

## About CART

Established in 1983 as a small voluntary group of concerned citizens, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) expanded its activities and CUTS CART was set up in 1996 as a programme centre to pursue the cause of common consumers, initially being undertaken by CUTS as the mandate.

The programmes of the Centre are primarily aimed at generating awareness, creating a more responsible society and encouraging changes at the policy level by advocating with the government machinery and sensitising it to the issues of concern of the common man. The Centre has spearheaded several campaigns and pioneered consumer empowerment.

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## Civil Society, Governance, and Inclusive Economies Recent Developments

The 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) was held at Baku, Azerbaijan during May 01-04, 2015. More than 3,000 participants, including state heads, finance ministers, central bank governors and representatives from the private sector, academe, media and civil society attended the meeting.

Through the Civil Society Programme (CSP) of the Annual Meeting, ADB engages with the NGOs, labour unions, academia, think-tanks, community-based organisations, and other civil society groups and provides opportunities for dialogue, sharing of knowledge and networking with other CSOs as well as participants. The main focus of the year's events was 'Learning from Partners'. The CSP commenced on May 02, 2015 with a Q&A session by the ADB President Takehiko Nakao.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS International attended the CSP associated with the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the ADB. The theme of the programme was 'Fostering Partnerships for Development'.



Cherian was one of the speakers in the CSP session on 'Civil Society, Governance and Inclusive Economies: Recent Developments' jointly organised by Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) and Open Government Partnership (OGP). He spoke on effective governance, transparency, accountability and corruption in government departments as the key challenges. He cited the example of Indian civil society effectively using 'Right to Information Act' in order to address challenges to 'effective governance'. In his presentation entitled '*Power of Information in Empowering the People: Case of RTI in India*' he spoke about the recent challenges faced in this process, prevailing concerns of the civil society, including the Whistle Blowers Protection Act etc.

The session discussed examples of how civil society has contributed to results in the key thematic areas included in the proposed Sustainable Development Goal to build inclusive societies and responsive and accountable institutions. In particular, panellists from five countries (Azerbaijan, India, Georgia, Indonesia, and Kyrgyzstan) shared experiences of civil society engagement in their countries, some of which are members of the OGP.



The session was moderated by Vinay Bhargava, Chief Technical Adviser, PTF. Along with George Cherian, other speakers were Nurzat Abdyrasulova, Director, Civic Foundation UNISON, Kyrgyzstan; Vugar Bayramov, Chairman, Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD), Azerbaijan; Giorgi Kldiashvili, Director, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, Georgia; and Nanda Sihombing, Open Government Specialist, Centre for Regional Information and Studies, PATTIRO, Indonesia. The discussants were Bart W Edes, Director, Social Development, Governance, and Gender Division, Asian Development Bank, Manila and Daniel Kaufmann, President of the Natural Resource Governance Institute, UK.

## Alternative Means of Urban Service Delivery is Need of the Hour

Alternative ways and means, to deliver existing key municipal services, need to be developed so that municipal services can be made more effective and accessible. This can be done through adopting innovative ways and means of implementing services and usage of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) tools and methods. These views were unanimously expressed in the first ever 'Rajasthan Mayor's Conference' organised by CUTS with the support of The Asia Foundation at Jaipur on April 15, 2015.

Nirmal Nahata, Mayor, Jaipur said that discussions on the present condition of the urban local bodies are going on at various levels in the government and as a result some good decisions are taken by the present government for empowering the boards etc. At the Jaipur Municipal Corporation level, they are trying to generate revenues and enhance public participation.

Mahesh Vijayvargiya, Mayor, Kota said that some of the services in the Kota municipality are monopolised by certain groups which can only be broken through creating alternative means of using machines replacing men. He said that 47 percent of posts are vacant in Kota municipality.

Shiv Singh Bhont, Mayor, Bharatpur said that mayor is such a weak position that he cannot even initiate an action or transfer of an erring official who is not working well. Necessary steps to provide required power to mayors' are the need of the hour. He requested all mayors to meet with the minister concerned and discuss issues.

Prof. VS Vyas, *Padamshri Awardee* and former Deputy Chairman, State Planning Board Rajasthan mentioned that there has to be fine balance in all parts of the city in development work. He spoke on issues of finance, need to mobilising own resources, capacity building and sensitisation of municipal staff, citizen engagement through ward committees.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS said that urban rapid growth is facing several challenges in front of municipalities and as a result slums are cropping up, inadequate civic infrastructure is there and solid waste management is becoming a serious issue. He further said that the concept of three Fs, i.e. Fund, Functionaries and Functions need to be evolved.

Amar Deep Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS welcomed the delegates and presented highlights of MyCity project which is being implemented in Jaipur city since last three years based on urban governance.



## Promoting Organic Consumption in Rajasthan

Six district-level consultations were held under the ProOrganic project during March-May 2015. The objective of conducting these consultations was to discuss preliminary findings of this action research and receive inputs to be used in finalising and preparing the research report and advocacy document.

A study was conducted in six project districts under the action research component of the project with an objective to gauge the level of awareness among consumers and farmers on organic consumption and farming issues. During the period consultations were held in Pratapgarh on April 08; Udaipur on April 15; Chittorgarh on May 06; Kota and Jaipur on May 29, 2015 respectively.

The methodology of these consultations focussed on the presentation of action research findings followed with discussions and sharing of information on project issues in order to invigorate the practice of organic farming in the district.

The participants comprised of all relevant stakeholders including common consumers, farmers and youth groups, self-help groups, local CSOs, experts, concerned government officials etc. and most importantly, at least two-four participants of each village targeted under the research action and have been part of village meetings as well, which enabled representation of all targeted villages.



## 14<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Central Advisory Committee

The Central Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India was chaired by YS Malik, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI. After adoption of 13<sup>th</sup> CAC Meeting Minutes, I.N.Moorthy, General Manager, National



Institute for Smart Government, Hyderabad made a detailed presentation on Food Licensing and Registration System. Cherian actively participated in discussions and raised several questions. On the sidelines, he also met with food safety commissioners of several states and had discussions.

## Improving the Quality of Urban Service Delivery

An orientation programme was conducted at Jaipur on April 29, 2015. Representatives of partner CSOs took part in the orientation. Vipin Chawla welcomed the participants. Amar Deep Singh provided a detailed orientation of participants on Citizen Report Card (CRC), Public Service Index (PSI) and its methodology. Madhu Sudan Sharma oriented participants on road monitoring tools and its uses.

George Cherian stated that maintaining the quality of CRC and PSI is very important for the success of the project. Dharmendra Chaturvedi proposed vote of thanks in the meeting. Six ward councilors joined during lunch and discussed the ward-level implementation of project and other developments.

Ambuj Kishore, Executive Director, Arvalli along with Cherian visited ward No. 77 of Jaipur city and attended a meeting of the Citizens' Action Group and participated in discussions on June 08, 2015. They also visited some parts of the ward and viewed changes happened on the ground with regard to solid waste disposal.



### Training cum Need Assessment for World Vision Staff

Amrat Singh along with Amar Deep Singh and Madhu Sudan Sharma delivered a half-day training-cum need assessment session for World Vision India Jaipur Team at Jaipur on April 30, 2015. The participants included Josiah Daniel, Programme Manager and community development coordinators working for 20 slum areas of Jaipur city.

The first session was taken by Amrat Singh on need assessment in which he asked participants about their working areas, problems and challenges. Based on the feedback derived from the first session, Amar Deep Singh took second session on social accountability, its basics and how it is covered under Citizen Voice Action. He presented a brief introduction of Community Score Card with examples of Integrated Child Development Services and MyCity approach on urban governance specific. Madhu Sudan Sharma spoke about access to information and general approach of CUTS' projects as well.

### Grahak Suvida Kendra (Consumer Care Centre)

Deepak Saxena attended *Grahak Suvidha Kendra* (GSK) Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signing ceremony held at Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs on June 30, 2015 in the capacity of CUTS



representative, which was attended by representatives of four other GSKs namely Bhavishya, Kolkata; Saver, Patna; CERC, Ahmedabad and Karshan Technologies, Bangalore. Girish Chandra, Deputy Secretary and Jayalaxmi Kannan, Under Secretary were present on behalf of DoCA. Saxena signed MoA on behalf of CUTS.

### Gram Gadar Award

The 'Gram Gadar Award' for the year 2014 for rural reporting was conferred on a Hindi language scribe Surendra Chirana for his agriculture-related news stories and features in *Dainik Bhaskar*. Chirana, who hails from Jhunjhunu district and has been working for *Dainik Bhaskar* as agriculture reporter for last eight years, would receive a cash prize of ₹10,000 and citation at a function to be organised later in 2015. CUTS has been publishing a periodical 'Gram Gadar' since 1983 and instituted the award for best rural reporting based on agriculture.



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## REPRESENTATION IN MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS ETC.

### Study on Structural Factors behind Food Inflation

Amrat Singh and Deepak Saxena visited DoCA, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, New Delhi and made a presentation on 'Study on Structural Factors behind Food Inflation' on April 15, 2015.

### World No Tobacco Day

Amar Deep Singh and Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended 'World No Tobacco Day' programme jointly organised by Health Department, Rajasthan Voluntary Health Association (RVHA), Indian Asthma Care Society and *Gayatri Parivar* at Jaipur on May 31, 2015.

### e-Commerce and Consumers: Issues and Challenges

Amarjeet Singh attended a National Seminar on 'e-Commerce and Consumers: Issues and Challenges' organised by Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in collaboration with DoCA at New Delhi on May 08, 2015.

### Save Kids Lives: Child Safety on Roads

Deepak Saxena and Arjun Kant Jha participated in a two-day National Conference on 'Save Kids Lives: Child Safety on Roads' organised by Centre for Road Safety under Sardar Patel University of Police, Security & Criminal Justice, Jodhpur at Jaipur on May 06, 2015.

### Open House Discussion at Tata Tele Services

Deepak Saxena and Dharmendra Chaturvedi participated in an open house organised by Tata Tele Services on May 26, 2015.

### Financial Services and Consumer Protection

Arjun Kant Jha participated in a National Seminar on 'Financial Services and Consumer Protection' organised by Centre for Consumer Studies and IIPA at New Delhi on May 15, 2015.



### CART IN MEDIA

### Fact-finding and Evaluation

Deepak Saxena was part of BIS team for 'Fact-finding and Evaluation' for Rajiv Gandhi National Quality Awards 2013 at Jaipur on June 18, 2015.

### Promoting Rights of Children

Dharmendra Chaturvedi participated in a consultation on promoting rights of children focussing on natural stone sector organised by ARAVALI at Jaipur on June 18, 2015.

### Clean Water for All

Varidhi Singh attended the conference on 'Clean Water for All', organised by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Jaipur on June 18, 2015.

### Green Growth and Energy Security in India

Deepak Saxena and Amarjeet Singh participated in a conference on 'Green Growth and Energy Security in India: Political Economy Transformation and Challenges' organised by CUTS at Jaipur on June 19, 2015.

### Opposing State Government's Move to Cut Tax on Tobacco

Amar Deep Singh as part of delegates from Rajasthan Coalition on Tobacco Control met with Rajendra Singh Rathore, Minister of Health, Government of Rajasthan on June 23, 2015 in this connection.

### New Initiative

#### Grahak Suvidha Kendra (GSK)

GSK is a new initiative of the Government of India as a 'One Stop Centre' catering to a spectrum of services for consumer welfare. GSK will serve as integrated consumer advocacy centre that will extend a host of services – information, dissemination, counselling, grievance redress, meditation, class action, product testing, capacity building, training and mobilising popular support to the consumer movement. CUTS is managing one GSK, functional from July 01, 2015 in Jaipur.

