

Workshop on Generating High Quality Think Tanks in India

Date: May 09-11, 2017

Venue: New Delhi

CSTEP, in association with the Think Tank Initiative, organised a 3-day workshop to inaugurate an 18 month long Capacity Building Programme in South Asian Think Tanks in New Delhi on May 9-11, 2017. The workshop was organised at the India Habitat Centre. The inaugural session of this workshop, titled 'Generating High Quality Think Tanks in India', was specifically designed to generate discussion on creating a more enabling ecosystem for Think Tanks in India.

The inaugural session was introduced by Dr Anshu Bharadwaj, Executive Director, CSTEP. He welcomed all the guests and thanked them for attending the event. He set the context of the inaugural session by highlighting some of the major challenges that are being faced by most Think Tanks in the South Asian region, especially India. These challenges ranged from the very definition of think tanks in the region to ways of achieving sustainable funding. The key question that was raised by Dr Bharadwaj was: How can Indian Think Tanks strengthen themselves to become comparable with the global best?

Following Dr Bharadwaj's address, Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, TERI was invited to say a few words. Dr Mathur chose to focus his address on the role played by think tanks in policy formulation and how they can be relevant in order to achieve excellence. His speech addressed challenges faced by TERI and other policy research organisations in the areas of accessing data, conducting long-term studies in the midst of completing short-term studies, using the right methodologies, preparing communication plans for outreach. The most important take-home message he shared was: keep track of policy announcements so that the organisation can respond effectively and in a timely manner.

The inaugural session was drawn to a close with a recorded message sent by Shri Suresh Prabhu, Railway Minister, Government of India. In his message, Shri Prabhu emphasised the importance of Think Tanks in a democratic polity like India.

The panel discussion on 'Generating High Quality Think Tanks in India' was chaired by Dr Arunabha Ghosh, CEO, Council in Environment, Energy and Water (CEEW) and included the following members: Krishan Dhawan, CEO, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation; Samar Verma, Senior Program Specialist, IDRC; and Sandhya Venkateswaran, India Country Lead, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).

The remaining sessions of the workshop focussed on familiarising the participants of the Capacity Building Programme with the course content. These sessions were conducted by Will Paxton and Guy Lodge, Kivu Inetrnational.