

# Consumer Awareness Programme



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## Introduction

CUTS has established net-workers and consumer groups in a total of 238 blocks of 33 districts in Rajasthan, who have actively been involved in consumer awareness programme at the grassroots level. However, due to lack of adequate skills and resources, net-workers are unable to perform as per the expectations. In order for them to be able to work for the successful consumer awareness campaign, they need relevant skills and resources in their respective areas.

In pursuit of this, CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) with the support of State Consumer Welfare Fund under the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan undertook Consumer Awareness Programme to raise awareness among the consumers towards their rights and responsibilities. The duration of the project was of one-year.

## Objectives

The overall objectives of the project were to:

- Raise consumer awareness at the grassroots by strengthening the capacity of net-workers in 20 selected blocks in Rajasthan; and
- Build a strong consumer movement at the grassroots level in Rajasthan.

## Activities

- Skill training programmes
- Consumer friends training
- Awareness campaigns on issues related to consumer protection
- Awareness rallies

## Launch of the Project

The project was formally launched at the campus of CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS CHD), Chittorgarh on April 07, 2007. The skills training programme for selected representatives of two blocks of Chittorgarh district was also clubbed with the launch meeting in which Rajendra Singh Shekhawat, Additional Collector, District Information Officer of Chittorgarh, and G P Bohra, District Supply Officer (DSO) were the distinguished guests. Rajeenish Pitalia, Chandmal Garg and Prahlad Rai were the three lawyers who facilitated different technical sessions on Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (COPRA) and other related laws. Hari Prasad Yogi and Gangadhar Solanki were the other two speakers in the sessions on advocacy and consumer rights.

The district co-coordinators of all the 10 selected districts, representatives of consumer clubs including their nodal officers, representatives of the consumer groups of all the 14 blocks and representatives of DSO, Chittorgarh, media and local volunteers participated in the meeting. For the skill training, there were around 60 participants from the two blocks, Chotisadri and Bhupalsagar.





## Skill Training Programmes

There were total 20 skill training programmes (one in each identified block).

### Target Audience

- CUTS Net-workers
- Volunteers

### Objectives

- impart awareness and skill training to at least 50 to 60 interested net-workers and other volunteers of the block; and
- enhance networking, office management, fund raising and legal subject with emphasis on COPRA, consumer rights, Right to Information (RTI) and other related laws.

## Consumer Friends Training

There were total 20 consumer friends training (one in each identified block).

### Target Audience

- Local employed or unemployed youth
- Net-workers
- Volunteers
- Interested persons from any class, profession or area

### Objectives

- create a team of net-workers/activists, who would in turn, take up litigation on behalf of aggrieved poor consumers in the consumer forums;
- organise camps in each block

comprising local youth, net-workers and activists; and

- distribute relevant literature to the participants pertaining to the subjects taken for the discussions.

## Awareness Campaigns on RTI

There were total 20 awareness campaigns on Right to Information (one in each identified block).

### Target Audience

- CUTS net-workers
- Volunteers
- Representatives of NGOs and various development sector
- Representatives from government departments
- Citizens

### Objectives

- educate and train the masses about the awareness on RTI; and
- train the citizens on RTI, including its objectives and proper usage.

## Awareness Rallies

There were total 10 awareness rallies (one in each selected district)

### Target Audience

- CUTS net-workers
- Volunteers
- Representatives from government departments
- Citizens
- School children
- Corporate and sellers

## Objectives

- invite attention of the local administration to resolve the problems pertaining to the local and second generation consumer issues like PDS, water, electricity, roads, adulteration etc.

## The Way Forward

CUTS, after having successfully implemented the project, proposes to initiate similar activities in other districts of Rajasthan. So far, only 10 districts with two blocks each have been covered, which is a very small area by looking at the vast area and the huge population of the state. In a small period of just one year or so, there were as much as 70 activities implemented, which was by itself a very big task but the organisation with dedicated team and support from the local partners at the district level successfully conducted all events.

In future, looking at the demands emerged out from various places, CUTS wishes to take new districts with some participation from the districts and the blocks already covered. CUTS also envisages taking second generation consumer issues other than power and RTI, which are being taken up by the organisation at various platforms and through different projects. The second-generation issues may include adulteration, water and some uncontrolled services relating to consumers, etc.





## Recommendations

- Raising awareness on consumer rights and responsibilities at the grassroots as consumers are still not adequately aware even after 22 years of enactment of COPRA.
- The subject 'Consumer Awareness' should be made mandatory at the school level
- Need for similar trainings
- Activating district and state level consumer protection councils
- Involving media for raising awareness on consumer rights
- Distribution of reading materials in Hindi at *gram panchayat* and *chaupal* meetings and resource persons from CUTS should be sent to teach

- consumer rights and responsibilities to villagers at regular intervals in these meetings
- More consumer participation in consumer protection councils and consumer clubs
- Consumers to be more vigilant towards unfair trade practices, service deficiency and adulteration
- Government to put an end to the exploitation of consumers by private educational institutions in the State
- Need to improve and control over collusive and tied sale system, inordinate delay in consumer forums, absence of judge and members in the forums, continuous sale of banned and banable drugs in the market



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