

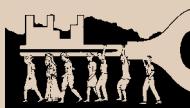
About CART

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.

INSIDE

- Projects and Programmes
- Representations
- Visits
- CART in Media



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Public Procurement in Rajasthan

Current Scenario and Future Prospects

CUTS International has set up a Public Procurement Observatory in Jaipur, Rajasthan in partnership with CUTS Institute for Regulation & Competition (CIRC) and with support from the World Bank. This Observatory is imparting public access to information and happenings with regard to current procurement and the procurement process to ensure transparency and thus, triggering a mechanism of public watch.

CUTS organised first workshop on the theme 'Public Procurement in Rajasthan: Current Scenario and Future Prospects' at Jaipur on July 07, 2015. Discussions were held on the current status of the Rajasthan Transparency in Public Procurement (RTPP) Act, 2012 and its level of implementation in various government departments, on one hand, and problems/concerns of procuring officials and remedies, on the other.

Sidharth Mahajan, Special Secretary, Department of Finance, Government of Rajasthan said that sometimes Act makes the process of procurement difficult because of its complicated



nature. He further said that Rajasthan Procurement Facilitation Cell, under the Finance Department is providing support to the procuring entities and officials in redressing their problems regularly. He applauded the efforts by the World Bank, CIRC and CUTS, which will help in the process of improving the current scenario of the Procurement in the State.

Shanker Lal, Senior Procurement Specialist, World Bank said that Procurement is an issue which is directly linked with the image of the government so all the governments internationally are taking it up very seriously. While shedding light on the experiences from three state procurement observatories set by The World Bank in Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Assam, he stated that these are good initiatives but there are certain challenges ahead, such as getting data for research, limited number of key performance indicators and observatories to be made economically sustainable.

Bulbul Sen, Former Chief Income Tax Commissioner and Member, Expert Group on Procurement in the UN Office of Drugs and Crime said that there is great need of emphasising 'Sustainable Procurement' which is also called as 'Green Procurement'. She laid emphasis on setting up of a complaint redressal tribunal in Rajasthan to ensure effective/speedy redressal of procurement complaints.

Dr Mreeshi Agarwala from Assam Institute of Management, shared her experience on working on procurement issues in Assam.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS underlined the importance of Public Procurement which is a key determinant in the public expenditure management cycle. He also provided a brief overview of CUTS' work in the area of public procurement in India.

Madhu Sudan Sharma, Senior Project Coordinator of CUTS presented the research findings of the 'Public Procurement Observatory'. In the workshop, participants from various departments, contractors, academic institutions and media participated.

'Grahak Suvidha Kendra' Launched

Department of Consumer Affairs of Government of India sponsored *Grahak Suvidha Kendra* (GSK) was formally launched before the auspicious presence of Justice V S Dave, former High Court Judge & ex-President Rajasthan State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission; Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General CUTS, Anant Sharma, Member, Central Consumer Protection Council (CCPC) and President, Consumer Action & Network Society and Sanjay Jhala, Deputy Director, Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan.

In the opening address, Cherian elucidated the objective behind the introduction of GSK. He said that the government's aim is to empower consumers and achieving the overall consumer's sovereignty is in their main agenda. He also stated that the government has started GSKs in five states and Rajasthan is one of them, whose responsibility has been bestowed upon CUTS.



Deepak Saxena, Senior Coordinator, CUTS presented a detailed power point presentation on the GSK and its functioning. It will work on four principles: information, advice, advocacy and complaints' handling.

Justice V S Dave said that it is a wise decision on part of the government and these GSKs will definitely be able to protect the interests of consumers. Dave said that these platforms will be in a position to give direct and easy access to consumers for getting redressal.

Pradeep S Mehta opined that CUTS is fighting for the rights of consumers since 1983 and has been at the forefront for protection of these rights. He said that the organisation has been successful in achieving these goals with the help of weapons, such as 'consumer advocacy', which also contributed in creating awareness among consumers. This GSK will also work on similar lines.

Anant Sharma emphasised that any legislation, scheme or project could not be successful until and unless it reaches to the lower strata of the society because these are the people, who need utmost protection.

Sanjaya Jhala focussed on the commitment of the government for better implementation of the Consumer Protection Act and its support to any scheme for protection of interest of consumers.

During the programme, Surendra Chirana, a rural-based journalist was given *Gram Gadar* award for the best journalism at the rural level.

Engaging Citizens to Enhance Public Service Delivery Process

Addressing challenges of rapid urbanisation is the need of the hour which can be done by strengthening Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) through making them financially viable and creating more space for citizen engagement in the service delivery processes", this was unanimously agreed in an advocacy meeting organised by CUTS at Jaipur on August 27, 2015.

Addressing the participants, Purushotam Biyana, Director-cum-Joint Secretary, Directorate of Local Bodies, Government of Rajasthan said that efforts are being initiated by the Department to strengthen ULBs.

Mohan Lal Gupta, MLA, Jaipur said that in urban areas effective redressal of complaints should be ensured and which can be done using Public Service Guarantee Act and generating more awareness by such acts.

Ramavtar Raghuvanshi, Director, Rajasthan Institute of Local Self Government stated that structural changes are need of the hour in ULBs. He cited example of Surat where urban development tax regime has been reformed and Hyderabad where cleanliness has been ensured by taking innovative ways and means.

Cherian provided a brief overview of MyCity project and its relevance in the overall development of Jaipur city. He said that still lot more needs to be done by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), such as devolution of powers, activation of ward committees, enhancing more civic engagement etc.

While making presentation, Amar Deep Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS shared the key findings emerged out of the study done in Jaipur to assess the condition of public services delivered by urban bodies and perceptions of citizens.

Sanchita Bishnoi, Additional Director, Directorate of Local Bodies, Government of Rajasthan emphasised that every individual needs to develop some sense of ownership and therefore creating active citizenship is the key.

Bhawani Singh Rajawat, Chairman, Committee of Slums, JMC said that the value-based training to the government officials will certainly bring number of positive changes in the system.

Monika Solanki, Official from Jaipur Unite (an initiative by JMC for engaging citizens in making Jaipur clean and green) provided an overview of its initiative and requested participants to join it.

More than 100 participants including present and former councillors, JMC and other departmental officials, civil society organisation (CSO) representatives, resident welfare associations, civic bodies and media took part in the event.



Better Coordination between Municipal Corporations and DLBs

“All Mayors should be invited by the Directorate of Local Bodies (DLBs) to discuss their issues and grievances so that development work is not hampered. There is need of better coordination between DLBs and Municipal Corporations to efficiently deliver services”, Mahesh Vijay, Mayor of Kota was speaking in a conference organised by CUTS with the support of The Asia Foundation at Kota on September 22, 2015.

He said that in Kota Municipal Corporation, resource crunch is a main problem and human resources are seriously lacking. This issue should be taken up at DLB-level for solution.

Sunita Vyas, Deputy Mayor said that devolution of powers must happen at ward councillors level including Mayors as well since they are also public representatives and an important link in the service delivery process.

Sanchita Bishnoi, Additional Director, Directorate of Local Bodies, Government of Rajasthan said that many decisions are being taken at the Department-level to improve the efficiency of ULBs.

Cherian said that devolution of powers to ULBs and enhancing civic engagement are need of the hour so that Mayors are empowered and Municipalities strengthened.



National Environment

Awareness Campaign 2014-15

A total number of 295 proposals and an amount ₹29,50,000 got sanctioned under National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2014-15. The post proposal workshop was organised at Jaipur on August 18, 2015.



In the workshop, P K Merkap, Chairman, Rajasthan State Biodiversity Board was the chief guest, who delivered the keynote address. A total number of 164 participants attended the workshop.

National Consumer Convention

The Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) organised the National Consumer Convention at Hyderabad on September 26, 2015. Bandaru Dattatreya (Hon’ble Union Minister for Labour & Employment); Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, (Hon’ble Minister for Agriculture, Telangana); Kalvakuntla Kavita (Hon’ble Member of Parliament); Indrani Thuraisingham (Consumers International, APRO, Malaysia), Krishna Reddy (Chairman, CCC), Ramjibhai Mavani (Vice Chairman, CCC) etc. were present in the inaugural session. ESL Narasimhan, Governor of Andhra Pradesh was the chief guest in the valedictory function.



Cherian delivered the keynote address on theme ‘Consumer Empowerment in India: Challenges, Opportunities, and Strategies’ in technical session.

Green Action Week: Stakeholders' Consultation

CUTS international organised a State-level Stakeholders’ Consultation on ‘Organic Food and Farming for All’ making the conclusion of the Green Action Week campaign. The campaign was supported by Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) where findings of the consumer survey were shared.



A K Gupta, Prof. & Head, Rajasthan Agriculture Research Institute, Jaipur laid stress on healthy soil which gives healthy food, and be achieved with the help of integrated farming methods by adopting organic farming.

S S Rathore, Programme Coordinator, *Krishi Vigyan Kendra*, Chomu said that organic farming with best scientific techniques will be more beneficial to farmers.

Prof. S R Sharma, SKN Agriculture University, Jobner Jaipur opined that market, production system and availability are facing major constraints for organic products. If farmers adopt natural farming then it will reduce the cost of cultivation and increase the profit margin of farmers.

Cherian said that even though Rajasthan is moving towards the adoption of organic farming cultivation; it needs integrated efforts from both the government and farmers’ side. Varidhi Singh, Project Officer, CUTS International, Jaipur shared the activities conducted under this campaign. The consultation was attended by more than 70 participants including representatives of civil society organisations, educational and research institutes, universities and media.

REPRESENTATION IN MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS ETC.

Telecom Regulation

Deepak Saxena attended the West Zone regional meeting of Consumer Advocacy Groups and Service Providers of telecom conducted by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India at Udaipur on August 07, 2015.

India's Foreign Trade Policy

George Cherian, Madhu Sudan Sharma, Amarjeet Singh and Amar Deep Singh, along with other colleagues from CUTS, attended a session on 'India's Foreign Trade Policy' by C Raja Mohan (An Indian Academic, Journalist and Foreign Policy Analyst, and a Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi) at CUTS Conference Hall on August 01, 2015.

Social Waste Management

Amar Deep Singh participated in a consultation on 'Social Waste Management' organised by the Institute of Chartered Waste Management and Institute of Development Management at Jaipur on July 24, 2015.

Indian Financial Code

George Cherian and Gajendra Khichi, along with other staff from CUTS, attended meeting on Indian Financial Code conducted by Ashish Aggarwal and Bhargavi Zaveri from National Institute of Public Finance and Policy at CUTS Conference Hall on July 21, 2015.

Swachh Bharat Mission

Amar Deep Singh attended a conference on the *Swachh Bharat Mission* organised by Centre for Advocacy & Research jointly with City Managers' Association of Rajasthan at Jaipur on July 15, 2015.



CART IN MEDIA



VISITS

Visit of Joy Elamon

Joy Elamon, Chief Executive Officer of Intercooperation Social Development India (ISDI) and Senior Advisor (Local Governance) of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation visited CUTS on July 03, 2015 and met with Pradeep S Mehta, George Cherian and other staff and had discussions about possible collaboration.

Visit of 'Study Abroad Group'

University of Florida (USA), 'Study Abroad Group', comprising of 18 students along with faculty, Muthusami Kumaran and Leela Kumaran, visited CUTS on July 23, 2015 to know about the organisation and also interacted on the topic 'NGOs & Development'. The programme was co-ordinated by George Cherian, who made a brief presentation about CUTS, followed by the screening of the documentary film depicting journey of CUTS.

New Project

Rajasthan City Mayors' Learning Platform in partnership with The Asia Foundation

