



CUTS Centre for
Consumer Action,
Research & Training (CART)

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A Golden Beginning

In 1984, CUTS raised the first burning case in favour of consumers about virulent coin shortage. Reserve Bank of India was written a letter followed by a joint petition signed by 44 MLAs of Rajasthan, including the present Vice-President of India, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. A highly acclaimed editorial page article by Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, in *Janasatta*, provoked the Government to take immediate action and end the shortage.

State Level Dissemination Meeting of PETS

The state level dissemination meeting of the Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) on 'Mid Day Meal Scheme' (MDMS) in Rajasthan, implemented by CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS-CART), in partnership with the SASANet and supported by the World Bank was held at Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur, Rajasthan, on June 08, 2006.

The meeting started with a welcome note by George Cheriyan, who briefed the objective of the project as well as the meeting, and explained the various tools being used for social accountability. His address was followed by a brief introduction of Social Accountability Pilots by J V R Murty, World Bank. K C Sharma and Dudheshwar Kumar of CUTS-CART presented the key findings of the survey while Murty explained the summary of the findings highlighting the important issues that emerged from it. Saroj Punhani, Accountant General (Audit), Rajasthan, who chaired the meeting, appreciated the efforts made by CART. Nathu Singh Gurjar, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and chairman of the Estimates Committee said, "MDM is a very good and important programme having multi dimensional objectives and goals".

Vinod Sehgal, Regional Public Finance Accountability Specialist of the World Bank said that Rajasthan has a strong tradition of social accountability but the issue is the effective implementation of programme/schemes. Divisional Commissioner Jaipur, Rajendra Bhanawat said that unless the reality is accepted, the goals would not be accomplished.

S S Acharya, former Director IDS, pointed out that involvement of teachers in the MDMS is hampering the teaching work, which, in turn, is affecting the quality of education. Delivering the valedictory address, MLA and Chairman of the Public Accounts

Committee, C P Joshi emphasised the need to fix accountability by improving the traditional accounting system and social audit. R K Sharma coordinated the proceedings of the meeting and proposed the vote of thanks.

About 60 selected delegates from various government departments, NGOs, research institutions and media, including government officials related to

MDMS from Chittorgarh and CHD staff attended the meeting. Media, both electronic and print, provided wide coverage of the event.

De-briefing Meeting

Earlier a de-briefing meeting was held in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, on May 11, 2006. About 100 representatives from various blocks of Chittorgarh district participated in the meeting. In addition to J V R Murty; Rajendra Singh Shekhawat, (Additional District Magistrate); T C Damor (City Superintendent of Police), Sunil Kumar Jha (Chief Executive Officer, *Zilla Parishad*), Narmada Bhambi (Deputy Executive Officer, *Zilla Parishad*), Pushpa Khilani (Chief Medical & Health Officer), Shiv Shankar Daadich, (*Pradhan*, Rashmi), Manohar Lal Anjana (*Pradhan*, Choti Sadri) attended the de-briefing meeting. George Cheriyan, K C Sharma and Dhudeshwar Kumar from CART and Dhanna Singh Rawat and Madan Giri Goswami from CHD also attended and coordinated the meeting.



Dissemination meeting in progress



Children participating in Essay Competition

Essay Competition

was 'Are we children too: Problems and Solutions.' About 50 students, from various schools of Jaipur participated and put forth their views on the status of child domestic workers.

An inter-school essay competition, as a part of sensitisation and awareness generation programme under the project on Child Domestic Workers (CDWs), was held at Krishnayan Hall, Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur on May 12, 2006. The topic of the competition

While inaugurating the essay competition and addressing the students, parents and the teachers, George Cheriyan, highlighted various issues involving CDWs and the need for collective action through child-to-child approach to address the issue and advocacy with the Government. Dharmendra Chaturvedi explained various

activities being undertaken under the project. Priyanka Gupta (Intern at CUTS) coordinated the competition and proposed the vote of thanks.

Students also signed a declaration in which they vowed to say no to child domestic work and also to create awareness on the sensitive issue of child rights to the best of their abilities.

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Justice Jain distributing prizes

State Level Advocacy Seminar

Moving forward from Awareness to Advocacy

towards these problems along with a positive outlook. Only then some concrete outputs will be achieved' said Mr. Singh.

A documentary film "Jiya" was also shown during the seminar to make the participants aware of the harassment that the child domestic workers are facing. The theme of this film was centrally based on a character 'Jiya' who was brought by his uncle from a village to a city in order to work in a house, where she was ill treated and physically harassed but at the end of the day she managed to return to her village. This film successfully managed to create a sense of belongingness and solidarity among the children and adults watching it.

While initiating the open discussions, Programme Coordinator, Save the Children (UK), Neetu Sahi emphasised the need to locate child domestic workers and sensitise each and every person on the issue. She appreciated the work done by CUTS-CART during the year long project.

Anil K. Joseph (World Vision of India), Manju Bala Joshi (CECOEDECON) and Tara Singhal (Rajasthan University Women's Association), along with several others, actively participated in the discussions and put forward suggestions for a future plan of action and recommendations for advocacy. While intervening in the discussions, George Cheriyan, Associate Director, CUTS spoke about the national and international acts and laws for ensuring Rights of Children and the need to follow the same. Any attempt to accept the CDWs as a reality, traditionally followed in the country, will dilute the cause and will hamper the whole purpose of the campaign, he cautioned. A future plan of action was finalised based on the recommendations emerging out of the seminar. It was decided to submit the recommendations to the State Government.

About 100 participants, representing various INGOs/NGOs, Government Departments, media and teachers and students of the selected schools of Jaipur who participated in the project, attended the seminar. Priyanka Gupta anchored the seminar and K C Sharma made the concluding remarks and proposed the Vote of Thanks.

Although there are laws to protect other forms of child labour, the CDWs have not been included in the legal provisions till date. Unless the common man wakes up to the needs of these children and changes his attitude, the situation won't change", said Chairman of the Rajasthan State Human Rights Commission Justice N K Jain while delivering the inaugural address, as the Chief Guest, of the state level advocacy seminar under the project on CDWs held in Jaipur on May 26, 2006. In his address, he suggested inclusion of adequate provisions in the Child Labour Act to protect the rights of child domestic workers. 'Although many laws exist in order to ensure the Right to Equality but the implementation is very weak. To achieve the aforesaid, political will, public and parents' support will have to be ensured,' Justice Jain further stated.

Earlier, Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Coordinator of the project, made introductory remarks, and welcomed the guests. Chaturvedi along with Priyanka Gupta made a detailed presentation, on the one-year activities of the project, setting the direction of the advocacy seminar. The Chief Guest also distributed prizes to the children, who participated in various competitions under the year-long project.

Project Director, National Child Labour Project (NCLP) and Asst. Labour Commissioner, Jivraj Singh delivered the keynote address. There is a dire need to develop and follow a common code of conduct to tackle the issue. Media plays a vital role in propagating such issues. There has to be a focused approach

Evaluation Workshop under Power Sector Reforms

The state level evaluation workshop marking the conclusion of the activities under the second phase of the CUTS-Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) programme was organised at Jaipur, Rajasthan, on June 23-24, 2006.

A total of 96 participants from 22 districts of Rajasthan attended the workshop. This included 12 circles, where the second phase was carried out. Y Mathur, Energy Secretary, Government of Rajasthan inaugurated the evaluation workshop. Representing the Power Distribution Companies, Superintendent Engineer, P K Vijay of Jaipur Power Distribution Company attended the



Inaugural address by Y Mathur, Energy Secretary, GoR

workshop as a resource person and facilitated a session on 'Feeder Reforms in Rajasthan and its different franchisees'. As a resource person, Retired Secretary of Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC), Prabhat Dayal took the session on regulations and tariff

settings. D M Mathur, a leading lawyer of Rajasthan High Court, took up the non-technical session on consumer advocacy on electricity. CUTS Secretary General Pradeep S Mehta delivered the valedictory address in the concluding session.

The evaluation workshop was a great success in terms of participation, sessions, group discussions, deliberations and group presentations with lot of new ideas and recommendations put forward. Deepak Saxena of CUTS-CART coordinated the workshop.

Prior to the evaluation workshop, the eleventh circle level workshop under the project was organised at Ajmer on April 7, 2006 and 12th workshop was organised at Udaipur on May 17, 2006.

PROJECTS & PROGRAMMES

Peer Review of Budget

Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington DC is working on International Budget Project (IBP). The project aims to measure the level of transparency in national budgetary processes in 60 countries. The findings are based on a detailed questionnaire (122 questions) that was filled out by research organisations working in these countries.

The questionnaire was to be further reviewed by the peer reviewers. K C Sharma was appointed as a peer reviewer under the IBP to examine the questionnaire (containing 122 questions) in the context of India Budget. After examining all the answers given by the research organisations, the observations were communicated to the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities, Washington DC on 26 April 2006.

Post Card Campaign

The Tiwari Committee was formed by the Rajasthan High Court while hearing a PIL on the regular increase in the fee structure of all the aided and non-aided schools in the state. The committee submitted its recommendation to the court in December last year after which the court left its implementation on the discretion of the state government.

Urging the government to implement the report soon a post card campaign was initiated by CART during April. Hundreds of post cards are being sent to the Chief Minister for the past one-month by parents of school going children urging the implementation of the recommendations. Dharmendra Chaturvedi coordinated the campaign, which was done through the network of CUTS.

Administrative Reforms

The Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC), Government of India convened a public hearing at the auditorium of Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sansthan in Jaipur on May 24, 2006 to elicit suggestions for improving delivery of services and reforming the administration.

The ARC covered all areas of administration at the local, state and national level. M. Veerappa Moily (Member of Parliament & former Chief Minister, Karnataka) is chairing the ARC. Vineeta Rai, Member Secretary and Jayaprakash Narayan, Member, ARC were present along with state level officials to gather suggestions from different groups present in the hearing. Representing CUTS, R K Sharma and K C Sharma appeared in the public hearing and submitted suggestions for key administrative reforms that are necessary in all spheres of administration in the country.

REPRESENTATIONS / EVENTS

Seminar on investment

Planning Commission, New Delhi in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur organised a one-day seminar on 'Critical issues of investment in Rajasthan', in the context of the XIth Five Year Plan on 12 April 2006 at IDSJ. Pradeep S Mehta and K C Sharma attended the seminar.

Seminar: Advertisement Standards

The European Union in association with Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC), organised a Seminar on April 21, 2006, Indian Code of Advertisement Standards (Draft) and proposed Law for Advertisement Standards Regulatory Commission (ASRC). Representing CUTS, Deepak Saxena attended the seminar.

Sharing on Aapni Yojna

In order to share the learning of *Aapni Yojna* and findings of the different studies with the wider audience, an experience-sharing workshop was organised in Jaipur on April 27, 2006 by the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), Government of Rajasthan and Community Participation Unit (CPU) consisting of five NGOs/Institutions. On behalf of CART, R K Sharma participated in the workshop.

Release of Citizen's Report

Governor Pratibha Patil released the Citizen's Report on 'Governance and Development' prepared by National Social Watch Centre (NSWC) and the Hindi version of the report prepared by Rajasthan Social Watch, in a function organised at Raj Bhavan on April 27, 2006. George Cheriyan attended the function.

Business Initiative for Road Safety

Shell India Pvt Ltd and Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP) organised a workshop on Business Initiative for Road Safety Standards-Voluntary Code for Conduct for Fleet Operators in Bangalore on May 17-18, 2006. Deepak Saxena attended the workshop on May 18 and made a presentation on road safety.

A Civil Society Review of the CMP

The 2nd Civil Society Review of the National Common Minimum Program (CMP) was held on May 23, 2006 at Indian Social Institute, Delhi to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of what the government has gained or missed in its achievement of the CMP, and to formulate policy recommendations and strategic actions for advocacy in this context. George Cheriyan and R K Sharma attended the review workshop.

Workshop: Tobacco Control Law

George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena attended the national workshop on "Strategies for Effective Implementation of the Tobacco Control Law" organised by VOICE, Delhi in collaboration with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, GoI and the World Health Organisation (WHO) at India Habitat Centre, Delhi. About 200 delegates from all over the country attended the national workshop. Ambumani Ramadoss, Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, inaugurated the workshop.

World Vision Consultative Meeting

George Cheriyan and Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended a one-day strategy consultation meeting organised by World Vision of India at Maharani Plaza in Jaipur on June 9, 2006. The purpose was to gather ideas in the areas of health, education and livelihoods for the second phase of the area development programme to be implemented in nine slums in Jaipur.

Child Rights Seminar at Chaksu

Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended, as a resource person, a child rights seminar held at Chaksu on June 26, 2006 organised by Gramodaya Samajik Sansthan for the PRI representatives from 10 villages in Jaipur rural under the 'child rights and development programme' of Save the Children (Finland).

MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT/DONOR AGENCIES

- On May 17, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met Suabrata Dey, the new State Representative of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Jaipur. The purpose was to explore the possibility of collaboration with CRS.
- On May 18, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met Priyadarshini Roy, the new Zonal Director of SC (UK). In addition to briefing her about the progress of CDW & RGEP projects,

the possibility of consortium funding for a project on "Combating Child Labor in Rajasthan" also was discussed.

- On May 19, 2006, Deepak Saxena met Chandana S. Wali, Programme Secretary, HIVOS in Bangalore. The purpose was to explore the possibility of funding support from HIVOS.
- On May 22, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met with Sanjeev Reddy, Director, Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in New

Delhi. The purpose was to explore the small funding possibilities for consumer protection available with IIPA.

- On May 22, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met with Somnath Bandyopadhyay, Senior Programme Officer, Rural Development and Vivek Singh Programme Officer, Rural Development in New Delhi. The purpose was to explore the possibility of partnering with AKF.

MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT/DONOR AGENCIES

- On May 22, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met with Lori Roskam Cajegas in Delhi. She is the representative of Novib for South Asia.
- On May 23, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met with Jürgen Bischoff, Director, Advisory Services in Environmental Management (ASEM), GTZ in New Delhi. The main purpose of the meeting was to find out the details of the project on "Strengthening Consumer Protection in India" as part of the bilateral agreement between Government of India and Federal Republic of Germany.
- On May 30, 2006, George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena met with S K Misra, Director, Road Transport, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India in New Delhi. Ramu Gupta, Under Secretary also was present during the meeting and discussion. The purpose of the meeting was to remind them about the CUTS application for funding support for the year 2006-07.
- On May 30, 2006, George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena met with U K Sinha, Under Secretary, IEPF, Ministry of

- Company Affairs, Government of India. He is responsible for the IEPF. The purpose of the meeting was to follow the pending payment from the previous IEPF project and to discuss the status of the new application.
- On May 30, 2006, George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena visited Department of Consumer Affairs and met with P Venkatesan, Director, Consumer Protection Unit, Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Government of India. S L Meena, Under Secretary, DoCA also was present during the discussions.
- On May 31, 2006, George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena met with Vineet Gill Munish, National Professional Officer Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI) of World Health Organisation (WHO) and discussed the possibility of collaboration with WHO.
- On June 9, 2006 George Cheriyan briefly met with Subrat Kumar Padhi (Grants Accounts Officer, Save the Children, UK, New Delhi) and Monika Garg (Administrator, Zonal Office, Save the Children, UK, Jaipur), who visited CUTS to discuss accounting procedures.

- On June 16, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma visited the office of Save the Children (Finland) in Jaipur and met with Mukesh Krishan Lath, Country Programme Manager and discussed the possibility of collaboration with SC (F).
- On June 22, 2006, George Cheriyan and R K Sharma met with the Chief Medical & Health Officer (CMHO), Bhilwara Yashpal Gupta and DAO Choudhary, who visited the CART office as part of the appraisal for MNGO Bhilwara.
- Two members representing OECD, Paul Conway, Economist, India Desk, Economics Department, OECD and Simrit Kaur, Reader in Economics, Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi who are extending consultation services to OECD visited CUTS on June 30, 2006. Representing CART, R.K. Sharma met with them and participated in the discussions along with others from CUTS.
- K C Sharma and Dharmendra visited the office of UNICEF and met with Sushmita, Programme Officer, Education on June 30, 2006 and discussed possible collaboration with UNICEF in education sector.

PUBLICATIONS

- **Panchva Stambh**
(quarterly newsletter)
- **Gram Gadar**
(monthly wall newspaper)
- **Hum Bhi Bachche Hain**
(quarterly project newsletter)



FUTURE ACTIVITIES

SMAC Workshops (4th round)

The fourth round of Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC) with the support of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will begin from the month of July 2006. In this round, 10 workshops will be conducted in small towns and rural areas of Rajasthan for educating the small investors about the dynamics of capital and share market.

CART IN MEDIA

