover, it examines how global narratives link with local framings of problems faced by citizens at the grassroots.

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6 Author’s emphasis added.



Do advocacy groups effectively link local and global narratives within the broader discourse on agriculture trade policy and does their framing affect India's trade policy process and/or resonate with citizens?

## 2.4 Spaces and strategies

Space is a 'useful lens with which to view the everyday politics and practice of actors and to examine how their power to act is enabled or constrained' (McGee 2004: 15–16). It is a metaphorically rich concept which can literally describe the physical site of policymaking or conceptually describe the political and symbolic arena of actors' engagement with the process – whether it is formal or informal, a site of contestation, collaboration or co-optation and even whether it signifies transformation or reification of the status quo (Cornwall 2004, 2002).

There are numerous ways to describe these political spaces for citizens' engagement (Cornwall 2004, 2002; McGee 2004; Gaventa 2004). In advocacy, there is the notion of actors engaging on the 'inside' with state officials or institutions versus those challenging the state or the broader ideological paradigm from the 'outside'. 'Inside' spaces are institutional/formal spaces of the state where one can be 'invited' to participate in the policy process or they constitute various forms of lobbying. 'Outside' spaces can be called 'created', 'popular' or 'autonomous' where groups organise around state-led processes, or in spite of them, and often in a critical manner against the state (Gaventa 2004; Cornwall 2002). In reality, many groups engage on both the inside and outside, since state institutionalised spaces can also be claimed and spaces that are created outside of formal state structures can also be co-opted (McGee 2004: 19). Power helps shape the spaces advocacy groups use.

VeneKlasen and Miller's schema on *Power, Political Participation and Social Change*<sup>7</sup> shows how different advocacy strategies can tackle different forms of power (2002: 50). Most CSOs involved in trade advocacy attempt to change and modify *visible forms of power*. This power is exemplified by institutions such as the WTO and through instruments they use to wield power, such as the AoA. Such institutions can enforce their power through biased policies in favour of more dominant groups or countries and create decision-making structures that allow dominant groups and countries to set the agenda. Advocacy strategies to address such forms of power entail direct *policy advocacy* in the form of lobbying, monitoring, policy research, public education, media work and protest marches in conjunction with specific policy moments (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 50).

However, many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements are interested in changing deeper and more paradigmatic discourses and practices. These dimensions fall under *hidden power* exhibited by processes of exclusion and delegitimisation. As shown above, certain discourses are considered more credit worthy and informed while others are considered radical depending on who is in a position of power. This hidden power dimension shapes who sets the agenda and

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7 See Appendix A.

the rules of engagement in a policy process (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 50). Long term strategies such as *organising at and for the grassroots* attempt to tackle this form of power. This entails building common constituencies over the long term and strengthening coalitions, movements and leaders in order to amplify the voices of the excluded and to build a powerful force that can challenge the agenda set by more powerful actors or institutions. This contrasts with organising around political events or strategic policy moments where the emphasis is more on 'turn-out' and mobilisation for public protests organised by others (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002).

Finally, a long term strategy associated with tackling *invisible* forms of power is *popular education* (Freire 1992a, 1992b; VeneKlasen and Miller 2002). Through a variety of practices, this strategy entails critical consciousness raising and citizen action from the grassroots up to tackle forms of power, whereby individuals and groups themselves have internalised social and cultural values and ideologies that marginalise them (Miller *et al.* 2005; VeneKlasen and Miller 2002). This power manifests itself in marginalised groups of people feeling helpless or blaming themselves for economic realities they face due to socialisation and/or lack of information on their rights and possibilities, and on why something is happening to them. A most stark example of this is farmers' suicides in India, where out of helplessness, lack of power, information and support, individuals are taking their own lives to get out of the cycle of debt and poverty.

In reality, activists may not distinguish between policy advocacy, organising and popular education as short or long term strategies or link them to different forms of power. However, this differentiation helps to understand how different advocacy strategies relate to the grassroots and citizen engagement. Subsequent sections examine what kind of spaces and strategies Indian CSOs use on global trade policy processes and the implications of their strategies on citizen action. For instance, do CSOs engage on the 'inside' with the government or on the 'outside' to create political pressure? Do CSO intermediaries tap into existing social struggles around agrarian policies and link them to Indian trade policy, or do they attempt to create movements around trade policy concerns? Do they mobilise people for a 'turn-out' at a trade policy event, or do they engage in popular education on how agriculture trade policy links to citizens' concerns on agriculture? Or conversely, do they do both?

## 2.5 Citizen engagement as citizen action

Cornwall and Gaventa (2001) define citizenship through citizen action. This definition encompasses the right of citizens to participate in decisions that affect their lives. It sees citizens as agents that can help create accountability of policy-making processes. It thus bestows upon citizens not only rights, but also responsibility, through collective action to create more democratic governance systems (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001: 7). 'Citizenship thus becomes a differentiated relationship of belonging, action and accountability between citizens and the many different institutions that have influence over their lives' (Jones and Gaventa 2002: 20).

As stated above, 'citizen' in relation to the AoA means those dependent on agriculture or agriculture related activities for their livelihoods. This is approximately two-thirds of the Indian population. To what extent trade advocacy groups are able to support and strengthen the more marginalised constituencies in this population toward citizen action is the overarching question of this paper.

## 2.6 Summary

The concepts of actor-networks, discourse, spaces and strategies help us to see the power dimensions within which various actors are engaged on trade advocacy in India. They can help us see which actors are more powerful in relation to the state and what role they play in changing dominant discourses. They can illustrate which discourses may be more powerful in relation to the state and whether narratives on WTO policies overpower more localised narratives around agriculture problems. They can also help unpack the extent to which certain spaces and strategies are available for and effectively used by advocacy groups, and whether these spaces link global advocacy with the concerns of farmers and agricultural labourers on the ground. Together, these concepts help understand how CSO advocacy in India impacts the state's policymaking process on global agriculture trade and whether it facilitates citizen action in the long run.

The next section looks at the context within which CSO advocacy takes place on broader trade liberalisation issues and on the WTO. It situates the GOI within the global and national arena with regards to the AoA and uncovers its policymaking process. Through analysing the state's key actors, the debates around trade liberalisation and the state's provision of policymaking spaces for CSOs, we gain a deeper understanding of the Indian state's policy process and the political context within which CSOs engage in advocacy.

## 3 Setting the context for advocacy: the GOI's policy process

The last section addressed the key concepts used in this paper to examine advocacy on the AoA. It posed relevant questions related to actors and discourse in shaping the AoA policy process. It also addressed the importance of spaces and strategies in shaping different types of advocacy and citizen participation in these processes.

This section looks at the specific context within which Indian CSOs engage on the AoA. It provides a background on the AoA, global advocacy and highlights the key state actor-networks and discourses on agriculture trade liberalisation in India. It also highlights the major state processes that influence the GOI position and the state sanctioned spaces that exist for CSOs. These factors then set the context for the case studies in section four.

### 3.1 The AoA and global advocacy

Like other WTO agreements, the AoA was drafted amid competing commercial and political interests during the Uruguay Round (1986–1994).<sup>8</sup> The US,<sup>9</sup> backed by a group of agriculture exporting countries known as the Cairns Group, pushed the launch of agriculture negotiations with the intent to significantly lower agriculture tariffs of member countries (Murphy 1999; Ingersent *et al.* 1994). Meanwhile, it was commonly acknowledged that developed countries, as major exporters, were competing on a basis of heavily subsidised agriculture, while developing countries bore the brunt of cheap imports. Thus, the bulk of developing countries, including India, remained skeptical about this agreement and pushed for special and differential treatment for countries whose populations significantly depended on domestic agriculture for livelihoods and food security (Sharma 1998). However, they were also swayed by economic studies (see for example, Tyers and Anderson 1992; Islam and Valdes 1990) whose models projected enormous gains for developing countries through agriculture trade liberalisation (in particular countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD) through the AoA.

The final agreement,<sup>10</sup> however, secured the continuation of US and EU subsidy programmes under special provisions of the agreement such as the ‘Amber’, ‘Blue’ and ‘Green Box’. The three key components of the agreement are rules on: (1) export competition – aiming to reduce export subsidies, export credits and food aid; (2) increased market access of all members to other countries through reduction of border protection; and (3) reduction of domestic support (domestic subsidies and other programmes of support to farmers) that affects world trade in agriculture.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the global agreement not only created rules to liberalise forms of border protection such as tariffs, quotas and quantitative restrictions (QRs), but also on curbing domestic agriculture support, thereby implicating a broad range of national agriculture policies (Sharma 1998).

In addition, global CSO advocacy on the AoA has taken various forms, both northern and southern CSOs have either: (1) continued to press for improvements of the AoA through new proposals<sup>12</sup> and policy advocacy that would give governments from developing countries more leverage to protect rural livelihoods or deal with food security concerns; or (2) pushed for ‘WTO out of agriculture’ by mobilising constituencies in various countries in opposition to the AoA; via Campesina Website<sup>13</sup> and/or (3) advocated for ‘food sovereignty’ and hence the right of people

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8 For a complete history of the Uruguay Round see Croome (1999).

9 The major driving force behind the US were agri-businesses who wanted market access in developing countries for trade in livestock, grain and other temperate products (Murphy 1999).

10 It was primarily finalised in 1992 by the US and the EU in a deal known as the ‘Blair House Accord’.

11 For details of the agreement visit the WTO Website at [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

12 See Khan *et al.* (2003) for a joint collaboration between ActionAid Pakistan, the Canadian Food Grains Bank, Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and ActionAid UK.

to define agriculture and trade policies that prioritise local livelihoods and family based production.<sup>14</sup> This last position entails dismantling the current AoA and strengthening other UN bodies and principles that give more value to small scale agriculture and allow for more citizen participation in these policies.

Proposals to improve the AoA have been contentious between international peasant movement organisations, such as *Via Campesina* (VC) and development NGOs. Development NGOs contend that creating worse proposals in the AoA will only exacerbate policy conditions on trade and agriculture, while groups such as VC insist that ‘improving’ the agreement will only lead to cosmetic changes and legitimise a fundamentally flawed institution and policy. This has created ‘inside’ spaces for some actors who are working with state officials to improve or change the existing agreement. While other sets of actors have occupied ‘outside’ spaces that challenge the existence of this agreement and the institution. Many groups engage in both of these spaces.

WTO members are currently renegotiating the AoA under the Doha Round (launched at the Doha Ministerial in 2001). In principle this means further national commitments towards the liberalisation of agriculture. In July 2004 a framework for these negotiations, called the ‘July Framework’, was created between key WTO coalitions such as the G20, the EU and the US. This framework was further elaborated on in December 2005 at the Hong Kong Ministerial and it continues to be negotiated among member states and remains controversial among CSOs.

CSOs continue to engage in, around and outside these WTO processes. Many of these CSOs simultaneously monitor, digest, disseminate and translate the complex language of trade negotiations into something that nationally based groups and social movements can understand and act upon for the interest of their cause or constituency (Brock and McGee 2004). How Indian advocacy groups locate themselves between these global actors, discourses and spaces forms the basis of the next section. However, in order to understand their engagement, we now turn to the state’s own actor-networks, the debate on agriculture liberalisation within India and the GOI’s policy process in relation to global and domestic forces.

### **3.2 ‘Uncle Dunkel’ and the GOI position amidst actors and discourses**

There are strongly contrasting narratives on the pros and cons of agriculture liberalisation in India which clearly link to different actors and their ideological positions. These starkly different narratives have different policy implications for agriculture. The narratives are legitimised depending on the broader power dynamics that shape discourse on liberalisation, political alliances and interests of the actor-networks involved. These actors use different political spaces and strategies, which in turn shape the politics of the policymaking process of the GOI.

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13 For example, the *Via Campesina* website: [www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org)

14 This position is supported by the Agriculture Trade Network, a coalition of both Southern and Northern social movements and NGOs (Agriculture Trade Network 2005).

The politicisation of the GATT 'Dunkel Draft'<sup>15</sup> coincided with India's launch of economic reforms to liberalise the Indian economy in 1991. Subsequent governments throughout the 1990s have continued to move towards liberalisation of industry, finance, the public sector and agriculture. Though agriculture continues to be one of the most contentious areas of reforms, CSO advocacy on the WTO and agriculture must be viewed within the context of the dominant trend towards liberalisation in India.

There is an array of literature that supports Indian agriculture liberalisation (Baghwati and Srinivisan 1993; Pursell and Gulati 1993; Gulati and Sharma 1994 and 1997; Hoda and Gulati 2002) and suggests that India's commitments in the WTO have left it ample room to manoeuvre national and sub-national agriculture policies. Meanwhile, another set of literature highlights the precarious nature of Indian agriculture and cautions on the impacts of liberalisation on the agrarian population (Bhalla 1994; Nayyar and Sen 1994; Storm 1997; Rao and Storm 1998).

From both perspectives, the actors involved in many of these studies have been associated with the AoA policymaking process. For instance, both Anwarul Hoda and Ashok Gulati were some of the key experts advising the GOI towards liberalisation during the Dunkel negotiations. Hoda served as the chief Indian negotiator and rather suddenly moved to the GATT/WTO secretariat in 1993 as a deputy director general until 1999 (interview with Civil Servant 2005). He is now with the GOI as a member of the Planning Commission. Gulati, now with International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), was formerly part of the government affiliated pro-liberalisation think tank called the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and served as an advisor on the AoA negotiations. The Commerce Department relies on experts such as Gulati and Anil Sharma from NCAER for data regarding market access in the agriculture negotiations. However, those more critical of liberalisation, such as G.S. Bhalla and Abhijit Sen have also served as expert advisors as part of an 'advisory group' on the AoA for the Commerce Department and the Ministry of Agriculture. Sen is now also a member of the Planning Commission. They continue to provide a counter discourse in this debate.

The pro-liberalisation actors (actor-networks in the bureaucracy, Indian universities and government sponsored think tanks) described the AoA as an opportunity for India to enter the world market as a competitor given its comparative advantage as an agriculture exporter (Gulati and Sharma 1994). They saw liberalisation as a way to stop taxing Indian agriculture (Baghwati and Srinivasan 1993). Though their predictions about India's economic gains have been tempered by continued EU-US subsidies, they continue to see agriculture liberalisation and exports as a key to India's economic growth. This is combined with their vision of Indian food production shifting from food grains to one that caters to the changing 'food basket' of

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15 Arthur Dunkel, the GATT General Director in 1991, drafted the final negotiating text (hence the term 'Dunkel Draft') that later became the WTO Marakesh agreements. Within India, the draft and 'Uncle Dunkel' were heavily politicised by NGOs, primarily on the critiques around the proposed TRIPS agreement. Farmers rallies took place opposing the draft and Dunkel effigies were burned on the streets in Delhi (Assadi 1995, 2002).

the wealthier Indian urban middle class (von Braun *et al.* 2005; Gulati 2001). Thus, they advocate for policies that promote diversification of Indian agriculture into cash crops and investment in a value added food markets for Indian consumers and exports (von Braun *et al.* 2005; Gulati 2001). The dominance of this discourse is substantiated by the fact that domestic agriculture policy is increasingly moving towards agriculture liberalisation and export led growth, irrespective of India's position in the WTO.

However, individuals in the same ministries across the Planning Commission, Agriculture and Commerce still see food self sufficiency, and a cautious approach to external agriculture liberalisation, as a major political and practical goal in a country the size of India. Members of this camp cite India's massive crop constituency (five million people dependent on a single crop in 35 agriculture commodities) as a major reason to proceed with caution (Mehta 2002; Interview, Ministry of Agriculture 2005b). They argue that this makes 'trade-offs' in these commodities very difficult, let alone among other sectors being negotiated at the WTO (Interview, Ministry of Agriculture 2005b). This debate has continued to influence advocacy on the AoA process within India.

An example of this is the WTO induced removal of India's QRs. In 2001, the removal of QRs created a big public controversy regarding the impact on India's agrarian population. The pro-liberalisation lobby in the Commerce Ministry, academia and the financial media stressed that India's high bound tariff rates in the WTO had prevented imports from flooding in (Bagchi 2001; Ministry of Commerce and Industry 2001). Meanwhile, other intellectuals, CSOs and political parties mobilised in opposition to the dismantling of the QRs (Choudhary 2000; Yechury 2000; Shiva 2002). They contended that even a small time-lag in raising applied tariffs had wiped out farmers who did not have sufficient savings to recover from the crisis. They are supported by left economists (Patnaik 1999; Chandrasekhar and Ghosh 2002; Ghosh 2005) who provide their own analysis against the broader move towards liberalisation and its impact on the agrarian sector.<sup>16</sup> In the end, the Commerce Ministry prevailed on removing QRs and removing them earlier than mandated by the WTO in spite of protests from the left – though it was forced to raise tariffs of certain politically sensitive commodities. These debates continue across ministries and the media and, as we will see in the next section, shape CSO advocacy spaces and strategies for political action.

### 3.3 The state's invited spaces of policymaking

Indian advocacy on the AoA is also shaped by GOI's own engagement with powerful global actors and its management of the formal policy process between India's vast bureaucracy and its democratic and federal political system. The Commerce Ministry responds to both global and domestic factors and creates certain spaces of engagement in its policymaking process.

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<sup>16</sup> These authors contend that the political reality of the Indian countryside does not enable the poorest farmers to respond to market signals, especially as public investment into agri culture infrastructure has declined since structural adjustment in India.

Global actors and processes play an important role in India's trade policy decisions. In the 2001 Doha Ministerial, Commerce Minister Marasoli Maran refused to sign onto the new round because of proposed language on four new agreements into the WTO. A last minute phone call by Tony Blair to Prime Minister Vajpayee is reported to have made the final difference in India signing onto the Doha Round (Interview, Sharma 2005; Jawara and Kwa 2003). Since then, India has actively facilitated the rise of the powerful G20 grouping of countries that include Brazil and China. Its active involvement in the politically powerful and exclusive FIPs and G6 process also raises global political pressure for India to compromise with the major players such as the EU and the US. This global dynamic ensures that Indian advocacy on the AoA cannot be limited to policy processes from within India alone. Moreover, experts working with the Commerce Ministry suggest that Geneva based Indian negotiators exert significant power over the process and the decisions the GOI takes on the WTO. This power has increased in recent years given India's participation in exclusive negotiations with other global powers (Interview, Civil Servant 2005).

While global political power relations influence India's positions in the WTO, agency of actors within ministries and political arms of the state can influence the boundaries within which Geneva based negotiators operate. For instance, the bureaucracy itself is fragmented even though Geneva based officials and the Commerce Ministry have the most power in directing the WTO process. There are 'turf' issues between the Commerce and Agriculture Ministries on the AoA. The Ministry of Commerce is in charge of the entire WTO package as a 'single undertaking' and thus weighs other interests alongside agriculture, including those of the services industry. Its positions in Geneva are formulated across economic sectors with 'trade-offs' in mind (Interview, Ministry of Department of Commerce 2005). However, Ministry of Agriculture officials have grown more and more disgruntled as a result. They feel that they should be playing the lead role in agriculture trade negotiations given that they are accountable for any negative impacts of trade policy on domestic agricultural interests (Interview, Ministry of Agriculture 2005a). Here, the role of political parties and politicians becomes relevant since agriculture is historically a highly politicised subject within India and neither ministry can be seen to be ignoring agriculture interests.

The politics of this turf war results in both of the ministries utilising and working on different sets of data for agriculture negotiations without necessarily arriving at a common position. When conflicts persist the cabinet makes the final decision, as was the case on the AOA for the July Framework (Interview, Ministry of Agriculture 2005a). Political observers believe that powerful individuals such as the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Montek Singh Aluwaliah, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram and ultimately, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, favour agriculture liberalisation in India. Thus, the final decision taken by the Commerce Ministry is biased towards the ideological viewpoints of these powerful actors (Interview, Civil Servant 2005; Interview, Ghosh 2005).

Political parties and the Parliament, however, provide opportunities for democratic checks and balances in the Indian system. Thus far, the Parliament's role on the AoA remains limited since AoA related adjustments in agriculture have mainly been bureaucratic rather than legislative; and because India's current WTO commitments



in the AoA have not directly forced changes in agriculture policies apart from the removal of QRs. The parliamentary and political party engagement on agriculture, nonetheless, has created a measure of ‘answerability’ in relation to Commerce’s actions in Geneva, and thus remains an important vehicle for CSO advocacy.

For instance, the Parliament’s Departmental Standing Committee on Commerce<sup>17</sup> issued two WTO related reports in the 1990s. These reports stressed the importance of India’s Public Distribution System (PDS) as it relates to minimum support prices (MSPs) for farmers; the continued use of agriculture subsidies; concerns about imports; problems associated with world commodity prices; subsidisation of Western agriculture; and the right for farmers to save and share seeds (Parliament of India 1998; Ministry of Commerce ca 1993).

The process of these reports enabled participation of civil society actors as witnesses in front of the committee. They also involved a range of interventions from other ministries and industry associations (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming: 14). The process of the committees allowed for a much wider debate and served as an important political signal to the Ministry of Commerce even though the first report was delivered just as the Uruguay Round concluded (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the parliamentary processes can force Commerce to respond to WTO related concerns in parliament.<sup>19</sup> Though constitutionally<sup>20</sup> the Parliament can have a limited direct impact on the trade policy process, it is an important advocacy space for Indian CSOs, especially since WTO negotiations continue to have significant implications for future legislation.

India’s federalist system adds yet more layers of complexity and provides more spaces for CSO advocacy. Constitutionally, agriculture is a state subject which means that any agriculture policy created by the central Government must also be approved by individual states. Thus, chief ministers and their states can also potentially play a significant political role in holding the GOI accountable on the AoA.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, state politicians and bureaucrats remain spectators and at most times ignorant of the GOI trade policy formulation given their own lack of capacity on WTO issues. The Commerce ministry also does not encourage their participation. The ministry’s effort to involve states has entailed writing letters to chief ministers for inputs into the negotiations and occasional meetings with ministers and secretaries of various states. This remains an open advocacy space for CSOs.

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17 The Parliament has a standing committee on each government department where it can pose questions to the senior officials of that ministry.

18 It was delivered the day before Uruguay Round negotiations concluded in Geneva in December 1993.

19 From 1994 to 2004, there have been 2,900 interventions in the lower house of parliament on WTO related issues, with a significant portion of them devoted to agriculture issues (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming: 22–3).

20 The constitutional rule that international treaties are the ambit of the administration allows Commerce with ample leeway not to have to listen to Members of Parliament (MPs) or include them in the process unless they are forced to do so (Jenkins 2003).

21 Four states challenged the central government’s ratification of the Marrakesh Agreement in the Supreme Court given that agriculture was a state subject (Jenkins 2003).

Commerce and Agriculture Ministries' consultative 'inside' spaces on trade policy have left the parliament, most CSO actors and even most government departments, on the outside of the formal policy process. The GOI has a National Trade Advisory Committee (NTAC) which consists of government officials from key ministries such as Finance, External Affairs and also includes industry associations, 'trade experts', representatives of think tanks and two NGOs<sup>22</sup> (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming; Interview, Sahai 2005). They serve as a reference group that can provide inputs on the various WTO agreements. However, the use of this space is *ad hoc* and depends on who is running the Commerce Ministry. According to some officials, the current Commerce Minister, Kamal Nath, has further limited this type of interaction (Interview, Civil Servant 2006).

In the past, the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce have separately and jointly held national level consultations with sub-state officials, political parties, farmers' organisations and NGOs (refer to Appendix B for a list of consultations).<sup>23</sup> However, these spaces have been described as a 'one-way street' where state officials provide updates and listen to comments, but are in no way obligated to report back or justify their actions following these meetings (Interview, Civil Servant 2005; Interview, Member of Planning Commission 2005). Thus 'invited' and 'inside' spaces with the formal policymaking process remain limited for CSOs, and agency within various ministries continues to play an important role in the policy process.

### 3.4 Conclusion

India's official trade policy is led by Geneva and the Commerce Ministry, but is influenced by other global actors and processes as well as government factions within the bureaucracy. Moreover, the Indian Parliament and the federal system have the potential to play an important role in widening democratic spaces and voices in trade policymaking. The dominant discourse continues to be pro-liberalisation and many of the most powerful actors of the state, including the Prime Minister favour policies in this direction. Nonetheless, there continues to be a counter discourse within India with state actors who lend it support. Also, the role of politicians and political parties continues to be important in pushing domestic agriculture interests in this debate and for creating answerability at the highest level of office.

The discussion above reveals that agency of state actors remains one of the key factors in the policy process in the Indian context. However, the politicisation of trade issues can have an impact at the highest level of government and thus, the role of political parties and the parliament remains important. Thus far, the parliament has played a minimal role in the trade arena, however, when engaged, they exact a level of answerability from the GOI.

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22 A consumer NGO called CUTS and a representative from the Gene Campaign (involved in intellectual property issues).

23 Between 1999 and 2004, around 25 efforts have been made to make the process more inclusive.

This context of state actor-networks, competing discourses and existing policy-making spaces presents dilemmas and choices for CSO advocacy in India on trade and agriculture and the AoA. Given the context within which the GOI forges its position, how can Indian CSOs engage most effectively to influence the policy process? Furthermore, how do they enable citizen engagement on these issues and what kind of discourse enables them to affect change at the policy level or galvanise political engagement from the grassroots? Additionally, what spaces and strategies do they utilise to fulfil their goals? The next section looks at how four different sets of CSO actor-networks tackle these issues in relation to the state and the citizens for whom they advocate.

## 4 CSO advocates and their discourses, spaces and strategies

The last section looked at the context within which the GOI trade policy is made. Figure 4.1 depicts a linear conventional approach in understanding the GOI's trade policy process. Figure 4.1 illustrates different arms of the government, the legislature and the judiciary and their respective roles in the process. The Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Department of Commerce lead the process. State and local (*Panchayats*) governments, at the lower rungs, feed into the system and implement decisions taken at the higher levels. Other ministries also input into the Department of Commerce and the Central Government; while civil society, political parties, the media and other non-state actors play an indirect role.

This depiction, however, fails to illuminate the agency of individual actors, power/knowledge differences between each layer of government and across actors. It therefore also fails to shed light on the complexity of the policymaking process and the choices that CSO advocates face in influencing Indian trade policy.

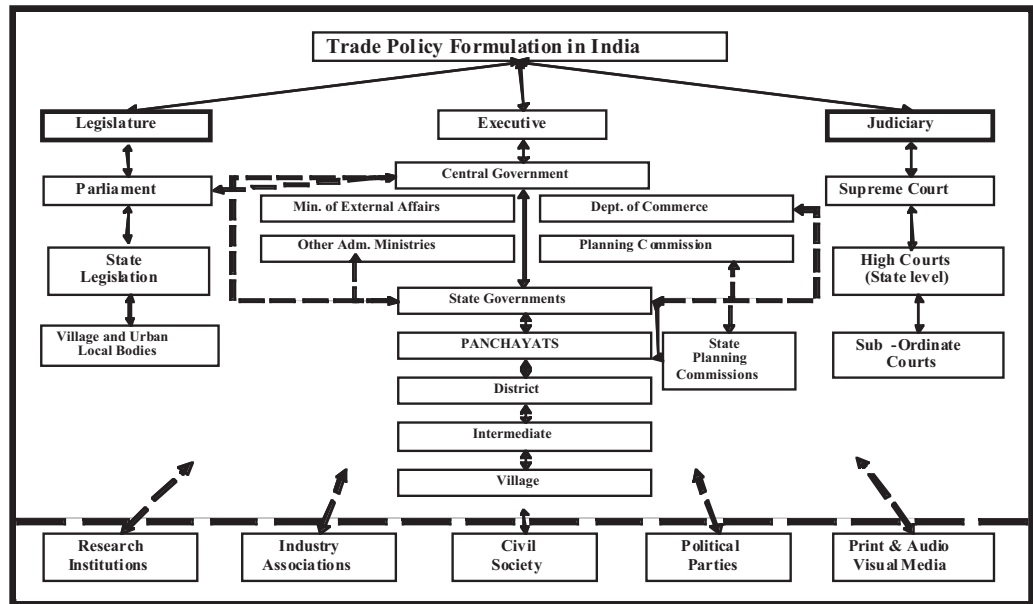
The real process of trade policymaking is a dynamic process of global and domestic interests; the agency of individual government actors; and the power of one knowledge set over another. Indian CSOs advocate within this global-local terrain on agricultural trade and respond to the dominant discourse and direction the state is taking. The media also serves as a critical discursive space that frames the global, national and local debates around these issues with some actors allowed greater legitimacy over others.

CSO advocates are forced to make strategic choices between international, national and local spaces and navigate between the different global-local narratives and discursive frames in addressing impacts of global agricultural trade policies on farmers and labourers. They make choices on how best to use their existing resources to fulfil their long and short term political goals by engaging in certain spaces, disengaging from others and by creating new ones.

The next four cases<sup>24</sup> look at different actor-networks, their narratives, and the spaces and strategies they utilise. They look at Delhi-based actors, representatives of the mass base and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) who attempt to link to grassroots and the global advocacy community. The fourth case

examines corporate advocacy to distinguish between the narratives and advocacy strategies of private capital versus those who are advocating for producers and labourers. It shows why this group has greater legitimacy and clout.

**Figure 4.1 The linear model of India’s trade policy process**



(Source: reproduced from Dhar and Kallummal, forthcoming: 5)

The cases reveal important dilemmas and trade-offs between engagement in policy advocacy with the state and creating effective citizen engagement on these issues. They help to draw lessons on short and long term implications for citizen action at the grassroots.

**4.1 Indian advocacy against the AoA: Delhi-based intellectuals**

The first case study examines Delhi-based intellectuals and their own organisations. These set of actors are most closely linked to national policy advocacy on the AoA given that trade policy is coordinated in the capital city. Individuals such as Devinder Sharma, Vandana Shiva and left academics such as Jayati Ghosh from *Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)*, have served as some of the main intellectual resources in framing the counter discourse against the AoA and/or agriculture liberalisation over the last 15 years for both domestic and international CSOs. Thus, they are prime intermediaries that mediate between the international and the local on advocacy on these issues.

24 The next four sections are largely based on the author’s fieldwork in India from 5 June–8 July 2005.

Primarily using the media and various other forms of public discursive space, these actors interpret processes of the WTO, liberalisation, economic globalisation, and link them to impacts on Indian farmers and agriculture labourers. They translate Geneva processes for Indian CSOs and conduct economic analyses of liberalisation and its impact on rural India. Internationally they represent the Indian critique against the AoA and liberalisation, and therefore indirectly serve as the voices of the agrarian sector abroad. An examination of their role and discourse provides insight in CSO ability to influence the state and to link to the circumstances of the farmers and agriculture labourers they write and speak about. Their advocacy strategies provide insights into the opportunities and constraints of influencing change on trade in the Indian context.

#### 4.1.1 Actor-network

Sharma is a food and trade analyst and heads his own organisation called the Forum for Biotechnology and Food Security.<sup>25</sup> Over the years he has become a key resource to NGOs, the media, farmers' movements and politicians and writes extensively on trade and food security issues, both for a national and international audience (Interview, Sharma 2005). He is a coordinating member of several movements such as the *National Kisan Panchayat*, a collective of organised farmers groups. He is also a member and resource for the WTO *Virodhi Bharatiya Jan Abhiyan* (the Indian People's Campaign Against the WTO), a broad coalition of activists opposing WTO's policies. The *Abhiyan's* convenor, S.P. Shukla, is a former ambassador to the GATT who negotiated for the GOI just prior to the completion of the Uruguay Round.

Vandana Shiva, another prominent international figure and author of several books, has been critiquing the WTO since the Dunkel Draft. She is frequently quoted by the international media and engages regularly in international forums that discuss the WTO, the role of corporations and other Indian agriculture issues.<sup>26</sup> She has been an avid spokesperson for the Indian farmer as well as organic and small scale Indian agriculture at an international and national level. She runs her own organisation called *Navdanya*<sup>27</sup> (Interview, Shiva 2005) and is also part of the Indian People's Campaign Against the WTO.

Finally, left economists from JNU such as Jayati Ghosh, C.P. Chandrasekhar and Utsa Patnaik serve as important resource persons for NGOs, social movements and politicians to provide economic critiques against economic liberalisation processes of the Indian economy and analyses of related agrarian problems. Ghosh and Chandrasekhar also run their own think tank called the Economic Research

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25 See for example, Sharma's articles on the CounterCurrents website at [www.counter-currents.org/archive-dsharma.htm](http://www.counter-currents.org/archive-dsharma.htm) and Indiatogether website at [www.indiatogether.org/opinions/dsharma/](http://www.indiatogether.org/opinions/dsharma/)

26 See for example, her interview with the BBC at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith\\_2000/lecture5.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_2000/lecture5.stm)

27 See, [www.navdanya.org](http://www.navdanya.org)

Foundation,<sup>28</sup> which seeks to provide a counter and alternative economic discourse to the dominant neoclassical one in India. Ghosh also provides intellectual inputs to left political parties on economic policy issues and has been on government commissions.<sup>29</sup>

All three are part of a small community of Delhi-based CSOs working with a critical perspective on trade and economic issues at the capital level. There have been successful mutual alliances and also competition among Delhi-based players as they vie for influence over actor-networks within the state bureaucracy, parliamentarians and the policy process. Thus coalition building and collaborative projects have, at times, been difficult amongst Delhi-based groups. However, each of them also have their own networks with parliamentarians, political party leaders, state bureaucrats, farmers movements and CSOs within India and abroad. Through their networks and their analysis, they continue to provide an intellectual base against the dominant push towards economic liberalisation and the dismantling of the state.

Each of these individuals also faces severe time and resource constraints on their ability to engage consistently on advocacy on the AoA and broader issues facing Indian agriculture. With very little staff support, they monitor, write and speak on a wide variety of issues and travel extensively. Thus their capacity to devote consistent attention to either the AoA policy process or the grassroots remains limited. In effect, they try and engage in the given time and resources, and do so through a wide distribution of their discursive material.

#### 4.1.2 Discourse

The discourse that these intellectuals engage in vary from radical messages about the WTO being the 'death knell of Indian farmers' (Navdanya 2003) to more general linkages between problems of liberalisation, EU-US subsidies and impacts of the removal of QRs on Indian farmers.

Shiva, a staunch advocate against the AoA, delivers powerful and emotive messages on the dire consequences of the WTO regime on Indian agriculture:

Indian cotton farmers are losing their livelihoods as a result of both the dumping of heavily-subsidised Texas cotton and costly and unreliable seeds, like Monsanto's genetically-engineered *Bt* cotton. India's inheritance from the WTO rules of trade liberalisation has come in the form of suicides of farmers and starvation deaths.

(Shiva ca. 2004)

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28 See, their websites: [www.macrosan.com/misc/erf.htm](http://www.macrosan.com/misc/erf.htm); [www.networkideas.org/](http://www.networkideas.org/)

29 Most recently, she served as co-Chair on the Commission on Farmers Welfare set up by the Andhra Pradesh (AP) Government to examine the agrarian crisis in AP. Utsa Patnaik served as an advisor. See, Network Ideas Website: [www.networkideas.org/alt/apr2005/alt07\\_Farmers\\_Welfare.htm](http://www.networkideas.org/alt/apr2005/alt07_Farmers_Welfare.htm)

However, this type of framing that links the WTO to suicides and starvation deaths has alienated some journalists who have covered agriculture and trade issues since the Dunkel Draft (Interview, Journalist 2005). They accuse CSOs of 'reaching for the nearest villain' for an agriculture situation that has seen years of state-led mismanagement and through a myriad of other policies (Interview, Murlidharan 2005). They contend that the failure of framing the agrarian problem in a more comprehensive and accurate way has let national policymakers off the hook and highlighted the wrong targets for advocacy (Interview, Journalist 2005; Interview, Murlidharan 2005). One journalist reflects:

I feel in many cases the quality of analysis by NGOs, through the media when they present their case, is a rather shallow analysis. It has been very easy for liberalizers to shoot them down. You construct a whole set of arguments, the opposite side picks on the most egregious things and the whole thing gets shot. I've looked at their material and it is easy to make outrageous claims. I feel like while they have had an impact and continue to have an impact, because fears are always easily built up, but whether they are having any constructive role is debatable.

(Interview, Journalist 2005)

Sharma's most frequent critique of the WTO trade regime is the mounting subsidies of the EU and the US under the AoA's various boxes. Writing widely on a number of agriculture trade issues in India, Sharma has flagged declining commodity prices in states such as Kerala, the decline of the oilseeds sector and the damaging effects that liberalisation has had on Indian agriculture because of the three- to four-fold increase in the food import bill. He is critical of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) pressures on Indian policies to dismantle existing input subsidies to farmers and for dismantling the MSP of the PDS. He blames the phase out of QRs for bringing in cheap imports of skimmed milk powder, edible oils, sugar, tea, apples and coconut (Sharma 2000).

The JNU economist is nuanced in her analysis: 'The AoA is only one of the problems affecting agriculture. The government did lots of things that destroyed farmers in the 1990s. The MSP system is destroyed, regulation of inputs, government inputs, credit schemes, and [the Government] got rid of extension services' (Interview, Ghosh 2005).

Media analysts and some bureaucrats interviewed for this paper critique the 'general' nature of some of their arguments. They insist that the same actors have held the same positions, using the same arguments over many years and this has sidelined them (Interview, Civil Servant 2005; Interview, Journalist 2005; Interview, Murlidharan 2005). 'Over time some [NGOs] get marginalised, or they've overplayed their argument. I can say this with my personal experience. Early, mid-1990s I used to read very carefully what they used to write, now I don't' (Interview, Journalist 2005).

They attribute this to a lack of new and comprehensive information, whether from CSO or academic sources, that could illuminate concrete policy directions in a country as complex as India:

We don't have comprehensive analysis, not just on agriculture, but on specific crops and specific regions on how (and I'm not talking about modeling) 30 years ago we had boring studies of cost of cultivation, what is happening to seed costs, wages. Unless you know what's happening to the structure of output and cost of production, how are you going to say, 'You're going to get wiped out.' And the quality of inputs from academics is not very great either. The stuff we are getting at the Economic and Political Weekly reflects this ... we have a hugely diverse country, we cannot have a single point of analysis, you have to have it for each crop in each state.

(Interview, Journalist 2005)

The framing of the narratives against the WTO has also had impacts on the right advocacy targets, according to some bureaucrats (Interview, Member of Planning Commission 2005; Interview, Civil Servant 2005). For example, Indian trade policymakers have kept the applied tariffs of cotton to 10 per cent which has devastated cotton farmers in Punjab: 'Had [policymakers] consulted with cotton farmers, they would have been able to lower cotton duties on the type that is not grown in India and maintain higher import duties to protect Indian cotton farmers considering the bound rate for cotton in the WTO is 100 per cent' (Interview, Civil Servant 2005).

Implicated in these policy measures are powerful interests of domestic traders (in collusion with state officials) who profit from subsidised cotton imports. Rather than blaming the WTO as the culprit, some contend that advocacy groups could have focused on sub-national and national political processes that are leading to bad trade policy decisions (Interview, Civil Servant 2005).

In contrast, CSO actors engaged in trade advocacy stress that these critiques must be situated in the power and politics of discourse on agriculture and trade (Interview, Ghosh 2005; Interview, Focus 2005a; Interview, Focus 2005d). These CSO actors are advocating for small and marginal farmers and landless labourers who have systemically been neglected by policymakers. They argue that regardless of the quantity and quality of existing empirical evidence, their discourse is considered less legitimate in urban policy circles compared to evidence that supports the proponents of agriculture liberalisation. They contend that lack of political will – not the lack of adequate data – marginalises their discourse. It is this Foucauldian sense of power/knowledge and hence legitimacy of certain discourses over others that has, in turn, shaped the advocacy spaces and strategies of these actors:

Real change in policy will come from mass protest ... I have no illusions that I can change government policy myself or with Focus [on the Global South] ... There is a shortage of mass protest, not data. It is not a shortage of knowledge. I travel extensively, and these women and farmers, they know what has done it ... they knew it all, they may not say it technically ... they talk about input suppliers ... 'we are at the mercy of these middle men, they cheat us in the following way ... I am a woman farmer, I can't access credit anyway ... That even when the crop is failing, prices are low ...' It's not that people aren't there [trying to bring these voices to the Centre], it's that no one is willing to listen to these voices. No one is willing to read [this research]. We can bring it up to the Centre, but who will listen to it?

(Interview, Ghosh 2005)



This reflection also illustrates how the sheer complexity of the technical and legal jargon associated with the AoA creates an epistemic gap between global and local narratives and creates problems in what policymakers consider an ‘informed public debate’ in the trade policy arena. The power difference between the global-local and urban-rural in the trade arena limits the debate to urban intellectuals and marginalises those who do not use the same language. Journalists commented on their own difficulties in simplifying the AoA without distorting it:

There is a basic problem that it is such a complex issue involving law, economics, politics, technology etc that you cannot but make it simplistic when you put it across to citizens. It's not easy, you cannot criticize the Vandana Shivas too much ... Maybe people have deliberately made it this complex that it is hard to have a constructive citizens' debate on this ...

(Interview, Journalist 2005)

This dynamic in the discourse of trade policy creates a tiered system by default, whereby only a handful of actors are able to engage in policy circles and speak the same language, while those who create wider, more sweeping linkages to trade policy impacts are dismissed.

The discussion above highlights four key discursive considerations that impact CSO ability to influence change in trade policy circles. Firstly, their linkage of agrarian problems in India to the WTO is seen at times as too simplistic and overly focused on the WTO by urban media covering the AoA; secondly, their arguments about problems related to liberalisation and agriculture are considered ‘overplayed’, too general and in need of fresh, more targeted empirical evidence that can enable policymakers to take different measures; thirdly, these critiques must be situated in the context of power – their discourse addresses concerns of some of the most marginalised populations in India who have historically been neglected by policy-makers. Thus, CSO actors find that providing empirical evidence alone, no matter how detailed or new, lends little legitimacy to their claims without the necessary political will; fourthly, the spatially distant, exclusive and technical nature of trade discourse presents challenges in broader participation of citizens in the debate since their knowledge is marginalised.

The challenge remains on how to prevent over-simplification of the socio-historical, economic and political processes impacting the grassroots, and at the same time reaching the public in a way that resonates in policy circles. This difference between the global-local discourse and the discursive divide between policy-circles and ordinary rural citizens constrains the ability of these actors to bridge the epistemic gap (Appadurai 1996) between global trade policy processes and the reality of farmers and labourers they are writing about.

### **4.1.3 Spaces and strategies**

Given their own limited capacity as individual actors and the marginalisation of their discourse, Delhi-based CSOs remain primarily on the ‘outside’ of the state’s trade policymaking process, or as some suggest, on ‘a parallel process’ (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming: 26). However, as some of the key intermediaries linking

WTO matters to grassroots struggles, they play an important political role in bringing the concerns of the marginalised to the centre. They flag political concerns and build public opinion in urban policy circles. Their strong critiques on the WTO force a level of answerability from bureaucrats through the political process – whether in the form of a parliamentary standing committee or the progressive elements of the press. They also play a critical mediating role between international and domestic civil society advocacy networks.

Let's also recognise that many of the internationally known NGOs don't have grassroots activists, they basically have people like me. People like Vandana and Devinder are people like me and our interaction with people who are working with the grassroots. I don't want to overplay our role and also underplay it ... it's a very important role doing the linkage and being able to present particular positions or to question whether they are valid or counter theoretical arguments. And all of these aspects need to be dealt with. We need to translate it to something that can be understood, build an empirical argument and bring it back to the society at large.

(Interview, Ghosh 2005)

Moreover, the political realities of policy change in India makes it more effective to influence politicians and parliamentarians rather than bureaucrats: 'The notion of civil society in India is different ... Advocacy groups can do very little here ... India is a very large and complex thing and NGOs are very minor. When political parties push, when a party has this [AoA] on the agenda, then they sit up and listen' (Interview, Ghosh 2005).

Thus their advocacy strategies are to engage in discursive debates and build political opposition against agriculture liberalisation. They inform parliamentarians about policy implications and bring up the voices from the grassroots. They build political alliances with various party leaders, ex-prime ministers and other retired senior officials. Through these networks, they engage with the parliament and the Prime Minister to deliver highly politicised public messages before the trade minister goes to WTO ministerials (Interview, Sharma 2005; Interview, Shiva 2005; Interview, Ghosh 2005; Interview, Sahai 2005).

They write extensively on agriculture and trade and circulate their articles on the internet, their websites and through a mass distribution lists. They also publish through media channels receptive to their discourse and/or are frequently quoted by them. Some, like Ghosh publish columns in left papers on a regular basis (Interview, Ghosh 2005). They frequently speak at universities, CSO events in India and internationally to represent the voices of Indian civil society on agriculture, globalisation and economic liberalisation.

This is part of their effort to build a long term movement against trade liberalisation. At various times, they have tried to ally themselves with farmers movements, served as resource persons to non-politically and politically affiliated farmers movements and attempted to build a broad based political platform of new social movements such as women's groups, environmental groups, indigenous rights groups, agricultural labourers and farmers (Interview, Sharma 2005; Interview, Shiva 2005; Interview, Ghosh 2005). However, because they engage in all of these

activities and more, their ability to devote consistent attention to either policy advocacy or grassroots movement building remains limited.

Thus, Delhi-based intellectuals remain primarily on the outside of the state's bureaucratic processes, though people like Ghosh have served in several government commissions. Their main spaces remain discursive and they all engage in creating new political spaces with political parties and parliamentarians on these issues as time allows. Their advocacy strategies seem to be both short term policy advocacy in Delhi and long term movement building, serving as an intellectual base for CSOs and social movements. People like Shiva have actively sought to create a farmers movement through her organisation's work in various states; while people like Ghosh and Sharma serve more as resource people for social movements.

#### 4.1.4 Conclusion

As intermediaries between the national and international arena, Delhi-based intellectuals play an important role linking grassroots realities to international trade policy. Their discourse has limited them to a left constituency and their impact on direct policy change is limited. However, they occupy an important discursive space that continues to get political attention at strategic moments of the policy process. Their ability and time to work with groups grappling with agriculture issues at the sub-national and grassroots level is limited.

These dynamics have broader implications for activists and their constituencies at the grassroots level. They raise important questions about whether direct citizen action is feasible on global trade policy. It is unrealistic to expect poor farmers and labourers to speak the same language as trade policymakers and policy advocates, yet they have a right to demand that these policies take their wellbeing into account and at the very least, not harm them. Intermediaries in Delhi attempt to make these linkages for policymakers by communicating the impacts of global economic policies to local realities and face critiques of being too simplistic or inaccurate. However, do their narratives help strengthen citizen action on the ground? The next case which looks at mass based organisations addresses some of these questions.

## 4.2 Mass based organisations and citizens' engagement

Mass based organisations of farmers unions and agricultural labourers are the litmus test for citizen engagement on the AoA. Farmers unions such as the BKU and hundreds of groups such as the Animation, Development, Employment and Communication (ADECOM) Network and the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective (TNWC) work with some of the poorest farmers and agriculture labourers (often *dalits* and/or women). They are the reference points of advocates at the national level and for INGOs. The leaders of the mass base (termed 'citizens' in this paper) serve as intermediaries between their own constituencies and city-based NGOs. It is often these constituents that are most marginalised by the state and it is in their name, 'the 600 million people dependent on agriculture',<sup>30</sup> that the GOI frames its trade policy positions on agriculture.

How strong is the linkage between AoA advocacy and the concerns of these mass based organisations? How does their activity impact the state's trade policymaking process and does it lead to citizen action and strengthen grassroots movements?

The analysis below reveals that the mass base is important in politicising the trade policy process and farmers unions continue to be important in this regard because they can mobilise farmers to protest at key moments. However, the case also shows a level of disconnect between the advocacy discourse around the AoA/WTO and the articulated concerns of grassroots constituencies. It thus points to the need for creating deeper and more effective linkages with the grassroots. This affects the creation of new political spaces and strategies of engagement, including greater investment in long term advocacy strategies and the identification of appropriate domestic advocacy targets.

#### 4.2.1 Actor-network

The BKU, as a non-party affiliated farmers' movement, has been the subject of extensive academic research.<sup>31</sup> The 1980s' academic critiques on the BKU ranged from the elite nature of its leadership to debates on whether it actually represented the interest of any but the richest farmers of the Indian north and north-west.<sup>32</sup> According to the BKU, 70 per cent of its farmers own less than two hectares (small farmers) and about 20 per cent own two to five hectares (middle farmers) (Interview, BKU 2005). They do not have agriculture labourers in their constituency and can be at odds with them on many domestic issues. In addition over the last few years, the BKU has made a concerted effort to expand beyond its strongholds in northern India.

The BKU has been active since the late 1970s, but was most prominent in the 1980s with its intense '*rasta roko*'<sup>33</sup> strikes. These would shut down Delhi with half a million farmers marching in demand for fair prices for electricity, water and their crops. While the BKU had once been seen as a powerful *Kulak* or 'green revolution lobby', today it is considered considerably weaker and fragmented (Lindberg 1995).

The BKU's engagement with the WTO began in the early 1990s when its farmers mobilised in protest of the Dunkel Draft against corporate control of seeds and the Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement (Interview, BKU 2005). Campaigning by organisations such as the Gene Campaign, plus individuals such as Vandana Shiva and Devinder Sharma among others, led to mass publicity about the dangers of patent monopolies and other limitations on plant variety protection that may infringe upon farmers' rights to save seeds (Interview, Sahai 2005; Interview, Shiva 2005).

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30 A term often used in Geneva by Indian trade negotiators and in international meetings.

31 See for example, Lindberg (1995).

32 Though beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that agriculture labour interests and those of farmers – rich, middle and small – have always been contentious issues among farmers' movements and the subject of rigorous academic debate (Shah 1990).

33 Hindi for 'block the road'.

Today, the BKU's engagement on the AoA is facilitated primarily by their Delhi-based representative who attends WTO strategy meetings organised by social movements such as VC and NGOs, both internationally and nationally. At these meetings, the representative learns about the latest developments on the WTO talks and coordinates joint actions within the BKU and with other Indian farmers' movements and CSOs.

Efforts to rejuvenate and strengthen a national alliance of non-party affiliated farmers movements is currently underway by the BKU and the *Karnataka Rajya Ryotha Sangha* (KRRS)<sup>34</sup> through the Indian Coordinating Committee of Farmers Movements (ICCFM) (Interview, BKU 2005). The BKU as part of the ICCFM provides the mass base for mobilisations against the AoA, while INGOs such as Focus on the Global South and selected Delhi based intellectuals provide intellectual resources and media support. The BKU has been mobilising its mass base in protests against the AoA since 2001 (Interview, BKU 2005).

Groups such as ADECOM and the TNWC, on the other hand, work with some of the most marginalised populations of agriculture labourers and cultivators in India. The ADECOM Network<sup>35</sup> is based in Pondicherry and its vision is 'to enable the people who are politically, culturally, economically, socially and spiritually depressed to get their rights and to empower them by transforming them from conscientisation stage to participation stage'. The TNWC<sup>36</sup> represents 75,000 women in Tamil Nadu in over 1444 villages. Its mission is to 'empower women through: education and awareness raising; training and skills building; organising and mobilizing women to influence the course of public policies that will affect their daily lives.' Its president, Sheelu Francis, was once an Oxfam member of staff and now serves as an intermediary between these women, who speak Tamil, and the English speaking world.

Both of these groups were represented at a WTO strategy meeting for Asian activists and both have different insights on how their work relates to advocacy on the AoA/agriculture trade. The ADECOM spokesperson did not feel that her constituency could relate to and thus join the struggle against the AoA (Interview, Lalidamballe 2005). On the other hand, Francis saw direct linkages between local conditions her group confronts and global processes. Her group chooses to strengthen local governance as a response and does not engage in policy advocacy on trade at the national level (Interview, Francis 2005).

#### 4.2.2 Discourse

According to the BKU representative, the biggest threat of the AoA is western subsidies. Thus his line to journalists and state officials is:<sup>37</sup>

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34 KRRS is a Karnataka-based farmers movement linked to global networks such as VC.

35 See ADECOM's website at <http://education.vsnl.com/adecom/>

36 See TNWC's website: [www.womencollective.org/](http://www.womencollective.org/)

37 Unless specified, quotations in this next section are from author's participant observation of the BKU regional meeting with district leaders, held in Hardiwar, Uttaranchal, 16–17 June 2005.

Agriculture needs to be out of the WTO. The US is seeking our markets, especially India's. [OECD] subsidies have increased three times since WTO put its base at the 1986–88 level. Prior to elections, Bush said that we have to raise them for our farmers. Why can't our leaders fight for us? They can neither stop [OECD] subsidies, nor can they give us any. For this reason, we want this topic of agriculture out of the WTO.

However, the BKU's discourse regarding the state is equally critical. For instance, the BKU regards the state procurement agency as corrupt and it would like to liberalise the internal market with the guarantee that the MSP system continues (Interview, BKU 2005). It believes that the state is dominated by middlemen in collusion with state-level politicians who control the market – a much similar line to the proponents of liberalisation (Interview, BKU 2005).

The BKU leadership is averse to aligning itself with India's agriculture industry, but it has yet to examine the role that major agribusinesses such as Cargill would play in India's food grain market once privatised internally. Contrary to neoliberal critiques about farmers lobbying for subsidies, the BKU is in favour of removing fertiliser subsidies which it considers benefit the industry more than farmers, provided that the MSP accounts for the rise in price of inputs (Interview, BKU 2005).

While the WTO discourse of the BKU representative is informed and linked to threats of imports on domestic production of its farmers, BKU's district level leaders voice different concerns for their constituencies – ranging from dropping water tables, lack of electricity and indebtedness. Their most repeated complaints were ever-decreasing incomes and rising input costs since they are earning below their cost of production:

WTO can't be understood by villagers, but we can talk about prices. WTO is too complicated to understand at the district and village level. We should create a justice *Panchayat* and link WTO to *mulya suchan* [purchasing power parity]. That when we used to get a certain price for our crops, we used to pay a certain amount for diesel. Now, what is the price we get for our crops and how much do we pay for diesel?

Their comprehension about the AoA is limited and the WTO's link to their own litany of problems remains vague. They thus articulate the need to better understand and build effective linkages between WTO policies and why farmers are being damaged domestically:

[The Delhi Representative] raised the WTO issue, but we have not been able to reach the public. Our comrades also haven't been able to understand. If you say to our farmers about our protest march [against the WTO] they might not understand its importance. But we need to redouble our efforts on the WTO. Our next generations' future is at stake. We need booklets on why the WTO hurts us. We have all these credit cards, *shakti* [strength] cards for farmers now, so that we can be in debt, but if we look at the state of our farmers, then I would say we need to protest to the degree that every village and villager knows and protests vigorously.

The WTO meant a lot of different things to farmers at the *Haridwar* rally. For one, it was: '... that rule where you can't grow what you want and we need to straight-

en this out in Delhi.' The WTO was also associated with their current problems related to corporate farming and large companies taking over land, with *Bt* cotton, lack of control over seeds, or what they grow. Some of these associations were remnants of the TRIPs campaigns in the early 1990s.

Groups that work with agricultural labourers revealed concerns about unemployment, a significant decrease in farm labour work due to mechanisation, decreasing wages in relation to decreasing commodity prices in large sectors such as tea, copra and spices. They also struggled with reverse tenancy and corporate leasing of land resulting in an increase of agriculture labourers and landlessness (Interview, Lalidamballe 2005; Interview, Francis 2005). For some of these groups such as ADECOM, the linkage of the AoA and trade policy to their own problems was not clear:

Yes, I understand in general it affects the people, but when we get to the regional level, how does it relate to the regional policies? They [NGOs] are doing it at their level at international level. They are talking about Cancun struggle and Davos meeting, Doha incident.<sup>38</sup> But people are not talking about our local issues. These are international conflicts, but we should link those with our local issues. Then we have time and commitment towards it.

(Interview, Lalidamballe 2005)

On the other hand, for Francis of TNWC, the linkages were clearly linked to greater trade liberalisation within India and the removal of QRs, but her response was to strengthen local level activism and understanding:

After 2000, we have begun to see a difference. Now, liberalisation has created imports of machines – mechanisation in construction and in agriculture. With QRs, rubber was affected after one year, coconut, pepper, all the spices, tea was most affected. Tea plantation workers in Kerela are migrants and *dalits* and there's no alternative to this [employment]. Plantation owners left and ran away without paying 67 lakh rupees of electricity bills in the Western Ghats [Tamil Nadu]. We felt this immediately after the QRs were lifted. Tea plantation workers went on a big strike. They were on the road protesting for weeks when their pay came down from 128 rupees to 75 [from a little over \$3 to less than \$2]. *Dalits* protested and 13 were shot and killed.

(Interview, Francis 2005)

In Francis' experience, the impact of various liberalisation measures has literally been a matter of life and death for the poorest. The problems with tea and spices have resulted from India's Free Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka and keeping applied rates low for certain commodities such as soya bean oil has much to do with the power of urban consumer interests. Cheap sugar that created a crisis among sugar farmers came from a bilateral deal with Pakistan, palm oil which destroyed the edible oil producers came from Malaysia, but often the discourse around QRs and agricultural trade liberalisation in India is broadly labeled under the rubric of the

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38 Reference to WTO ministerial meetings and other international economic fora.

WTO. This type of framing highlights the WTO instead of national processes and politics that are responsible for such trade policy decisions. It therefore lets certain state actors and political processes off the hook. For example, the Commerce Ministry unilaterally kept many applied tariffs low in spite of high bound rates at the WTO after removing QRs.

The refrain from the BKU farmers points to the need for better tools to understand how WTO policies are linked to declining commodity prices and rising input costs. As the ADECOM leader stresses, a disproportionate focus on the WTO may disconnect intermediaries from support of grassroots constituencies. It may hinder a deeper understanding of the differential impacts of India's WTO commitments, unilateral trade decisions and other economic policies relevant to farmers and labourers. This can then hinder the identification of proper advocacy targets for their own struggles.

The BKU and ADECOM examples show that disconnects exist between the concerns of the real mass base and the intermediaries that work with or reference these citizens in their work on the AoA. While intermediaries genuinely see connections between the ideology that the AoA espouses and processes of external liberalisation, these linkages remain unclear to those impacted by these policies on the ground. Many in their mass base have not grasped why the WTO might be relevant to their own struggles. This prevents some grassroots groups from getting involved in the advocacy debate on the AoA and/or agriculture trade liberalisation.

Meanwhile, the narratives of citizens in all three groups reflect the drastic impact that various national and sub-national policy measures can have on the lives of people with whom they work. Many of their problems are related to unilateral trade and economic policy decisions taken by the GOI rather than mandated by the WTO. The TNWC's response to this has been to focus on and strengthen leadership at the grassroots level and build a long term movement to strengthen local responses to these various policies impacting their lives. A part of their work entails gaining a better understanding on how various macroeconomic policies are affecting them. (Interview, Francis 2005)

#### **4.2.3 Spaces and strategies**

The framing of the debate on the AoA and trade liberalisation determine the spaces and advocacy strategies these groups utilise. The main medium of advocacy for the BKU is mass rallies and protests that are geared towards state-level ministers of legislative assembly (MLAs) and MPs at the national level. In the past, the BKU has been able to align political parties and MPs on specific issues such as raising tariffs of certain edible oils after the removal of QRs through the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture (Interview, BKU 2005).

At the same time, the BKU no longer has the power to draw mass numbers of farmers for its protests as it once did in the 1980s. This is exacerbated by the fact that many of its organisers have a shallow understanding of the WTO and do not necessarily consider it to be their highest priority. The disconnects between policy



advocacy on the WTO and long term advocacy on trade liberalisation has led to problems in mobilising constituencies and perhaps even missing important national targets.

For example, during the G20 ministerial meeting hosted by India in March 2005, the BKU brought around 30,000 farmers to protest on a Saturday when government offices were closed (Interview, BKU 2005). The English press reported it as a traffic nuisance (Interview, Focus 2005b). The next day, 30–40 BKU leaders engaged in a physical confrontation at the barricades of the ministerial meeting. This led to press coverage of the G20 ministerial declaration being burned and an eventual promise by the Indian trade minister to meet with them (Interview, Focus 2005b). These actions give a strong political message to the Commerce Ministry about where farmers groups stand on external trade liberalisation. This is reflected in GOI's more protective stance on agriculture than other issues within the WTO.

However according to some, a mobilisation of 30,000 people is very small for any kind of political impact in India (Focus 2005c).

We used to get five lakh [500,000] farmers on the streets in Delhi in the 80s. That was a shattering experience in central Delhi and the reaction of the elite and governing classes was overwhelming. Now, despite greater devastation [in agriculture], why that hasn't happened is perplexing. And no amount of NGO activity in a country this big is going to make a difference in policy making like that does.

(Interview, Ghosh 2005)

In the June 2005 BKU meeting, the Delhi representative asked district level organisers to bring their constituencies for another mass protest to block imports at the Mumbai port in October. The goal was to send a strong political message to the GOI before it headed to the WTO's sixth ministerial in Hong Kong.

However, choosing between WTO related advocacy and other issues of relevance to farmers presents trade-offs for movements with limited resources. While their energies were focused on WTO related events, other important political events at the national level were overlooked. For instance, there were no farmer protests at the National Development Council (NDC) meeting where chief ministers from every state sat with the Planning Commission to review economic growth and revise the country's five-year development plan. This event received wide press coverage because of the NDC's findings that the agriculture sector's growth was even lower than previous years and is seriously impacting the growth projections for the Indian economy as a whole (*Times of India* 2005). The Planning Commission and the NDC are the key institutional links between the Centre and the states in the Indian federal system and can help determine targets for public investment in agriculture. The lack of civil society advocacy and farmers groups at this event raises questions about whether these groups have a more comprehensive advocacy strategy on agriculture policy or whether it is primarily geared towards the WTO? It also raises questions about whether their advocacy strategies align with the priorities of the mass base itself?

As economic restructuring creates differentiated changes based on different international, national and sub-national policies, the BKU faces genuine challenges

in long term advocacy planning around the needs of its union members. Moreover, the complexity of how different agriculture policies differentially impact groups of farmers within the Union adds further challenges in organising around any one issue. This has created concerns about how to do long term popular education and movement building around agriculture issues for farmers unions:

Long term movements have peaks and now we want to revive and reorganise. Before, we didn't understand the issues so much and we didn't have to worry about international problems. We could fight on some basic problems like electricity, but now, the WTO is more complicated and it seems so far away. The issues are much more difficult to explain. So movements find it harder to understand. Internal liberalisation has been beneficial to farmers, mustard in Rajasthan can be sold in Uttar Pradesh. Wheat from Punjab can be sold in Tamil Nadu. The difficulty with foreign liberalisation is subsidies.

(Interview, BKU 2005)

Finally, farmers' movements continue to be skeptical of extensive involvement with advocacy groups for fear of being misused by them. As a result, the BKU does not have many resources to build popular education tools for its members and relies on newspapers and organisations such as Focus and Delhi-based groups to give them information and provide a level of analysis (Interview, BKU 2005). They remain skeptical about too close an affiliation with NGOs: 'A lot of people talk to us without having a mass base – so I need to know what their intention is. We don't want to be misused. And if the intentions are clear, we would work with them, we join their platform. We invite them' (Interview, BKU 2005).

For groups working with agricultural labourers such as the TNWC, the response has been to strengthen local governance and to work with women leaders in understanding processes of globalisation that affect them. 'Things aren't going to change, so we have to block MNCs [multinational corporations] entering our *panchayat*. That's why we are training women in leadership and with all this information. And training them on AoA and WTO – they are relevant' (Interview, Francis 2005).

#### 4.2.4 Conclusion

This case illustrates that advocacy around the WTO and agriculture trade liberalisation is tied to Geneva-based processes such as the G20 ministerial meeting in Delhi or the Hong Kong Ministerial. The emphasis has been on mobilising for protest to get media and political attention of trade policymakers and to warn them about the political repercussions of making the wrong decisions on their behalf. However, this section also shows that this has entailed trade-offs in terms of other domestic advocacy targets and the meaningful involvement of grassroots constituencies in a way that supports their own local struggles. Some groups have chosen to engage specifically at the local level and strengthen local responses to broader national and global processes instead. Their own capacity forces them to make strategic decisions about whether they will become involved locally or more globally.

Farmers and agricultural labourers are disconnected in many ways to advocacy on the AoA. The disconnect raises important questions for long term movement

building on liberalisation processes and empowerment of such groups for citizen action on trade and economic policies that impact them. On the other hand, many grassroots groups are working to strengthen local organisations in an effort to build a long term grassroots movement against the various factors that impact their localities. However, an exclusively local emphasis will inhibit the ability to create a broader national movement for policy change. The challenge in AoA advocacy appears to be in identifying the types of policies and processes that citizens would like to see enacted at the national and regional levels that redress problems faced by the marginalised, and which in turn, shape India's global policies on agriculture and trade.

### **4.3 Focus on the global south, India programme: a synthesis case on AoA advocacy and citizen engagement**

Focus India provides a synthesis of the challenges that advocacy groups face in influencing the state's policy process and creating real citizens' engagement on agriculture and trade policies in India. It highlights the dilemmas advocacy groups confront in prioritising between advocacy strategies geared towards long term goals of changing economic paradigms, versus short term policy advocacy targeting the WTO. Based on what motivates political change in India they choose between various activities such as lobbying and action research, versus mobilisation of mass based groups.

However, policy advocacy entails problems of 'representation' and organising at the grassroots entails a long term commitment with communities. Citizen action may or may not conform to the pace at which trade policy is made. Long term grassroots organising also entails confronting multi-layered and historical sources of unequal power relations that are not related to the AoA. CSOs are thus forced to prioritise between their activities given their own limited capacity and resources. This limits their influence both with the state and in facilitating citizen action. The Focus study illustrates these challenges.

#### **4.3.1 Actor-network**

Focus is a Bangkok-based international advocacy and 'research, policy analysis and activist organisation' with offices in Geneva, the Philippines and India (Focus 2005).<sup>39</sup> It engages both at the global and the grassroots levels and both with NGOs and mass based organisations. Focus is part of several transnational advocacy networks countering the WTO and sides with VC on getting WTO out of agriculture in favour of food sovereignty. At the grassroots, it seeks to 'serve as an intellectual and practical resource for movements' (Interview, Bello 2005).

Its WTO-related work in India began in 2000 from their Mumbai Office in Maharashtra (Interview, Focus 2005a). Focus collaborates with both Delhi-based groups and mass based organisations on WTO matters and links with groups such

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39 See also the Focus on the Global South Website at [www.focusweb.org/index.php](http://www.focusweb.org/index.php)

as the BKU and KRRS in promoting this position within India. The India Programme's work has not only entailed working on the AoA, but also the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Equally it has not only worked on the WTO but also the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Currently, Focus has a programme staff of 3.5 persons<sup>40</sup> working on economic policy issues. This includes the recent hire of a full-time employee to work on agriculture policies (Interview, Focus 2005b).

### 4.3.2 Discourse

Headed by renowned political activist, academic and writer, Walden Bello,<sup>41</sup> Focus has a clear line to 'end economic globalisation', defined as the integration of production and markets (Interview, Bello 2005). In order to do so, its economic policy programmes target institutions that embody this neoliberal paradigm – the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF and the ADB. Bello's long term vision is to 'defang the WTO' in order to create a 'pluralistic system of global economic governance' where other UN bodies are strengthened to provide checks and balances and 'developmental space' for developing countries (Focus 2005; Interview, Bello 2005).

Focus's public discourse is hard-hitting against any possibilities of reform of the WTO: 'The "July Framework Agreement" is the last nail in the coffin of the illusion that the WTO can somehow be reformed, either piecemeal or comprehensively, to serve the interests of developing countries' (Focus 2005). Its short term political strategy was to derail the 6th Ministerial conference in Hong Kong with the hopes that a third failure of a WTO ministerial may 'permanently cripple' the organisation (Focus 2005).

Though Focus advocates for the 'WTO out of agriculture' position in policy circles, how to frame the discourse on agriculture and trade, and link it to the WTO remains a challenge in its work with social movements in the Indian context.

The question of agriculture is such a huge, long drawn-out, centuries-old issue, in this country. You talk about land distribution, irrigation, ownership, fertiliser, social relations, caste, these issues are how old? So to enter that discourse, to bring this in as an important part of the discourse, to bring that in is the challenge, and how it actually impacts ... It's also a process of learning for not just Focus but others as well, to bring people together to make an approach and to bring the voice of the people above. So we can't go there [to the grassroots] with prepared texts. We can say these are the things we know about, but what are the issues you're worried about, otherwise it's highly unlikely you'll get anywhere besides being patronising.

(Interview, Focus 2005d)

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40 Since 2002 the acting director of the India Programme has been in the process of handing over responsibilities to the new director. This accounts for the 'half person'.

41 See Bello (2005).

However, this has been challenging in practice. Focus's political objectives and discourse on trade and agriculture are linked to Geneva-based processes and the WTO, and the organisation supports broader grassroots peasant struggles related to food sovereignty. As the next section shows, this creates challenges for its advocacy strategies and its work at the grassroots level in India.

### 4.3.3 Spaces and strategies

Focus engages both on the 'inside' with state actors in Geneva to 'push for progressive positions ... and overload the agenda at the WTO' and on the 'outside' with social movements (Interview, Bello 2005). Both Focus India directors believe that political mobilisation and 'building public opinion' rather than lobbying is the way to create political change on the WTO in India (Interview Focus 2005a; Focus 2005d). In the past, this has created tensions within the India office on the trade-offs between policy advocacy utilising lobbying and empirical evidence, versus mobilisation in the form of mass protests, media work and civil society alliances around strategic moments related to the WTO (Interview, Focus 2005c).

Their work with mass based organisations also highlights the trade-offs between mobilisation as a short term political opportunity, versus mobilisation as part of long term organising from the grassroots. This creates challenges for Focus in terms of reconciling its WTO related advocacy goals with the struggles of grassroots groups with whom they work. It also reveals the conflicts that short term advocacy around the WTO can bring within communities.

As part of Focus's overall strategy to derail the 6th WTO Ministerial, the national level priorities suggested to activists were to 'concentrate on building up comprehensive national mass campaigns against the July Framework ... getting NGOs working on the WTO to work more closely with trade unions, farmers' groups and other social movements' (Focus 2005). These strategies also included lobbying with legislators, doing media work, putting pressure on government officials 'at critical junctures' of the Geneva Process (Focus 2005).

As part of this work, Focus India has spent a lot of its staff time alliance building between various CSOs and creating joint advocacy platforms with mass based organisations (Interview, Focus 2005a; Focus 2005d). Focus was one of the key organisers of the joint CSO meeting around the March G20 Ministerial and mobilisation in Delhi. It also helped draft the 'People's Agenda Against the WTO' (Focus 2005b) presented to Ministers at the meeting.

Given its limited staff, Focus' long term work with grassroots and mass based organisations has been localised with the KRRS in Karnataka (where the former director was based), and in Maharashtra (where Focus India is based), with networks such as the *Jameen Jungle Pani Lokadhikar Andolan* (JJPLA), a coalition of 25 grassroots organisations that is 'a people's rights movement for land forest and water' resources (Surve, no date).

However, Focus has struggled internally on the most appropriate strategy on its WTO work. For one former staff member, lobbying with various state officials and building their capacity was more strategic on the WTO process. He felt that not clear enough linkages existed between struggles of the grassroots and the WTO.

He believed that Focus's approach was too ideological and disconnected to the ground reality of people, and thus long term mobilisation was difficult.

Unless you can convince people that their reality in their village, with the local *baniya* [lender] is somehow linked with the WTO, why would they listen ... Ideology will only provide you a framework of analysis, but whether it can appropriately interpret a given situation is the test.

(Interview, Focus 2005c)

In contrast, Focus India directors had concerns about a 'negotiation approach' with the state because they do not feel that they can represent grassroots constituencies (Interview, Focus 2005d). Rather than forwarding specific policy proposals in their name, they felt that Focus should confront the state with grassroots concerns and hold the government accountable to their critiques (Interview, Focus 2005d). As a political activist and organiser for over 20 years herself, the new director also favoured the idea of grassroots organising over spending time engaging with state officials:

To convince movements, to get a groundswell of movements is not an easy process and really speaking it's just begun, who has done it? To go to various district level people, that's where it starts on the ground. At the government level, it's only the bureaucrats. But even the bureaucrats are saying that 'things are going out of our hands.'

(Focus 2005d)

However, Focus's grassroots organising has also met with challenges and contradictions in the countryside. For instance, Focus helped organize a *yatra* (march/mobilisation) with JJPLA across several districts in Western Maharashtra around the WTO Cancun Ministerial in 2003. The goal was to raise awareness on the WTO with grassroots communities and at the same time raise the political profile in Maharashtra on problems associated with liberalisation and the WTO. The event attempted to create linkages on three different issues of relevance to these communities such as rights over natural resources, employment loss and food security and link it to the WTO and World Bank processes (Interview, Focus 2005c).

Planning the event created strategic problems for Focus because only the larger farmers linked to the market had an opinion about WTO impacts, while the more marginalised communities did not feel that it pertained to their lives:

So, if I go to Western Maharashtra and tell the sugarcane growers that you are using too much water, they will tell me to go away, but if you tell them sugar prices are falling and that your prices are going down because of EU subsidies, they will join in on the anti-WTO call. But the issue with social movements is that they are against class and caste, so class then gets to be an issue [difficulty in working with upper classes]. But if you ally with these farmers you can go anti-WTO ... What has touched the more marginalised today is privatisation and liberalisation, the WTO has not. You can link it but you can't stretch it beyond a point, then you delink it.

(Interview, Focus 2005c)

According to a JJPLA organiser, this event created conflicts in the communities where they mobilised:

In a lot of areas, there was a conflict between the bigger farmers and small farmers ... big farmers had their own meetings and we had our own. It was a tense atmosphere in the village and they were telling us that we are giving them bad information ... many were interested in the global market and they said 'you are trying to make a loss for us ...' We talked to them and shared with them the fact that many consignments [of grain] came back [because they did not meet international standards] and that even if you sold half price in the village, you would get the same price in the global market ... A lot of this information we got from websites and newspapers and the information support from Focus.

(Interview, Kadam 2005)

This conflict highlights the struggle between short term strategies of awareness building around WTO events, versus long term engagement on these issues with communities. Preventing such conflicts would entail a sustained dialogue and debate on these issues with communities and hence a long term physical presence in these communities. This requires staff time, resources, follow-up and a deliberate choice to engage on a long term basis. At JJPLA, there is one person serving as a link to grassroots communities on these issues and he, in turn, relies on Focus for much of the globalisation related material. Focus is also short staffed. As a result, follow-up is missing: 'we don't have enough people explaining it in simple language ... The expert support we need is less ... Even [X] from Focus, he has one foot here in Maharashtra and one in Delhi, they are too few and they have too many responsibilities on them' (Interview, Kadam 2005).

#### **4.3.4 Conclusion**

The Focus India programme exhibits the dilemmas faced by groups engaged in AoA advocacy in a country as complex and large as India. Focus straddles engagement with the state and the grassroots. Focus critiques GOI's trade policy and thus prefers to build public opinion from the 'outside' and in conjunction with people's organisations and the grassroots rather than promote policy proposals. It continues to grapple with how to link the global discourse on the WTO with the complexity of agrarian problems within India.

Finally, Focus's advocacy is linked to WTO processes and other global institutions and this creates problems for its movement building work within communities. Given its limited resources and staff, it is forced to make strategic choices for its space of engagement; whether to influence trade ministers through media events such as the G20 Ministerial meeting in Delhi, or through longer and sustained organising at the grassroots level. These choices create trade-offs between Focus's goals of influencing and changing AoA/WTO policy processes and its desire to work with grassroots groups and support their struggles.

## 4.4 Corporate advocacy and the state: the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII)

The final case serves as a contrast to the previous three. The agenda of the CII represents the interest of the private sector and industrial agriculture, rather than that of farmers or labourers. The difference in CII's discourse, spaces and strategies illuminates the power and influence that this actor-network possesses as compared to the others.

The CII and other industry associations are increasingly playing a critical role in influencing the GOI position on the WTO and the AoA. While typically concerned about manufacturing and trade in services, certain members of the CII have a keen and growing interest in the agribusiness and agro-processing sector. This case shows how CII's political power, combined with its collaborative approach with the state, makes it a force to be reckoned with.

### 4.4.1 Actor-network

As one of the most powerful industry associations in India, some researchers (for example, Pederson 2000) credit CII as being a critical influence in the 1991 government's launching of neoliberal economic reforms. Its membership reveals major international and national agribusiness and agro-based industries such as Dupont, Monsanto and Tata, as well as retail and agro-food processing outfits interested in developing markets for meat, fisheries, fruits, vegetables and value added food products (CII 2005). The goal of these companies is to build a market for and cater to the wealthier Indian urban middle class and foreign countries (Interview, CII 2005; CII 2004a).

In order to create legitimacy for its position with farmers and politicians, the CII funds the Indian Farmers and Industry Alliance (IFIA). Primarily run by one individual named Chengal Reddy, this group boasted (at the time of writing) of having 135 farm leaders as part of the 'confederation of Indian Farmers Associations' (IFIA 2005). Reddy has also created a 'Parliament Members Farmers Forum' that hopes to educate MPs on agriculture policies (FFA 2006a).

The IFIA's objective is to represent issues of concern to farmers associated with the IFIA and agriculture/agro-based industries before 'the Government of India, Planning Commission, Financial Institutions, Members of Parliament, Intellectuals, international organisations and others in order to develop favorable policies, obtain resources, build infrastructure and initiate other appropriate measures' (FFA 2006b).

### 4.4.2 Discourse

As section three shows, liberalisation is supported by some of the most powerful decision makers in the central government. CII's agribusiness interests support the view that India is an international competitor and a surplus agriculture producer domestically. CII encourages a shift in India's defensive stance on the AoA to an offensive one that seeks northern countries' subsidy reduction and their markets. This is because, 'India is inherently an agriculture superpower with fertile soil and the right agro-climatic conditions' (CII 2004b).



It believes that if the GOI provides the right incentives for private investment and diversification of agriculture production, CII businesses can create a market for value added food products for the Indian market and abroad (Interview, CII 2005). Its demands from the Indian government are therefore 'security of land, security of crop and security of output' for the private sector (CII 2004a).

Specifically it lobbies the GOI: (1) to push states to abolish the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act<sup>42</sup> in all Indian states so that businesses are 'free to buy at market determined prices and free to buy from anywhere' (CII 2004a: 4); (2) to create 'incentives' for industry to invest in agriculture extension, provide services such as 'finance, soil testing, price advice and technology' (CII 2004a: 4), such as the provision of seeds, tractors, and fertiliser and; (3) to create more public-private partnerships (contracts) in agriculture development (CII 2004a: 4). The goal is to increase consumption of processed food over food production, with the logic that 'the most efficient producer should be allowed to sell at the lowest price' (CII 2004a: 4). On the trade front, CII is pushing for greater liberalisation of the retail sector and on certain commodities where it has manufacturing members, for example, in the edible oil sector.

#### 4.4.3 Spaces and strategies

CII is an 'invited' insider by the Government. The Commerce Department regularly consults with the association. Its members are part of NTAC and its representatives, along with the other two industry associations, have been on the official GOI trade delegation at WTO Ministerials since Seattle (Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming). They are the only non-state actors allowed on the GOI delegation.

With a physical presence in Geneva, Delhi and in major cities across India, CII works on the 'inside' with various levels of the Government, including the states (Interview, CII 2005). In addition, because its members are both transnational and national businesses, it is backed by both global and national capital.

CII has positioned itself as a 'partner' to the government, where it plays a collaborative role with state officials in building their capacity on various issues of interest to its members (Pederson 2000; CII 2005). It creates new spaces to engage with the government and the financial media through seminars, private meetings and dinners. Its advocacy strategy has focused on lobbying, educating the media and providing detailed research on various policies of the GOI. This entails tracking policy interests on a state by state level through its various regional offices, including the precise percentages of excise duties and identifying its own targets for GOI's fiscal budget and distributing these publications to officials (Interview, CII 2005). Thus, it has numerous policy objectives and numerous targets and resources to achieve those objectives.

With the IFIA, and the Parliamentary Forum, the CII is also attempting to create a joint political platform of farmers and industry to gain legitimacy with politicians for

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42 It is an act that allows the APMC of each state to set up and regulate a market where agriculture commodities are traded.

its agriculture position. Without a viable 'farmers' constituency, it has less leverage with parliamentarians. With ample rhetoric about empowering farmers, Chengal Reddy appeals to groups like the BKU, gathers contacts of individual farmers attending these meetings and invites them to special conferences to entice them in creating joint industry-farmer proposals.<sup>43</sup> BKU leaders dismiss Reddy's attempt at co-opting them at the moment, but they may be underestimating the power of such a front group in policymaking circles.

#### 4.4.4 Conclusion

The CII is highly influential as a major political interest group for the private sector and holds a powerful position in relation to the GOI compared to other CSOs. CII has positioned itself as a collaborator and partner to the state and also contrasts with the other CSO actors in terms of its financial resources, and precise policy objectives. While CII has a moderate position on the AoA, it has clearly identified and advocates for specific and sweeping policy changes at the domestic level. If accepted, these policies are much more likely to change the way the agrarian sector functions than what is currently being negotiated at the WTO.

Moreover, CII is financially secure and more powerful than other non-state actors engaged on the WTO because it subscribes to the dominant discourse on trade liberalisation. The fact that it works on numerous targets at the national and sub-national levels distinguishes it from the other groups advocating on agriculture and trade policy in India who are either primarily focused on WTO related processes or specifically on local issues. While CII articulates what it wants in terms of agriculture and trade policy, CSO advocates are more united on what they do not want.

## 5 Conclusion

The central question asks how CSO advocacy influences India's trade policy process regarding the AoA and what this means for real citizen engagement on these issues? The five cases presented in this paper show that apart from industry associations, other CSOs have little *direct* influence on the GOI process. However, CSO advocacy *indirectly* affects the trade policy process to the extent that their efforts mobilise political parties and politicians to demand accountability for trade decisions taken in Geneva. As a result, CSOs advocacy on the AoA is primarily relegated to making political noise around key decision making moments of the WTO. Nonetheless, CSO advocates continue to play an important intermediary role in linking the global discourse on the AoA and economic liberalisation with the agrarian crises in India. They remain critical in providing a counter-discourse to the current wisdom in policy circles that favours trade liberalisation.

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43 Based on author's participant observation of the BKU regional meeting held in Hardiwar, Uttaranchal, 16–17 June, 2005.

These four cases illustrate how advocacy in India on global trade and agriculture is shaped by agency of actor-networks, their discourse and the spaces and strategies they utilise. The four have different access and legitimacy with the state and in relation to each other and they impact the policymaking process in different ways.

Apart from the CII, few of the others are 'invited' to participate in formal spaces that the GOI accords to the trade policy process. Therefore, power/knowledge in trade policy is skewed against mass based organisations of farmers and marginalised populations such as *dalits* and women peasant groups. Marginalisation of certain voices while inviting the inputs of others is particularly relevant since the trade policy process systemically suffers from a lack of representation (see section two). As unelected officials have enormous power in forging trade policy positions without formal parliamentary scrutiny and with very little public debate, being 'inside' allows much greater influence into the process.

This ensures that actors such as the CII – who are seen as legitimate stakeholders in trade policy – have greater direct power in the policy process, while mass based organisations who depend more on the political process of parliamentarians and political parties have to use indirect means to pressure the trade policy machinery.

Thus, CSO actors and their alliances create and use political spaces which draw on key politicians, party leaders and parliamentarians to build political pressure on the Department of Commerce and the Prime Minister. Section three shows however that so far the knowledge and involvement of parliament has been limited. Moreover, at the sub-federal level politicians also remain uninvolved in the process. This is an arena that remains under-utilised in trade advocacy.

CSO actors use both mainstream media and their own alternative media sources to build and sustain a counter discourse against agriculture trade liberalisation. Through this process they are able to keep a public debate in spite of the dearth of CSO intermediaries advocating against the AoA in Delhi.

Debates on the credibility of CSO discourses, the lack of political will by the state and the lack of appropriate empirical data demonstrate the complex relationship between knowledge, power and legitimacy. They illustrate how power is situated in this politics of discourse and whose evidence counts. Apart from the CII which subscribes to the dominant pro-liberalisation discourse, all other actors critique the state on its approach to liberalisation and the AoA. This marginalises them with powerful actors in the bureaucracy and the financial media who remain skeptical of these critiques. However, their discourse remains critical in keeping the debate alive within political circles in Delhi and in galvanising attention from political parties and parliamentarians.

On the other hand, questions arise as to the appropriate framing of narratives that link the domestic agriculture crises to the WTO. Media more receptive to alternative critiques dismiss the oversimplified framing of narratives that blame the WTO for many of the problems associated with liberalisation. They also believe that in the midst of competing discourses, some much needed empirical evidence is missing entirely from both sides. Thus in addition to power, the accuracy of CSO discourse has a bearing in how seriously the media takes these claims. CSO advocates contend that empirical evidence exists but is dismissed – stressing the more hidden and pervasive forms of power that marginalise certain knowledge over others.

Most advocacy actors create autonomous spaces outside and in parallel to the formal and ‘invited’ spaces of trade policymakers. They use strategies linked to policy advocacy such as lobbying politicians, alliance building and mobilising around WTO related processes and events. Mass based groups attempt to mobilise a large number of farmers to WTO related rallies. This has not necessarily resulted in a deeper understanding of how the WTO is linked to their local problems.

CSO strategies currently focus on the WTO and the AOA as the most visible forms of power that marginalise farmers and workers. The cases also show that CSO actors choose to engage limitedly in other spaces. For instance, there is little engagement with other ministries, either at the central level or at the sub-national level on these issues. Their decision to disengage with different parts of the bureaucracy appears to be related to the idea of ‘representation’. CSO intermediaries do not feel comfortable proposing policies on behalf of others. In addition, there is a strong consensus that working with politicians is a more effective political strategy in the Indian context. Engagement at the sub-federal level seems to be linked to resource limitations.

Meanwhile, many local groups are tackling the more ‘hidden’ and ‘invisible’ dimensions of power. They tend to focus on building leadership skills and capacity at the grassroots level to deal with impacts of globalisation in their communities. They thus remain removed from policy advocacy at the national level.

Advocacy groups mediating between global trade policies and local impacts face the challenge of addressing policy linkages across global, national and local spaces; navigating the disparate discourses within these spaces and developing appropriate strategies for political action. These factors present several dilemmas for citizen engagement. For instance, how do groups reconcile between strategic policy advocacy related to issues such as the AOA, versus the longer term vision of advocacy that is rooted in broader agrarian grassroots struggles? How do groups confront issues of representation and mediation when dealing with lobbying and mobilisation? How do they integrate global and local discourses on agriculture and trade in a way that reflects grassroots realities and has impact on policy processes, and what can capacity constraints of advocacy groups tell us about the trade-offs of different strategies? The next section concludes with these challenges and its implications for citizen engagement.

## 6 Challenges for advocacy and citizen engagement

‘... advocacy is not just about policy change; it is about changing the culture and process of politics.’

(VeneKlasen and Miller 2002)

After WTO’s Hong Kong Ministerial in December 2005, *Financial Times* journalist Guy de Jonquieres suggested that the WTO needs *less* participation and inclusion,

not more (De Jonquieres 2006). According to him, special interests and too much media and civil society actors prevent governments from taking necessary measures to liberalise their economies. This worldview is grounded in the discourse that economic liberalisation is the key to economic growth within countries and to the overall economic wellbeing of citizens therein. Global trade policy is bound to have winners and losers within each country and the role of the state therefore is to overlook special interests for the overall benefit for its citizens, which the state is in the best position to judge.

Social activists not only challenge this 'knowledge', but also the process by which these decisions are made. They contend that many of the losers are citizens who are already marginalised and poor and that the process of global economic policy-making exacerbates exclusion and inequality. Moreover, global trade policymaking processes sidestep domestic accountability by superceding existing democratic structures such as parliaments. In most countries, parliaments remain aloof of the intricacies of global trade negotiations. Section three substantiates this since the Indian parliament and sub-federal levels of government remain largely outside of trade policy processes within India, though have the potential to create accountability. It also shows how the agency of individual actors in Geneva and Delhi drive the policy process and are legitimised within the dominant discursive framework within which trade policy is made.

Exclusion is also exacerbated in this arena by the complex nature of the trade policy discourse which limits debate to well educated elites who carefully monitor these processes and policies. Attempts to link these policies to negative impacts on the ground are largely delegitimised. The exclusive nature of global trade policymaking and the physical spaces where it is discussed makes it unlikely that direct citizen engagement in trade policy advocacy can occur, especially by the poor and un-educated living in rural areas.

However the UN, under the tenets of social, cultural and economic rights, acknowledges that citizens have a right to participate in economic decisions that impact their wellbeing and that governments must ensure that these rights are not only protected, but promoted. In participation literature, citizenship means 'not only choosing officials and using the system; citizenship involves making and shaping the system's structures and rules' (VeneKlasen and Miller 2002: 30). Advocacy struggles to facilitate this type of citizenship.

Indian farmers and labourers, at a time of declining agriculture growth and major economic restructuring, face numerous problems linked and unlinked from WTO policies. Is it realistic then to expect that WTO advocacy can stem from grassroots citizen action and speak to citizens' needs? What do the case studies on CSO advocacy on the AoA tell us about facilitating citizen engagement of farmers groups and agriculture labourers? These case studies reveal four major challenges for CSOs in creating such citizen engagement in India.

## 6.1 Actor-networks: the role of intermediaries and managing representation of citizens

Firstly, they show that trade related advocacy necessitates intermediaries and 'mediation' between policymakers and citizens. In India, there is a dearth of intermediaries that engage on trade policy issues on behalf of citizens. This in turn poses problems about 'representation' and the legitimacy of intermediaries. Political impact on agrarian issues in India requires a large scale mobilisation of the mass base. However, this direct engagement can only occur through sustained efforts of intermediaries deepening the linkages between the mass base and global processes. The tension between the role of intermediaries in global-local processes and 'representation' is a real challenge for Indian CSOs in trade policy advocacy.

India's diversity, size and identity politics between class, caste, farmer/labourer, regional and linguistic lines, pose serious challenges in terms of representation and the articulation of common agendas across localities. If groups were to engage in trade policy advocacy, what policies can they legitimately lobby for and on whose behalf?

This is one factor that has prevented a collaborative approach with bureaucrats and the articulation of policy proposals that advocate for something. It has been much easier to unite on a common slogan that is 'anti' existing policies. Groups like Focus India have dealt with this issue of representation by choosing not to draft policy proposals and negotiate on behalf of mass based groups they work with, but rather to amplify their critiques against the trade regime. They support farmers movements' political message to get the 'WTO out of agriculture' and help get media coverage of mobilisations of farmers and agriculture workers. This means that they remain 'outside' the sphere of the state's policymaking process, but attempt to galvanise a people's movement to change the way policy is made.

Leaders of social movements as intermediaries also mobilise their own mass base. Questions of deepening and broadening their representation arise here. These leaders represent their constituencies and travel between global and local spaces. Often, only one contact person in groups such as the TNWC, JJPLA handle the global-local linkages. The BKU example shows that many district level leaders in the movement have a limited understanding of the WTO and how it relates to their problems. They therefore have a hard time convincing their local units to mobilise around WTO policy processes. Without buy-in of local leaders in the mass base, building a large mass movement around these issues remains a challenge.

At the same time, it is unrealistic to assume that a large majority of citizens of mass based organisations can directly engage in advocacy on the AoA when their priorities might rightly be in local and state level struggles. Global debates on trade and economic policies will thus always have intermediaries that speak on behalf of those who do not have access to global and national policy arenas where these debates take place. This tension between mediation, representation and mobilising a mass base remains an intrinsic challenge on advocacy that links global-local processes within India.

## **6.2 Power/knowledge: the global-local discursive disconnect for citizens engagement**

Secondly, each of the cases (apart from CII) show how difficult it is to appropriately frame the impacts of global trade policy processes and link them to diverse local impacts within India. The cases reveal how global discourses sometimes overpower the narratives of local people and their concerns. As local realities are diverse and global problems more unifying, global narratives tend to be more powerful for collective action. The CSO narratives on the WTO can also divert attention from national and sub-national processes that might have more salience with the knowledge and experiences of local groups.

There seems to be a discursive disconnect between the framing of the problems by intermediaries and how citizens at the grassroots, especially the most marginalised, experience their own reality. Groups raising awareness on the AoA very quickly find themselves speaking the language and terms of Geneva-based processes, and this can alienate the unfamiliar urban audience much less than more marginal and often illiterate rural constituencies. Most advocacy actors publicly blame the WTO for problems related to liberalisation and distress of farmers and agriculture labourers in India. However, as examples from the mass based organisations show, citizens' own framing of the problems is associated with many other policies and processes. This includes issues such as unemployment, mechanisation, corporate leasing of land and rising costs of production combined with declining state support. The discursive power/knowledge disconnect thus creates challenges for advocates to mobilise new leadership on these issues at the grassroots level. Many of these issues are indeed interrelated and connected to global economic policy processes. However, framing them in a way that is effective for advocacy purposes and at the same time speaks to the problems of the grassroots remains a challenge for Indian advocacy groups.

## **6.3 Spaces and strategies: advocacy in the long term versus policy advocacy on the AoA**

Thirdly, the pace, timing and strategies for policy advocacy related to the WTO and that of long term organising from the grassroots poses limits to effective citizen engagement. Policy change from the bottom up requires mass mobilisation that can activate the Indian democratic system. It must be able to motivate politicians to take these issues up and demand accountability from the central government and the Department of Commerce. This requires that grassroots groups and social movements across India take up trade issues in earnest and mobilise at the local, regional and national level. The long term time horizon that is required to create such a response does not match with the WTO policy process. In 2006, for example, a few trade ministers are expected to clinch a deal for the Doha Round through a series of closed and exclusive meetings in Geneva and elsewhere.

The tension between short term WTO policy advocacy and long term capacity building presents trade-offs for when and how citizens engage on trade issues within India. For instance farmers mobilising around the G20 ministerial meeting in Delhi may put pressure on the Commerce Minister to respond to farmers' needs in

new WTO commitments, but it does not hold the national government accountable for the lack of a comprehensive agriculture policy that addresses indebtedness, risk mitigation and unemployment plaguing farmers/labourers. It may also not help deepen the linkages between WTO policy and grassroots struggles. Thus, while possibly effective in meeting policy advocacy goals, it may do little to build a stronger grassroots agrarian movement in the long run.

Long term strategies might require sustained activity at the grassroots level, working collectively to share problems, building local leadership and building critical consciousness on how various global, national and sub-national processes are impacting livelihoods on the ground. It may also lead to the prioritisation of different advocacy targets. The TNWC's activities attempt to strengthen local *panchayats* in dealing with multinational corporations and other global and national processes that impact them. Through this work, however, they choose not to engage on national level advocacy on the WTO.

Both the Focus/JJPLA effort to mobilise Maharashtran communities on agriculture trade around the WTO Cancun Ministerial and the BKU effort to mobilise farmers for a protest on the AoA, show the trade-offs on meaningful citizen engagement when advocacy is rooted around a policy process. While it allows political visibility of a mass base in opposition to the AoA, it does not necessarily lead to greater citizen buy-in on these issues. On the other hand, participatory advocacy strategies that strengthen local leadership may not necessarily lead to groups mobilising around the AoA, this lack of mobilisation could then let GOI trade policymakers off the hook.

Locating engagement within the broader processes of economic liberalisation within India leads to numerous national and subnational targets for movements and perhaps different political strategies. A narrow focus on the AoA/WTO policy process limits groups to mobilising around global meetings and processes, which may seem far away and not resonate with farmers and labourers that will be impacted by these policies in the long run. Yet, the pace at which global trade policy is currently moving compels trade advocacy actors to focus on these processes with a sense of urgency at the expense of a deeper engagement of the mass base. This remains yet another challenge for advocacy actors in creating citizen engagement.

#### **6.4 Capacity constraints define the limits of advocacy**

Finally, the dearth of intermediaries, the size and diversity of India and the wide variety of economic problems faced by farmers and labourers creates challenges round how to spend limited time and scarce resources on trade-related advocacy. Being spread too thin contributes to problems in creating effective citizen engagement.

Most intermediaries do not have the time or resources to effectively engage at the grassroots level on a long term basis even if they wished to do so. This necessitates that CSOs consciously decide how their existing resources are used to fulfil their long term or short term advocacy goals. Delhi-based groups, the mass base intermediaries and Focus India engage in all arenas at the same time. They help



mobilise citizens groups, translate global policies for domestic consumption, do media work and critique government policies at the global and national levels. They travel extensively and are overcommitted.

Unlike the CII which has the financial capacity and resources to engage in policy advocacy at the international, national and subnational levels on numerous policies, these actors either function in their individual capacities or as part of a small staff. They are in high demand in global, national and local arenas given that they are well versed in AoA jargon and can connect it to the political process within India. Their own heavy schedules of travel and work unrelated to the AoA limits their ability to focus on agriculture and trade advocacy work in any sustained manner.

On the other hand, long term activities such as organising and popular education require trust and sustained relationships. Though Delhi-based individuals and Focus India attempt to build awareness and serve as resource people to many grassroots constituencies, their limited time and capacity prevents any sustained activity at ground level. This prevents follow up with citizens they have worked with on agriculture and trade issues and limits a deeper citizen engagement on these issues.

## **6.5 Citizens' engagement on trade issues**

In conclusion, citizens' engagement on trade issues and the AoA remains limited in India. The wider structural, political and historical processes of marginalisation of the rural poor and the agrarian class contribute to this problem. However, this paper has focused on the policy process and the role that advocacy plays in creating broader citizen participation. What can be learned about the challenges of creating citizen engagement on trade issues within India?

This paper shows that representation is essential in creating stronger 'grassroots-to-global' linkages on trade related issues. This means that greater citizen engagement requires a larger number of intermediaries and greater effort in leadership building on these issues than currently exist in the Indian trade advocacy arena. It is these intermediaries that can effectively link global and national policies to local impacts. This will help strengthen the voices of various constituencies all over India.

It also points to the need for deeper and broader vertical and horizontal networks between grassroots groups, movements and those following national and global trade policy. Within India this means that trade advocacy has to be strengthened on a state by state basis where the focus is also on state governments and national policy that impacts governance at the local and state level, rather than focusing on the WTO policy process alone.

The lack of interest in the global trading body indicates that the main priorities of political struggle lie elsewhere. Currently, trade advocacy is too removed from the way local people express and view economic policy impacts on their lives. At the same time, the complexities of the trade discourse keeps many from engaging at all. There may be too much emphasis on the WTO as the culprit without adequately addressing national level trade and economic policy decisions that impact on citizens' lives. Though the WTO can serve as an important tool for mobilisation and rallying around a common cause; the case studies points to the need for a broader

advocacy strategy that differentiates between local, state, national and international targets with appropriate time horizons for farmers and labourers to mobilise.

The broader analysis also points to the limits for citizen participation given the existing global trade policymaking process. Parliaments are largely relegated to rubber stamp a final agreement and most of the public remains obscured from the decisions being made on their behalf. The systemic democratic deficit in trade policymaking limits the extent to which citizens can truly demand accountability from the 'inside'. The Doha Round implicates legislation, regulation and the public interest in several areas, and thus CSOs will remain essential in creating spaces in global and national arenas that hold trade negotiators accountable for their actions abroad.

The cases in this study suggest that the physical distance, pace and discursive gap between global trade policymaking and local agrarian struggles, create many challenges for intermediaries that link layers of CSO advocacy at the global, national or mass base level. In addition, the peculiarities of the Indian context add further challenges for trade advocates given the size and complexity of the country, resource constraints and the limited number of intermediaries engaged in this work.

This research stops at the intersection between intermediaries who engage on the AoA and the mass base. It does not look at the work currently going on in thousands of localities across India in building global-local linkages. As outlined above, what emerges from this research is that the current linkage between advocacy on the AoA and grassroots struggles remains weak in India. The research illustrates that trade advocacy work must be grounded appropriately in the broader problems around agrarian displacement and impoverishment, indebtedness and other impacts of structural adjustment in India if citizens are to directly participate in this debate. For this to occur, greater investment and resources towards the problems of the grassroots is needed. At the same time, given the power dynamics and the pace at which global trade policy is moving, it is unrealistic to expect citizens from rural areas to directly engage in the debate. Therefore, the role of intermediaries as citizens will continue to be critical in the trade arena in the near term.

# Appendix A

## Schema on power, political participation and social change

	Mechanisms through which these dimensions of power operate	Examples	Responses/Strategies	
<b>Power over</b>	<b>Visible: making &amp; enforcing the rules</b>  Formal institutions and officials: President, Prime Minister, legislature, courts, ministries, police, military, etc. United Nations, IMF, World Bank; Private sector: industry, multinational corporations, chamber of commerce, businesses, etc.  Instruments: policies, laws, constitutions, budgets, regulations, conventions, implementing mechanisms, etc.	Biased laws/policies (e.g. health care policies that do not address women's reproductive needs);  Decisionmaking structures (parliaments, courts, IFI governance, etc) favour the elite or powerful and are closed to certain people's voices and unrepresentative;  The principle of 'equality' may exist in law, but parliaments and courts are not fairly representative of women and minorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lobbying and monitoring</li> <li>- Negotiation and litigation</li> <li>- Public education and media</li> <li>- Policy research, proposals</li> <li>- Shadow reports</li> <li>- Marches and demonstrations</li> <li>- Voting and running for office</li> <li>- Modelling innovations</li> <li>- Collaboration</li> <li>- Etc</li> </ul>	<b>Confronting, engaging, negotiating</b>
	<b>Hidden: setting the agenda</b>  <i>Exclusion and delegitimisation</i> Certain groups (and their issues) excluded from decision making by society's unwritten rules and the political control of dominant and vested interests.  They and their grievances are made invisible by intimidation, misinformation and co-optation.  Often, formal institutions with visible power, also exercise hidden power.	Leaders are labeled troublemakers or unrepresentative.  Issues related to the environment are deemed elitist, impractical; domestic violence, childcare are private, individual issues not worthy of public attention; peasant land rights and labour rights are 'special' interests and not economically viable.  The media does not consider these groups' issues to be mainstream or newsworthy.  Crucial information is concealed or inaccessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building active constituencies around common concerns</li> <li>- Strengthening organisations, coalitions, movements, and accountable leaders</li> <li>- Mobilising around shared agendas; demonstrating clout through direct action</li> <li>- Participatory research and dissemination of information that legitimises the issues of excluded groups</li> <li>- Etc</li> </ul>	<b>Building collective power Transforming power</b>
	<b>Invisible: shaping meaning, values and what's 'normal'</b>  <i>Socialisation and control of information:</i> processes, practices, cultural norms, values, ideologies and customs shape people's understanding of their needs, rights, roles, possibilities and actions in ways that detract effective action for change.	Socialisation in excluded groups internalises feelings of powerlessness, shame, anger, hostility, apathy, distrust, lack of worthiness etc. Dominant ideologies and lack of information/knowledge inhibit ability to participate and articulate demands.  Gender, race and class are critical factors to consider – women blame themselves for domestic abuse; poor farmers blame selves for poverty despite unequal access to global markets or decent prices or wages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Popular education tied to organising, leadership and consciousness (to build confidence, collaboration, political awareness and internalise a sense of rights/citizenship), which includes such strategies as: sharing stories, speaking out and connecting with others, affirming resistance, analysing power, linking concrete problems to rights</li> <li>- as well as doing action research, investigations and dissemination of concealed information and also using alternative media etc.</li> </ul>	<b>Building individual and collective power</b>

(Note: The distinctions among the different dimensions are not neat or clean. The arrows are intended to indicate the interactive nature among the various manifestations of power.)

Source: Taken from Just Associates' background paper, 'Understanding Power' for Workshop titled 'Citizen Action, Knowledge and Global Economic Power', held at IDS, Brighton, 1–3 August, 2005, based on VeneKlasen and Miller (2002: 50).

## Appendix B

### Efforts made to consult State Government and other stakeholders on WTO

SI		Subject
1	29 January, 30 March, 2 June, 17 November and 24 November 1999	Meetings of the Advisory Committee on International Trade consisting of Industrialists, NGOs, journalists of repute and experts on trade matters were held to discuss various WTO issues prior to the Seattle conference.
2	24 June 1999	The Commerce Minister wrote to Chief Minister and political parties regarding inputs for mandated negotiations in agriculture and services and inputs for other WTO matters coming up at Seattle.
3	15 November 1999	Commerce and Industry Minister had discussions with all the national level trade union leaders on WTO issues.
4	16, 17 and 24 November 1999	Commerce and Industry Minister had consultations with all national level political parties on WTO issues.
5	January, March, April, June, 2000	Regional consultations with State Governments, farmers' representatives, NGOs' etc. on agriculture and other WTO issues conducted jointly by Agriculture and Commerce Ministries.
6	3 February 2000	A meeting of the Advisory Committee on International Trade was held after the Seattle Conference to discuss various WTO issues in the post-Seattle scenario.
7	5 July, 8 Aug and 27 March 2000	Meetings under the chairmanship of Special Secretary, Department of Commerce were organised with various Industry Associations namely CII, FICCI, Assocham and FIEO to discuss WTO related issues.
8	11 July 2000	Special Secretary wrote to all Chief Secretaries regarding agriculture negotiations. He also wrote to Vice Chancellors of all agricultural universities for their inputs on the negotiations.
9	30 August 2000	National Conference on Small Scale Industries discussed impact of WTO where Commerce Ministry, jointly with Ministry of SSI, addressed State level officials on WTO matters. This was a culmination of about 28 workshops all over the country on impact of WTO on SSIs where Commerce Ministry officials had also participated.
10	13-14 September 2000	The Minister of Agriculture held national level consultations with the representatives of all political parties, farmers organisations and NGOs on 13 August 2000. Further national level consultations were held by the Agriculture Minister with the State Food and Agriculture Ministers on 14 August 2000. Commerce Ministry officials actively participated in the consultations.
11	17 October 2000	Letter by Commerce and Industry Minister to Chief Ministers and political parties seeking inputs for agriculture negotiations.
12	18 October 2000	The Commerce and Industry Minister addressed WTO issues at Economic Editors' Conference.
13	16 November 2000	A meeting of the Sub Group of the Advisory Committee on International Trade comprising of experts on agriculture was held.
14	17 November 2000	Presentations and oral evidences were made by the Department of Commerce before the Core Group on WTO of the Department related Parliamentary Standing Committee.

SI	Date	Subject
15	25 January 2001	Letter by Commerce and Industry Minister to Chief Ministers and political parties enclosing India's proposals on agriculture submitted in the WTO.
16	10 February 2001	Seminar by Maharashtra Chambers of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture, Pune on impact of WTO on Indian industry addressed by Special Secretary, in which State Government officials also participated.
17	19 March 2001	'Workshop on WTO issues' with State/UT Chief Secretaries.
18	27 March 2001	The Special Secretary, Department of Commerce had a meeting with the Industry Associations (CII, FICCI, FIEO and ASSOCHAM) to discuss various WTO issues.
19	11 May 2001	Joint Secretary of the Department of Commerce made a presentation at Hyderabad on 'WTO related issues' in which CM, AP and various officials of Government of Andhra Pradesh had participated.
20	18 May 2001	Joint Secretary of Department of Commerce made a presentation on WTO related issues and Agreements on Agriculture to the Chief Minister and officials and various stakeholders at Jammu, 21 May 2001, Conference of the Chief Ministers on 'WTO Agreement on Agriculture and Food Management'.
21	15 February 2001	2001 WTO issues were discussed among other issues in the meeting of Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the the Department of Commerce.
22	12 June 2001	Meeting of Advisory Committee on International Trade held to discuss issues related to the 4th Ministerial Conference at Doha.
23	9 July 2001	A meeting of Industry Associations v (FICCI/CII/Assocham/FIEU) was held under the Chairmanship of Commerce Secretary to discuss issues relating to Trade Facilitation and Industrial Tariffs in the context of 4th Ministerial Conference.
24	4 July 2001	The Department of Commerce officials along with Ministry of Agriculture officials attended a sensitisation workshop on WTO issues including on Agreement on Agriculture organised by Government of Punjab at Chandigarh.
25	26 July 2001	'Workshop on WTO issues' with State/UT Chief Secretaries.

Source: Taken from Dhar and Kallummal forthcoming: Annexure 7; based on:

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Civil Servant (2006) Phone interview with person affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce, 22 March, New Delhi

—— (2005) Interview with person affiliated with the Ministry of Commerce, 9 and 25 June, New Delhi

Department of Commerce (2005) Interview with senior official, 24 June, New Delhi

Focus India (2005a) Interview with former director of Focus on the Global South India Programme, 8 June, Negombo, Sri Lanka

—— (2005b) Interview with staff person of Focus on the Global South India Programme, 25 June, Mumbai

—— (2005c) Interview with former staff person of Focus on the Global South India Programme, 27 June, 2 July, Mumbai

—— (2005d) Interview with current director of Focus on the Global South India Programme, 5 July, New Delhi

Francis, Sheelu (2005) Interview with the president of the Tamil Nadu Women's Collective, 7 June, Negombo, Sri Lanka

Ghosh, Jayati (2005) Interview, 13 June, New Delhi

Journalist (2005) Interview with a journalist of a prominent publication, 2 July, Mumbai

Kadam, Anand (2005) Interview with coordinator of the Jan Jungle Pani Lokadhikar Andolan (JJPLA), 29 June, Mumbai

Lalidamballe (2005) Interview with trustee of the ADECOM Network, 7 June, Negombo, Sri Lanka

Member of Planning Commission (2005) Interview, 13 June, New Delhi

Ministry of Agriculture (2005a) Interview with senior official, 23 June, New Delhi

—— (2005b) Interview with official, 15 June, New Delhi

Murlidharan, Sukumar (2005) Interview with former *Frontline Magazine* journalist, 4 July, New Delhi

Sahai, Suman (2005) Interview with director of Gene Campaign, 23 June, New Delhi

Sharma, Devinder (2005) Interview, 14 June, New Delhi

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