



CUTS Centre for  
Consumer Action,  
Research & Training



# Catalyst

Quarterly E-Newsletter

Volume 3, No.2

April-June, 2007

## About CART

Established in 1996, CUTS CART is pursuing 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 more responsible society and encouraging changes at the policy level by advocating with the government machinery and sensitising it to its issues of concern to the common man. The Centre has spearheaded several campaigns and pioneered consumer empowerment.

## Towards Enhancing Transparency & Accountability

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), Jaipur organised a State Level Launch Meeting of the project 'Combating Corruption in Rajasthan State, India, by Applying RTI Act as a Tool' at Conference Hall, Patel Bhawan, HCM-RIPA, Jaipur on April 18, 2007.

The project is being implemented by CUTS CART in partnership with the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), an international NGO based in Washington DC, US dedicated to helping civil society to play an effective role in the design, implementation and monitoring of national anti-corruption programmes.

The project is being implemented in two administrative districts of Rajasthan state viz. Jaipur and Tonk with a rural community-based approach. The objectives of the project are: to generate awareness, provoke/encourage the common citizens towards application of Right to Information (RTI) Act; to empower the civil society organisations (CSOs) and the vulnerable sections at the grassroots and support them in improving functioning of the existing accountability mechanisms; and to advocate with the policy makers for effective implementation of RTI Act for ensuring good governance and accountability.

While delivering the special address, CD Arah, Chief Information Commissioner (CIC), Andhra



**Dignitaries at the Launch Meeting of the Project**

Pradesh, who was the Guest of Honour at the event, spoke about the different clauses of RTI Act. He pointed out the need to build capacity of general public regarding the use of RTI Act and said that selection of mode/method to impart/disseminate knowledge and information on RTI Act is critical.

Wajahat Habibullah, CIC of India, who was the Chief Guest in the meeting, formally launched the project. While delivering the inaugural address, the CIC said, "Right to Information Act is a tool, not a weapon". He opined that RTI Act should be used in a cordial manner that could address corruption up some extent and ensure transparency and accountability. Further, he added that there is an ardent necessity to orient public as well as public servants about RTI Act so that it can be collectively used for the development of the country. He highlighted that a combined force of Consumer Protection Act and RTI Act, in the hands of citizens, could prove to be a big tool to combat corruption. He also expressed the need to develop 'Information Technology' (IT) in

government departments to facilitate the process of information dissemination under RTI Act. The use of modern methods of communications such as e-mails etc., could provide a breakthrough and unlock new dimensions towards transparency and accountability in Public Sector, he added.

Habibullah responded to a number of questions raised by the participants after his inaugural address.

JVR Murty, the World Bank, Mumbai, moderated the Technical Session on 'RTI Act and its Potential being a tool to ensure transparency and accountability in the government system.' Sonal Thacker from



**Habibullah Interacting with the Media**

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), Gujarat, while facilitating the session introduced various aspects and clauses of RTI Act and its implications.

## INSIDE

- **Projects and Programmes**
- **Representation**
- **Meetings/Visits**
- **Future Activities**
- **Publications**
- **CART in Media**

## Poster Competition on World No Tobacco Day

Under the project "Tobacco: Deadly in Any Form or Disguise" in partnership with Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and the World Health Organisation (WHO), India, on April 28, 2007 a poster competition involving the partnering schools of Jaipur city was organised at Rotary Club Hall, Jaipur. The competition was based on the theme 'Tobacco & Health'.

About 69 students representing 13 schools participated in the event and created attractive posters on the theme. Through



Students Taking Part in Poster Competition

the competition, students were able to express their ideas and thoughts on the crucial topic. The competition was followed by a meeting in which students and teachers

participated. Dr SP Yadav, Director, Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan and Dr Malati Tiwari, Soni Hospital, addressed the students on 'Tobacco Control Initiatives' and explained various health problems that are caused as a result of tobacco consumption. As part of the project, seven road shows were also organised during April & May, 2007.

To mark the 'World No Tobacco Day' (WNTD), a Road Show and a Signature Campaign was organised on May 30, 2007. Signature campaign focused on the 'ban of smoking in public places', which was carried out at Collectorate Circle and Chandpole Gate at Jaipur.

Approximately 200 people including lawyers, policemen, rickshaw pullers and students pledged their support to the campaign by signing the banner.

Road Show was organised near Purana Pagal Khana, Chandpole Gate in which a large number of people gathered and extended their support by signing the banner.

## Consumer Awareness Programme (CAP)



Audience Listening to Rajendra Singh Shekhawat

CUTS CART, in association with Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan launched Consumer Awareness Programme (CAP) on April 07, 2007. The skill training programme for the selected representatives of two blocks of Chittorgarh district was also clubbed with the launch.

CAP will be implemented in 20 selected blocks of 10 districts in Rajasthan. The activities, which are to be conducted under the programme in a period of one year are: Skill Training Programmes; Consumer Friends Training; Awareness Campaigns on specific burning issues related to Consumer Protection; and Awareness Rallies.

Rajendra Singh Shekhawat, Additional Collector and G P Bohra, the District Supply Officer were the guests at the launch meeting. Rajeenish Pitalia (Advocate), Chandmal Garg (Advocate) and Prahlad Rai (Advocate) were the resource persons, who moderated different technical sessions on Consumer Protection Act (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 other events related to CAP were held at Sultanpur, Kota (May 09-11), Behror, Alwar (May 19-21), Itawa, Kota (May 29-31) and Alwar (June 13-15).

## Launch of CUTS-FES Programme in the Power Sector (Phase-III)

The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the CUTS-FES programme entitled 'Involvement of Consumers in the Power Sector Reforms in Rajasthan' was formally launched on May 22, 2007 along with a district level training at Bharatpur, which was attended by officials from the Discom. The broad objectives of the programme are:

- to enhance regulatory efficacy in electricity sector through greater involvement of consumers and advocacy groups of Rajasthan through building their capacities to participate in regulatory processes in an effective manner; and
- to pursue more civil society groups to work on this issue and set up an informal network of such groups across the states to enable concerted action and sharing of experiences.

The second District Level Training programme was held at Bundi, on June 22, 2007.



Discom Officials at the 3rd Phase of CUTS-FES Programme

## Launch of Vidhayak Samvad

In a meeting at the Legislative Assembly premises, CUTS CART launched the *Vidhayak Samvad* on April 27, 2007. Smt. Sumitra Singh, the honourable Speaker of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly formally launched the forum. Delivering the inaugural address, she



Pradeep S Mehta with Sumitra Singh at Vidhayak Samvad

said that in keeping with the demand of present time, the Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of all political parties should work on important issues like water and electricity by creating unanimous public opinion. There is a need for leaders of political parties cutting across the party line, to work on issues of public importance by creating consensus.

Highlighting the importance of the '*Vidhayak Samvaad*' forum meeting, Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS said that a need was felt to create such a forum in order to raise the issues of public importance, and hence, the first meeting of this forum was organised. The subject of the '*Samvaad*' was water and electricity. Dr C P Joshi, the MLA from Nathdwara said that the governments of all political parties have spent huge amount of money on water and electricity and have reached agreements on these two basic necessities with the governments of other states. Expressing his opinion, Surendra Pareek, the MLA from Hawamahal criticised the free services and opposed the grant-in-aid services and said they neither show the services nor price of commodities.

Among the participants, 25 MLAs representing different political parties and those who shared their viewpoints and suggestions on issues related to water and electricity were: Mohan Lal Gupta, Surendra Pareek, Brij Kishore Sharma, Smt. Raj Kumari Sharma, Rao Rajendra Singh, Dr Suresh Choudhary and Bharat Singh presented.

### REPRESENTATIONS

#### Workshop on Social Responsibility

Deepak Saxena attended a two days workshop on 'ISO 26000 Guidance Standards on Social Responsibility: Its implications for Developing Countries' organised by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), New Delhi and VOICE, New Delhi, in association with Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India.

#### Silver Jubilee National Seminar

George Cheriyan and R K Sharma attended the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur (IDSJ) Silver Jubilee National Seminar on 'Rainfed Agriculture in India-Perspectives and Issues in the Changing Economic Environment' held at IDS, Jaipur on April 23, 2007.

#### National Workshop on Tobacco

Ritu Agarwal attended a two-day national workshop for capacity building on 'Bloomberg Global Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use' organised by Health Related

Information Dissemination Amongst Youth-Student Health Action Network (HRIDAY-SHAN) in partnership with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India on May 17-18, 2007 in New Delhi.

#### Consultations on Enterprises

Manish Dubey took part in the regional consultation organised by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) in collaboration with the Institute of Human Development, Delhi and IDS, Jaipur on May 02, 2007

#### Workshop on Livelihoods

Manish Dubey attended a two-day workshop on '*Rajasthan Aajeevika Anveshan*' in Jaipur organised by Rajasthan Mission on Livelihoods (RMoL) in partnership with Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action & Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Jaipur on May 09-10, 2007.

## Mission to Bangladesh

As part of the collaboration with the World Bank Institute on Sustainable Development (WBISD), Washington DC, and as a member of the International Resource Team on Social Accountability, George Cheriyan visited Dhaka to facilitate a Training of Trainers (ToT) on 'Social Accountability & Community Scorecard' during May 09-18, 2007.

The training for the facilitators was held in Dhaka from May 09-12, 2007, and ToT was held at the BRAC Centre for Development Management, Rajendrapur, about 65 kms away from Dhaka, during May 13-17. Social Development Foundation (SDF), Dhaka was the local organiser along with the World Bank-Bangladesh, and among the participants were the staff and community members from the World Bank supported projects.

#### Civil Society Review of NCMP

R K Sharma attended the 3<sup>rd</sup> Civil Society Review Meeting of the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) on May 23, 2007 organised by *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan* (WNTA), New Delhi. held at the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

#### Management and Leadership Course

Ritu Agarwal attended nine days training course in 'Leadership and General Management for Bloomberg Global Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use' organised by India Resource Centre (IRC) at National Tuberculosis Institute, Bangalore from June 13-21, 2007.

#### Meeting of Investor Associations

George Cheriyan represented CUTS at the quarterly meeting of the Investors' Associations (IAs) registered with Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), Mumbai held at SEBI Bhavan, Mumbai on June 11, 2007.



**MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT / DONOR AGENCIES**

**Meeting with M D Kaurani, Rakesh Hooja & Sunil Dhariwal**

George Cheriyan and Ritu Agarwal visited HCM-RIPA and met with M D Kaurani, CIC Rajasthan, Rakesh Hooja, Director, HCM-RIPA and Sunil Dhariwal, Additional Director, HCM-RIPA on April 05, 2007.

**Meeting with MoCA Official**

Deepak Saxena visited Shastri Bhawan on April 17, 2007 and met with Rajendra Singh, Under Secretary and Rashmi, Security Officer to enquire about the status of proposal submitted under Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF), Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India.

**Meeting with Rohit Kumar Singh**

R K Sharma along with JVR Murty from the World Bank met with Rohit

Kumar Singh, Secretary, Rural Development, Government of Rajasthan to discuss the assessment of the NREGS, in Sirohi, Rajasthan under the second phase of South Asia Social Accountability Network (SASANet) project.

**Meeting with Y S Bhawe**

George Cheriyan visited the Department of Consumer Affairs in Delhi on May 29, 2007 and met with Y S Bhawe, Secretary, Sanjay Singh, Joint Secretary and G N Sreekumaran, Director (CWF) and discussions various pending issues of CUTS before the Department, including GRANICA.

**Meeting with D P Chirania**

Deepak Saxena visited Vidyut Bhawan to meet D P Chirania, Chief Engineer-cum-

Advisor, IT and Training and also in charge of Coordination Cell, on June 29, 2007.

**Meeting with Yadunath Bhatt**

Deepak Saxena visited Yadunath Bhatt, Deputy Secretary, Rajasthan Vidhana Sabha, who is one of the three designated nodal persons for RTI in Vidhan Sabha on June 29, 2007.

**Meeting with Vinod Kapoor**

George Cheriyan and Deepak Saxena visited the secretariat and met with Vinod Kapoor, newly appointed Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs and also the newly appointed Deputy Secretary M A Faroque on May 23, 2007, and had discussions on various consumer issues in general and about CUTS pending issues with the Department in particular.

**PUBLICATIONS**

- **Panchva Stambh** (quarterly newsletter)
- **Gram Gadar** (monthly wall newspaper)
- **Ajeevika Samvaad** A forum for livelihood dialogue (quarterly newsletter)
- **Suchna hi Sakti Ha** Information is Power (quarterly newsletter)



**VISITS**

**Team from the World Bank**

Yamini Aiyar and Salimah Samji from the World Bank, New Delhi visited CART office on April 27, 2007. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the proposed plan of the Bank for the social audit of the NREGS in Rajasthan by the Social Development section of the Bank.

**FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

Assessing 2Qs (Quality & Quantity) Outputs of the 'National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' (NREGS), as Per Provisions of the NREGA (2005) in Sirohi District of Rajasthan State, India in partnership with the World Bank.

**CART IN MEDIA**