



CUTS Centre for
Consumer Action,
Research & Training

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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.

Disseminating the NREGS Outcomes

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a one-day District Level Dissemination meeting at Sirohi on May 21, 2008 under the project 'Assessing the Qualitative and Quantitative Output of NREGS' in Sirohi, as per the provision of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005. The project is being implemented in partnership with the World Bank. The objective of the meeting was to disseminate the findings of the assessment done under the project across the relevant stakeholders. This was mainly to show them the status of implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in their district. It also aimed to suggest measures to rectify the gaps for further smooth implementation.

Under the project, three tools of the social accountability, namely: Citizen Report Card (CRC), Community Score Card (CSC) and Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) for assessment of NREGS were developed. Also, the findings included other community meetings and group discussions. The sample drawn for CRC included one member from 829 sample households, 30 *Sarpanch*, e.g. *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (PRIs) representative at the *Gram Panchayat* level, 60 *panchayat* secretaries and 75 mates. The samples were drawn purely on random sampling methodology, which was scientific to avoid any biasness in the study.

About 50 relevant stakeholders representing all the three tiers of PRIs, government officials from grassroots to district level, media persons and common citizens benefited from NREGS participated in the event.



District Level Dissemination meeting in progress

George Cheriyan, Director CUTS outlined the achievements of the project during one year of intervention and discussed the findings to which the scientific methods were applied for sampling and analysis. He also reiterated that the tool of CRC is used for the first time in the history of Rajasthan which is drawing the international attention towards the district.

Om Prakash Arya made a PowerPoint presentation on the findings of the assessment, the process involved in the assessment and the methodology adopted. Anna Ram Borana, *Zila Pramukh* emphasised the problem of negligence being faced by PRIs. Ashfaque Hussain, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), *Zila Parishad* appreciated the findings as inspiring and gave the credit for better implementation to local authorities.

Siddharth Mahajan, District Collector, Sirohi, in his valedictory speech, referred to the study unbiased, close to reality and provided a few recommendations as very convincing. Dharamendra Chaturvedi of CUTS gave hearty thanks to all the participants for their active participation.

Canadian High Commissioner Visits CUTS' Target villages

On April 11, 2008 the Canadian High Commissioner, David M. Malone visited one of the villages in Rajasthan, i.e. Jhajhu of Kolayat block in Bikaner district. The village was one of the target villages under the CUTS CART project titled 'Promoting Greater Role of PRIs to Foster Rural



Livelihood Opportunities: Meeting the Challenges of Globalisation and Economic Liberalisation' in partnership with the 'Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives' (CFLI) during the year 2007. Canadian

High Commission requested CUTS CART to facilitate this visit. RK Sharma coordinated and facilitated High Commissioner's visit along with Rajendra Joshi, Secretary, *Rajasthan Muktinath Samiti*, a local network organisation of CUTS in Bikaner.

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Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms

The project on 'Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Select South Asian Countries' (RESA) supported by Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) seeks to enhance the long-term capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) so that they could play the required role in the policy formulation and regulatory decision-making process in the electricity sector. The project will be implemented for a period of two years in two states of India (Rajasthan and West Bengal), Bangladesh and Nepal. CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS C-CIER) is implementing the project in co-ordination with four project partners while CUTS CART is given the responsibility of implementation of the project in Rajasthan.

Local inception workshop in Rajasthan was organised on April 17, 2008 in Jaipur. The overall objective of the workshop was to launch the project in Rajasthan and share its objective and activities with local partner CSOs. There were 49 participants comprising various CSOs working on the issues related to power sector reforms and consumer protection, media, policy makers and subject experts.

RK Sharma Secretary, RERC, Shanti Prasad Ex-Chairperson RERC; P N Bhandari, Ex-Chairperson RSEB,



Dignitaries at the local inception workshop

R C Sharma, Joint Secretary, RERC, B L Agarwal, Chief Engineer (Commercial), JVVNL and K C Modi, Ex. Chief Engineer, AVVNL attended the workshop as resource persons. Udai Singh Mehta shared the details of the project, its objectives, activities etc. Deepak Saxena described the scenario of power sector reforms in Rajasthan and the past interventions of CUTS in the state.

In May 2008, a perception survey was undertaken in 10 selected districts of Rajasthan to gauge the level of understanding and awareness of consumers/users on the scope for their engagement in the process of electricity reforms and the major problems faced by them. A sample size of 700 respondents was surveyed from these districts.

Enhancing Capacity of Grassroots Consumer Activists

Three events were held under the Consumer Awareness Project (CAP) supported by Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Government of Rajasthan. In the first programme at Jayal (Nagaur) on April 21-23, 2008, there were technical sessions on Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) and its different provisions, in between, there was a group discussion among the participants.

In the second meeting at Bhupal Sagar (Chittorgarh) on 12-13 May 2008, Shantilal Bafna, *Sarpanch* of *Panchapat* village near Bhupalsagar block was the guest speaker. Bhagwanlal Sharma and Ravindra Joshi both lawyers were the other speakers in the training along with P R Vyas of Bhilwara, Jeevraj Paliwal of *Rashtriya Manavta Mission*, Rajmal Lohar of *Krishi Upbhokta Hit Raksha Samiti*, and Radheyshyam Parashar of *Upbhokta Seva Samiti*, Bhupalsagar were the other speakers..

At Choti Sadri, Mamta Patidaar, *Sarpanch* of Gagrol village, Choti Sadri block was the guest speaker. Other speakers were Shivlal Ahir and Ramlal Meena, both workers and members of *Upbhokta Parmarsh evam Sookhna Samiti*. In all three programmes, the participants were mainly the students and nodal officers of consumer clubs and citizens and a few NGO representatives of the area.



Stakeholders discussing grassroots consumer activities at Nagaur

CUTS Presentation at the World Bank Head Quarters

On invitation to a Brown Bag Lunch (BBL) event organised by the World Bank at Washington DC on June 04, 2008, George Cherian made a presentation titled 'Improving Public Expenditure Outcomes through Social Accountability Approaches: Field Experiences from Rajasthan, India'. The event was chaired by Adolfo Brizzi, Sector Manager, SASDA, The World Bank, and started by the introductory remarks by Parmesh Shah (Lead Rural Development Specialist, SASDA). The discussants were Robert S. Chase (Lead Social Development Specialist, SDV Bhuvan Bhatnagar (Senior Social Scientist, EASSO) and JVR Murty (Water Institutions Development Specialist, ETWSA).

Cherian visited Washington mainly to attend the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) Summit organised by the World Bank in Washington DC on June 02-03, 2008. An Exhibition was organised also took place on June 02-03, 2008 that to showcase innovative work supporting the demand for good governance from diverse sectoral, regional, and organisational perspectives. CUTS put up an attractive exhibition of posters and materials, e.g. newsletters, brochures, books etc.

Focused Group Discussions on RTI

Six focused group discussions (FGDs) were conducted during April-June, 2008 at Viratnagar (Jaipur), Bansur (Alwar), Tonk, Bhilwara, Dudu (Jaipur) and Masuda



A view of the focused group discussion

(Ajmer) blocks of Jaipur and Tonk districts in the Ajmer and Jaipur divisions respectively, under the project 'Combating Corruption in Rajasthan Applying RTI as a Tool' in partnership with Partnership for Fund (PTF).

The purpose of FGDs was to understand the entire process of filing Right to Information (RTI) applications by various applicants as motivated by Consortium of Groups Combating Corruption (CGCC) members, the outcomes of the application, its impact up on the service delivery, enhancing transparency and accountability and ultimately its contribution in creating an enabling environment to address the corruption.

Network for Action on Road Safety (NARS)

A meeting of NGOs working on road safety issues was organised at CUTS conference hall on April 10, 2008. The purpose was mainly to discuss a Joint Plan of Action on the basis of the remarks made by the Transport Commissioner, Jagdish Chandra at the launch meeting of the CUTS project on 'Traffic Calming for Pedestrian Safety' held at on March 03, 2008. In all, 8 NGOs from Jaipur working on road safety issues attended the meeting. Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International chaired the meeting, made the introductory remarks and moderated it to reach at certain consensus. The participants agreed to work and prepare a Joint Plan of Action and proposal for submission to the Transport Commissioner.

It was also agreed to establish an informal network, rather than an elected registered body, which was proposed by CUTS as Network for Action on Road Safety (NARS). The name was circulated among the participants for approval along with the Minutes of the meeting. Three broad categories of activities were identified and agreed up on for collective action: (a) *Sadak Mitra* and compliance education for drivers; (b) policy and enforcement issues; and (c) infrastructure issues.

The network meeting was again held on May 21, 2008. The purpose was to mainly draft a proposal jointly with detailed methodology for submission to the transport department.

Training for Field Studies

The conflict technique is being used for the purpose of 'Before' and 'After' studies in the project 'Traffic Calming Strategies to Improve Pedestrian Safety In India'. This technique was developed by the Department of Technology and Society, Lund University in the beginning of 1970, and uses near accidents as accident proxies. To facilitate a training programme for the Indian team on the technique, Prof. Dr Christer Hyden along with colleague Aliaksei Laureshyn was in Jaipur on June 01-07, 2008. The focus of the training was conflict recoding and analysis.

The entire training included indoor as well as outdoor sessions. During the training, the Indian team along with Swedish team visited a total of 17 locations, vide-graphed each of the locations for 2-3 minutes. In addition, the detailed video recoding of two sites were done during the training. Along with CUTS staff, two research students from IIT Delhi took part in the training.

All Party Committee under *Vidhayak Samvaad*

CUTS initiated '*Vidhayak Samvaad*' in April 2007 to discuss the key issues affecting the public and to increase the pace of developmental reforms in Rajasthan State. Under the banner of the '*Vidhayak Samvaad*', a meeting of the 'All-Party Committee' consisted of the legislators was organised under the chairmanship of Sumitra Singh in State Assembly premises, on June 04, 2008.

In the meeting, discussions were held on water, electricity and other infrastructure development issues and it was unanimously decided to move suggestions/solutions to the government in the area of necessary reforms. Rao Rajendra Singh, MLA is the Convener of the 'All-Party Committee'. In addition to the speaker, seven members of the committee, including one Minister attended the meeting.

World Environment Day Rally

A rally of school children was organised on the occasion of the 'World Environment Day' (June 05, 2008) from Ram Mandir, Banipark to Railway Station. When the rally comprising of 35 school children reached the Station Road Junction they received an overwhelming response and was received by the traffic department personnel. The pollution safety masks were given to the traffic personnel and they put on their nose. Electronic and print media had given wider coverage for the event.



The Pollution Safety Mask is being demonstrated

REPRESENTATIONS

National Workshop Tobacco Control Act

George Cheriyan attended a 'National Capacity Building Workshop for NGO personnel for Effective Enforcement of the Indian Tobacco Control Act, 2003' organised by Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control (AFTC) India, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and the World Health Organisation (WHO-India) in Delhi on April 04-05, 2008.

Consultation on 'PDS and Urban Poor'

Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended *City Level Consultation on 'Public Distribution System and Urban Poor'*, held on April 09, 2008 in Jaipur organized by the Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), in association with Women's Forums – *Jagrati Mahila Manch*.

National Workshop on 'Driver Licensing Systems'

Bhavna Tripathy attended a national workshop on 'Driver licensing systems' organised by the Transport Department, Govt. of Rajasthan, in collaboration with IRTE, New Delhi, Jaipur Development Authority, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, FIA Foundation and Muskaan, on April 25-26, 2008 at HCM RIPA, Jaipur.

Capacity Building of Consumer Advocacy Groups

Amarjeet Singh attended the meeting on Capacity Building of Consumer Advocacy Groups and Consumer Education at Dehradun on May 09, 2008 organised by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). The objective of the workshop was capacity building of consumer advocacy groups (CAGs) and consumer education in telecom sector.

World Bank Workshop on Social Accountability

Om Prakash Arya attended a workshop on 'Social Accountability (SAc)' project organised by the World Bank at its office in New Delhi. The workshop was aimed at gathering the viewpoints of CSOs on certain strategy decisive questions.

Workshop on 'RTI: Challenge to Existence'

RK Sharma attended the inaugural session of the workshop titled 'RTI: Challenge to Existence' at HCM-RIPA, Jaipur on June 07, 2008. The Centre for Media Research & Development (CMRD) organised the workshop.

VISITS

Visit of GTZ-DoCA Consultant

Dr JS Yadav from the International Media Institute, who is with the GTZ-DoCA project 'Strengthening Consumer Protection in India' as a consultant visited CUTS CART office on April 2, 2008

Visit of GTZ-DoCA Consultants

Ruediger Simonides (GFA) and H Wadhwa (Dy. CEO, Voice), who are with the GTZ-DoCA project 'Strengthening Consumer Protection in India' as a consultants visited CUTS CART office on April 30, 2008.

Visit of CWP to Jaipur

A group of five members of Pakistan visited India from April 28 to May 07, 2008. The tour has been organised by Consumer Watch Pakistan (CWP) with the support of Commonwealth Foundation. CUTS facilitated their visit to India. The team was in Jaipur on May 02-03, 2008. On May 03, it met with CUTS CART team and had discussions on various aspects of consumer protection in India.

Visit of Kumar Amarendra N Singh, World Bank

Kumar Amarendra N. Singh-KANS (Social Development Specialist, World Bank, New Delhi) visited CART office on June 23, 2008 mainly to discuss about the possibility of taking the governance agenda forward especially in Rajasthan through a long-term partnership with CUTS.

CART IN MEDIA