



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.

National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC)



The Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India (GoI) has appointed Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), Jaipur, as the Regional Resource Agency (RRA) for Rajasthan under the National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) for three years, i.e. from 2006-07 to 2008-09. CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), is entrusted with the responsibility to performing as the RRA.

The MoEF, GoI, has been organising the NEAC every year since 1986. The NEAC is a flagship campaign of the MoEF with the objective of creating environmental awareness at the national level. In total, 34 organisations located in different parts of the country have been designated as RRAs this year for assisting the MoEF in conducting and coordinating the NEAC.

The theme for NEAC for the year 2006-07 is: 'Solid Waste Management'. The Ministry has further identified sub-themes for conducting the campaign, which include: management of household waste/municipal waste; bio-medical waste; plastic waste; electronic waste; and industrial waste such as fly ash, composting/vermin-composting and waste management at higher altitude. Several non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational and training institutions, professional

associations, scientific bodies, community organisations and a whole range of other agencies are expected to participate in the campaign. These bodies, singularly or in partnership with other organisations,

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would organise programmes for creating environmental awareness followed by field action at the local, regional and national level.

In view of the wide range of inter-related environmental problems facing the country, the activities of the NEAC aim to focus on environmental issues, especially those that are related to the theme. Due emphasis is put forward for devising concrete, action-oriented activities against the issue/problem identified at the local level.

Moreover, the Campaign is being planned and overseen by the Ministry of Environment & Forests (GoI). The decentralised mechanism adopted for conducting NEAC since 1993 is being continued this year too.

As part of this campaign, CUTS CART organised the first open workshop, at the divisional level on September 28, 2006 at Kota, mainly to assist the participating NGOs in the preparation of the proposals. The remaining five open workshops at the divisional level are scheduled to be held at Churu, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Johdpur and Jaipur on October 3-7, 2006 respectively.



Project on CDWs Concluded Successfully Coinciding with Government Ban



The project concluded on July 31, 2006, coinciding with the Government of India's decision to ban employment of children as domestic servants or workers, and as helpers in *dhabas*, restaurants, hotels, motels, teashops, resorts, spas and other recreational centres through an order dated August 01, 2006.

The ban, effective from October 10 this year, has been imposed under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. The Labour Ministry,

which issued the notification giving the mandatory three-month notice, has warned that violators are liable to prosecution and other penal action under the Act. CUTS CART welcomed the

ban through a press release on August 2, 2006, which was published in the English and Hindi dailies.

Prior to the conclusion of the project the formation of Monitoring Cells (MCs) were held from July 10, 2006. Out of the 21 schools, MCs were formed 10 Schools consisting of one teacher and 10-15 students to carry on the project activities beyond the project period. In 13 schools, MCs were already formed before the summer vacation. The last and final issue (April-June) of the quarterly newsletter '*Hum Bhi Bachche Hain*' was brought out on the July 21, 2006. The same was distributed in each of the partnering schools.

In addition, the newsletter was mailed to about 200 individuals and NGOs/INGOs working on child rights.

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World Bank Appreciates CUTS Participation in PETS

'CUTS has taken keen interest in this pilot and provided able leadership to the project. The partnership with CUTS in this pilot project has been fruitful and mutually beneficial,' says a letter of appreciation, dated September 22, 2006, received from J V R Murty, Operations Analyst, Water and Sanitation Programme – South Asia, The World Bank, who was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the project, on CUTS participation in the project.

After incorporating the comments from J V R Murty the final report of the Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) titled 'Measuring Effectiveness of Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) in Rajasthan' was submitted to the World Bank on September 13, 2006. On the basis of the submission of the report, the project was successfully concluded on September 15, 2006.

During a meeting of CUTS CART staff with the Panchayati Raj Minister of



Rajasthan, Kalu Lal Gurjar on August 24, 2006, the background of the pilot project and the plan to expand the same to other parts of the state was explained to him by K C Sharma and a copy of key findings was submitted to him. The Minister responded positively to the idea. He said after receiving the final report the matter can be discussed with the Chief Minister. In a brief meeting with Dr N C Saxena, Commissioner to the Supreme Court, on August 29, 2006, George Cheriyan explained the project to him. He had shown interest in the social accountability

activities of CUTS CART and appreciated the efforts.

Sanjay Agarwal, IAS, (from Maharashtra cadre), who recently joined the World Bank in the South Asia Agriculture and Rural Development Unit (SASRD) visited CUTS on September 25, 2006. The main purpose of the visit was to review the learning from the pilot phase, to discuss the effective documentation of the same and also to discuss the possible areas of intervention in the second phase of the project. After meeting with staff in CUTS CART, Sanjay Agarwal had discussions with George Cheriyan and K C Sharma on the above-mentioned matters. It was conveyed that the next meeting of the partners of the SASANet is tentatively scheduled to be held in Hyderabad from November 22-24, 2006, where a final decision will be taken about the next phase of activities. It was decided that CUTS CART would share the learning from the pilot phase in the partners meeting.

Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC)

The workshops under the fourth round of Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC) supported by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) started in July, 2006 with a purpose to generate awareness among the investors. The objectives of the campaign are: to encourage the saving habit among the common people; to provide guidance for making the right investment and economic planning; to provide information about securities market and other options; to make investors aware of their rights; and to protect the interests of the investors and develop the securities market, so that people could be aware to invest their saved and hard-earned money into various securities and earn maximum benefits safely.

The first workshop was conducted in Ahore in the Jalore District of Rajasthan on July 27, 2006. The programme was organised at Hotel Govindam and was attended by around 50 small and rural investors. The main speaker in the programme was Mohan Parashar, Chartered Accountant by profession, has a sound knowledge of stock market. The other speakers were S D Solanki, Branch Manager, State Bank of India, Ahore Branch; Anil Vangani, Manager, LIC of India, Jalore Office and Lalit Kumar Dave, District Small Savings Officer, Jalore. The programme was well organised and well attended. The media also had given wide coverage to the workshop.

The second workshop was conducted in Jhalawar on August 26, 2006. The programme was organised at Ganpati Plaza, Jhalawar. The main resource person was Girish Kumar Sharma, Chartered Accountant, who has a sound knowledge of stock and

capital market. The other resource person was Prabhat Tiwari, Share Broker, Share Trading Co., Jhalawar. This programme was organised by CUTS CART with assistance from local networker Anwar Ahmed Khan, President, Desh Sevak Welfare Society, Kota. Deepak Saxena and Dharmendra Chaturvedi from CUTS spoke in the workshop.

The third workshop was organised on September 16, 2006, at Baran. Govind Prasad Garg, Chartered Accountant, Vijay Kumar Parik, Advocate and Secretary, Guardian Council and Pradeep Kumar Dalmia, Share Broker, who were present in the workshop, facilitated the workshop and provided information on capital market and addressed the queries from the investors. The fact that came to light from the workshop was that the investors of Baran, including its adjoining villages are not aware enough, so that they could invest their saved money or accumulated wealth in capital market suitably. Anwar Ahmed Khan, Chairman, Desh Sewak Welfare Society, Kota was the local coordinator. Dharmendra Chaturvedi and B N Sharma delivered introductory speeches on the SMAC & about CUTS respectively.

The fourth workshop was held in Bundi, Kota on September 29, 2006. The programme was organised at Pilot Public Secondary School, Bundi. The main resource person was Rajendra, Chartered Accountant, who has a sound knowledge of stock and capital market. The programme was well organised and well attended. The media also had given wide coverage for the workshop. This programme was organised with assistance of networker Hari Parsad Yogi, President, Consumer Legal Help Society, Sawai Madhopur.

Fourth Round



CUTS CART organised a function at the residence of *Panchayati Raj* Minister Kalu Lal Gurjar to distribute 'Gram Gadar' Awards, in Jaipur, on August 24, 2006. The following persons received the prize money of Rs 3,000 along with a certificate from the Minister:

- **Srawan Kumar Yadav** (*Rajasthan Patrika*, Jaipur) – Corruption
- **Geeta Yadav** (*Media Chakra*, Jaipur) – Violence against children
- **Kumar Ajay** (*Dainik Bhaskar*, Sikar) – Reforms in Agriculture

GRAM GADAR AWARDS



RK Sharma and Deepak Saxena made a brief introduction of CUTS as well as the award respectively. Minister congratulated the winners of the award and also CUTS, for establishing such an award for rural journalism. In addition to the CUTS CART staff George Cheriyan, RK Sharma, Deepak Saxena, K C Sharma and Dharmendra

Chaturvedi, a good number of media persons, including press photographers were present on the occasion. The media provided a wide coverage to the function.

REPRESENTATIONS / EVENTS

Coping Drought Challenges

Disaster Management and Relief Department, Government of Rajasthan and Save the Children (UK) jointly organised a State level Consultation on 'Coping Drought Challenges in Rajasthan' at HCM RIPA, Jaipur on July 28-29, 2006. Representing CUTS CART, K C Sharma attended the consultation on both the days.

AGM of CCC

Representing CUTS, Deepak Saxena attended the 15th Annual General Meeting of Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) on July 30, 2006 at Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi.

Quality Infrastructure

Representing CUTS, George Cheriyan attended the sub group meeting on quality infrastructure, under the working group on Consumer Protection of the Planning Commission for making recommendations in the context of preparing the XIth Five Year Plan to get relevant inputs held at Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on, July 31, 2006. CUTS' suggestions were submitted to the group. George Cheriyan also attended the third and final meeting of the

sub group on quality infrastructure held at Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) on August 18, 2006. Rakesh Verma, Additional Director General, BIS and convener of the sub group chaired the meeting. The meeting finalised the report and decided to prepare the proposed action plan in the policy format, as required by the Planning Commission, by August 21, 2006.

Prioritising Women & Children

The United Nations Children's Fund in collaboration with Department of Women & Child Development, Department of Planning and Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration organised a state level consultation on 'Prioritising Women & Children in the 11th Five Year Plan' at HCM-RIPA on August 29-30, 2006. The purpose of the consultation was to enrich the 11th Five Year Plan preparation process and ensure that measures to realise the rights of women and children are duly reflected in the plan document. George Cheriyan and RK Sharma attended the inaugural session of the consultation on August 29, 2006.

Consumer Protection

Deepak Saxena facilitated a session in the two day 'Executive Development

Programme' organised for officers of (REIL) sRajasthan Electronics and Instrumentation Ltd. by the Management Development Academy, highlighting the consumer protection issues to benefit executives of public sector manufacturing units like REIL, on September 10, 2006 at Amer, Jaipur.

Consumer Education

George Cheriyan along with Mani Lamba attended the sub group meeting on consumer education and awareness held on August 03, 2006 in the Conference hall of Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) chaired by the convener Richen Tempo, Joint Secretary, DoCA. CUTS' suggestions to the sub group was submitted and was well received.

KIC Inception

Inception Workshop of the KIC-GRANITE project "Documenting advocacy practices involving local stakeholders with the process of trade and globalisation in four Indian States" was held on September 09, 2006 at Jaipur. Representing CART, RK Sharma attended the workshop and made a power point presentation on an 'Overview of GRANITE'.

MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT/DONOR AGENCIES

- Deepak Saxena visited the Ministry of Company Affairs, Government of India on July 31, 2006 and met with Rajendra Singh, the Under Secretary, who is at present looking after the Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF) matters.
- Deepak Saxena met Dr Shailaja Sharma, Manager, Corporate Responsibility, Shell India on July 31, 2006 in New Delhi. The purpose was to explore the possibilities of working together in road safety area.
- George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena met with Kabir Seth at Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), New Delhi on July 31, 2006 afternoon. The main purpose was to discuss the 3rd Phase of CUTS-FES Intervention.
- George Cheriyan met Dr Rashid Hasan, Director Scientific, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government

of India in his office on August 18, 2006. The main purpose was to discuss the details regarding the NEAC under the Ministry, in the context of selection of CUTS in the RRA for Rajasthan.

- George Cheriyan visited Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi on August 18, 2006 and met with Prof S S Singh, who is in-charge of the schemes under consumer protection with the IIPA. The main purpose of the visit was to discuss regarding the status of the research proposal on Adulterated food items submitted to IIPA by CART. After the meeting with Prof. Singh, George also met Dr P L Sanjeev Reddy, Director, IIPA.
- Pradeep S Mehta and RK Sharma met with Ram Lubhaya, Principal Secretary, Department of *Panchayati Raj* & Rural Development, Government of

Rajasthan at Secretariat, Jaipur. It was a courtesy meeting.

- R K Sharma visited the District Poverty Initiative Programme (DPIP) office, Jaipur on August 31, 2006 and met with the State Project Director Abhay Kumar. The meeting was to pursue the pending DPIP matter.
- RK Sharma met with the *Panchayati Raj* Minister of Rajasthan, Shri Kalu Lal Gurjar on September 5, 2006 at his residence to discuss the pending matter of DPIP.
- Deepak Saxena and K C Sharma visited Nathu Singh Gurjar and Dr C P Joshi, Members of Legislative Assembly of Rajasthan on 27 & 29 September, 2006 respectively. The main purpose of the meeting was to share the idea regarding the possibility of forming a 'Legislators Forum on Economic Issues' in Rajasthan.

