

59% are not aware about available Grievance Redressal Mechanism of Electricity Service Providers

Jaipur, October 30, 2012

Consumer Unity & Trust Society conducted a State Level Media Workshop on October 30, 2012 at Hotel 'Jaipur Palace', to disseminate the findings of the survey on "Plight of Electricity Consumers in Rajasthan" under the Project 'Grassroot Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANIRCA), which is supported by Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Government of India. The Consultation was well represented by the media people from 12 districts, where the project is being implemented, senior local media persons, officials from Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission, discom and representatives of various Consumer organisations and activists.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, in his opening remarks welcomed all the dignitaries present and explained about the project. He said that the Project was launched in the year 2010. Several activities in 12 districts as a part of the project have been conducted so far. The main objective of the project is to create an enabling environment for protection and promotion of consumer interest and enhancing the capacity of identified CSOs to handle emerging and relevant consumer issues woven around the basic needs, ensuring improvement in service delivery and playing the "watchdog" role in their respective districts. Talking about the Media Workshop, he said that it is the 14th Workshop during three years. He also mentioned about the national level survey, which was conducted by CUTS and told that RBI is the most common name recognized by 40% of the respondents followed by TRAI (30%).

Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator, CUTS International explained about the Project GRANIRCA and shared the findings of the research survey, 'Plight of Electricity Consumers in Rajasthan'. Total 2419 respondents from twelve districts were interviewed; out of which almost quarter of percentage were female participants. 96% of the respondents avail electricity connection. Almost 65% are still unaware about RERC and its functions. This definitely indicates an improvement in the overall awareness on these reforms that started around 12 years back in the year 2000. Almost half of the respondents had rated feeder renovation programme (FRP) as good project run by the government and found it useful and consumer friendly. On the other hand, 59% are not aware about the new Public Service Guarantee Act. 45% respondents found difficult to get the connection and it almost took more than 30 days to get it. In continuation, 53% said that they were charged separately as additional amount while given connection. 79% respondents are not aware about Ombudsman. From the remaining 21 per cent, who knows it, 83% never filed appeal of their complaints. 66% of the respondents reported problems/loss caused due to supply of high voltage. 68% complained about fast running of their meters, which resulted into rapid change in reading. In an interesting question, respondents were asked as to whether the distribution companies pay to the consumers 5% of the cost as compensation for taking more than the prescribed time limit to get the meter replaced, a huge number of 80% said that they never received any such compensation.

In his inaugural speech, P N Bhandari, Ex. Chairman, Rajasthan State Electricity Board said that media plays an important role in highlighting the problems and said that one should not be always negative in giving feedback as the board is working for the people. Regarding, Subsidy in electricity tariff, he said that it should be given only to the needy people.

A book on "Plight of Electricity Consumer in Rajasthan" was formally released on this occasion. Gram Gadar Award which is being given by CUTS every year in the field of journalism was also distributed to Chuna Ram Godara from Jodhpur.



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pursuing social justice and economic equity within and across borders.

Gopal Sharma, Additional Director, Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Rajasthan appreciated the work done by CUTS and stress the need for media to play a pivotal role in imparting social issues to masses. Rajendra Prasad Bora, Senior Journalist; R C Sharma, Joint Secretary, RERC; Jai Singh Kothari, CEO, Nafa Nuksan; Vimal Jain from Rajasthan Patrika; Lokpal Sethi from the Pioneer; D R Mathur, Electricity Ombudsman, Rajasthan, Shyam Sunder Sharma, Rashtriya Sahara and R G Gupta, Ex- CMD, Discoms also shared their views and ideas related to the electricity.

In the meeting, among other participants, some more media colleagues from small, rural based newspapers, officials from discoms, regulator and NGOs took part.

For more information please contact

Deepak Saxena (+91- 9351366827) / Dharmendra Chaturvedi (+91-9414202868)

CUTS Center for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS- CART

277, Sindhi Colony, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park

Jaipur 302 016, India

Ph: 91.141.2282 062, 2282 823/2282 482