

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.

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NREGS Lacks Accountability

Almost 94 percent beneficiaries under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) endorsed increase in village facilities whereas nearly 50 percent are dissatisfied with the work measurement, complaint redressal mechanism and the accountability aspect of the scheme. This was revealed at the State Level Dissemination Meeting (SLDM) held under the project entitled, 'Assessing the Qualitative and Quantitative Output of NREGS' implemented in Sirohi district of Rajasthan. CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised the SLDM at HCM-RIPA, Jaipur, on July 16, 2008 to share key findings of the project, especially various social accountability tools used for the assessment.



In his introductory remarks, George Cheriyan, Director & Head, CUTS CART, presented an overview of the project and put emphasis on the social accountability tools which can help in enhancing the consumer voice to demand improvement in service delivery and accountability. Om Prakash Arya presented the key findings and recommendations before the audience. The study mainly focused on three aspects of the scheme: highlights of the implementation, gaps, and a set of recommendations to address those gaps.

AK Pande, Additional Chief Secretary (Development), Government of Rajasthan emphasised the need for an independent social audit once in year along with Intensive Awareness Campaign and proper *Gram Sabha* meeting for better service delivery.

Rajendra Bhanawat, Secretary, Rural Development Department, Government of Rajasthan mentioned several issues emerged out of the findings. Yaduvendra Mathur, Secretary, Planning Department, informed that Government is thinking for skill development of workers under NREGS for making them self-employed. He was very impressed with the tools of social accountability, e.g. Community Score Card (CSC). Anita Bhatt, Officer on Special Duty to Chief Minister of Rajasthan suggested for convergence of the scheme with Self Help Groups (SHGs).

Benjamin Powis, World Bank representative, emphasised the need to scale up the use of social accountability tools in different programmes and locations. More than 60 participants including senior bureaucrats, Government officials, representatives of donor agencies, civil society organisations (CSOs) and *Panchayati Raj* Institution (PRI).

'Assembly of Grassroots Change Makers'

An 'Assembly of Grassroots Change Makers' was organised at the Birla Auditorium on August 18, 2008 as part of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of CUTS. The theme of the Assembly was 'Role of Civil Society in Good Governance'. As the Chief Guest of the event, Sumitra Singh, Speaker, Rajasthan State Legislative Assembly delivered the inaugural address. Surendra Goyal, Minister for Urban Development & Housing, Government of Rajasthan delivered the keynote address, while Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS made the opening remarks. Dr Sharda Jain, Chairperson, CUTS CART Advisory Committee chaired the thematic session on 'Role of Civil Society in Good Governance'. The panellists, who spoke on the theme were Prof. Vijay Shankar Vyas and Justice (Retd.) Vinod Shankar Dave. Around 150 CSO representatives coming from 33 districts of Rajasthan attended the event.



Second Phase of Tobacco Control Campaign Takes off

CUTS CART launched a project entitled, 'Tobacco Control Campaign by Mobilising Key Stakeholders in Rajasthan State' in partnership with World Health Organisation (WHO), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, and in active collaboration with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan on August 06, 2008 in Jaipur.

The objective of the launch meeting was to formally promote the project objectives in presence of Government officials CSOs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational institutions and media. It was aimed to create a platform for various stakeholders to discuss issues and work together to increase the level of awareness among the participants.

More than 90 participants including officials, CSOs, NGOs working on health issues, tobacco cessation centers, selected schools, doctors of government hospitals, media and others working on the issue were present in the meeting.

The guests were: Dr Sunil Bhatnagar (Officer on Special Duty, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan); Dr P C Santhiya (Joint Director Tobacco Cell, Health Department); Dr A U Rehman (Mahavir Cancer Hospital, Jaipur); Swati Parmar & Amit Yadav (HRIDAY, New Delhi).



The meeting created the ground for an effective beginning of the campaign under the project. Through the participation of educational institutions, they gain their knowledge regarding ill effects of tobacco use, tobacco control legislation and other facts of tobacco. Media coverage helped in introducing the project to the larger groups of citizens in Rajasthan. Both the electronic as well as the printed media had given wider coverage for the event.



CUTS CART Mini Retreat & Strategic Planning Meeting

CUTS CART Mini Retreat was held on August 23, 2008 at Maharani Plaza. In addition to reviewing the projects just concluded as well as those ongoing, detailed discussions were held on the funding strategy, positive developments and the critical limitations. As decided in the retreat, a strategic planning meeting was organised on August 29, 2008 in the CUTS CART office to finalise the strategic business plan for 2008-10. All the 13 staff members of the Centre attended the retreat as well as the planning meeting.

National Environment Awareness Campaign

Under the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2008-09 of the Ministry of Environment & Forest, Government of India, a total of six divisional level pre-proposal Workshops were organised at Bhilwara on August 07, Chittorgarh on August 08, Kota on August 11, Jodhpur on August 12, Churu on August 13, and Jaipur on August 20, 2008. A total of 540 proposals were received from the NGOs.

The Regional Committee meeting was held at BAIF, Pune on September 23-25, 2008, which was headed by R Mehta, Adviser, NEAC. Out of 445 proposals recommended by CUTS, a total of 257 proposals were sanctioned with a total grant of Rs 17,42,000 this year

Securities and Market Awareness Campaign

CUTS CART organised the first workshop under the sixth round of Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC) supported by Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on September 20, 2008 at Bhilwara.

The workshop aimed to generate awareness among investors through educational training. The resource persons were: T C Choudhary, President; and P M Beswal, Senior Vice President of MCCI; Ravi Naredi, Chartered Accountant; and Surya Pakash Parasher, an Insurance Agent. Prahalad Rai Vyas, Secretary, *Upbhokta Adhikar Samiti* provided the local assistance in coordination.

Meeting of the Advisory Committee

The fifth meeting of the Advisory Committee of CUTS CART and second in the year 2008 was held on September 06, 2008 in the Centre's Office. The meeting was chaired by Dr Sharada Jain (Chairperson) and attended by Dr Maya Tandon, Dr Anita Mathur, Madhavi Joshi, Prof. C S Barla and Niharika Michael (special invitee). In addition, all staff members of CUTS CART attended the meeting. The main purpose of the meeting was to take guidance, advice and inputs on the two-year business plan of the Centre, which was emerged out of the CUTS CART mini retreat and strategic business planning meeting.

Enhancing the Capacity in Electricity Reforms

The project on 'Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA)' has an advisory body for each partner organisation called Reference Group (RG). This is to ensure quality in the project execution. A meeting of RG was held in Jaipur on July 11, 2008. Out of 14 RG members, 10 attended the meeting. Territorial Trainings (Phase I & II) in Rajasthan under the project were organised in Jaipur on September 17-18 & 25-26, 2008 respectively.

The objectives were capacity building of second tier partner CSOs and other consumer activists and networking with regulator, utilities, media and subject experts. 22 participants, representing nine 9 tier-two CSOs, who are partners in the project, participated in the training.



Central Consumer Protection Council

The meeting of the reconstituted Central Consumer Protection Council (CCPC) was held in New Delhi on July 30, 2008. Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Consumer Affairs delivered the inaugural address. Taslimuddin, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs also attended the meeting, which was held after a gap of 5 years.



Representing CUTS, George Cheriyan participated in the discussions. CUTS also convened a meeting of the consumer organisations, those who are members of CCPC, at CUTS, Delhi Resource Centre (DRC) on July 29, 2008. The main purpose was to formulate a joint strategy and ensure floor coordination in the CCPC meeting.

REPRESENTATIONS

State level Advocacy Meeting

George Cheriyan attended the State Level Advocacy Meeting in Kolkata on July 05, 2008 under the Mainstreaming International Trade into National Development Strategy project as a resource person and made a presentation on 'Making Services Workable for the Poor', i.e. Influencing Public Expenditure Outcomes through Social Accountability Approaches.

Achieving Universal Primary Education

Om Prakash Arya participated in a workshop on achieving the Universal Primary Education in prospect of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) organised jointly by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) & Institute for Integrated Learning Management (IILM), New Delhi at Jaipur, on July 05, 2008. Prominent educationists and bureaucrats attended the workshop.

Capacity building on Tobacco Control

Dharmendra Chaturvedi and Amar Deep Singh attended a State Level Capacity Building workshop for NGO Personnel on Tobacco Control organised by Rajasthan Cancer Foundation with support of *HRIDAY* in State Institute of Health & Family Welfare (SIHFW), Jaipur on July 19, 2008.

Facilitating Consumer Participation

Amarjeet Singh attended a National Workshop on 'Facilitating Consumer Participation in Electricity Regulatory Process: Exploring new Structures & Processes' on September 11-12, 2008 at National Law School of India University, Bengluru, organised by The Office of Consumer Advocacy (OCA) of Karnataka Electricity regulation Commission (KERC), Centre for Inter Disciplinary Studies in Environment & Development (CISED), Bangalore and the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Science (IISC), Bangalore.

Panchayati Raj Women Sangathan

Arjun Kant Jha attended a State Level Workshop of *Panchayati Raj Women Sangathan*, organised by The Hunger Project, Rajasthan Chapter in Jaipur on September 12, 2008. About 200 women representing *Panchayats* attended the '*Sangathan*', which was inaugurated by Rajasthan Governor, S K Singh.

Sale of Un-branded Generic Medicines

Madhu Sudan Sharma attended the inaugural session of the meeting on preparing a Draft Concept Paper for operationalising the scheme for opening up special retail outlets for sale of un-branded generic medicines at Government Hospital and other places for poor people,

REPRESENTATIONS

convened by Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government of India, in New Delhi, on September 12, 2008.

Sanitation with Special Reference to MDGs

OP Arya attended the Dialogue on 'Sanitation with Special Reference to MDGs in Rajasthan', on September 19, 2008 Clark jointly organised by UNICEF and IILM.

Role of Voluntary Sector

Om Prakash Arya, Madhu Sudan Sharma & Amarjeet Singh attended the consultation on the 'Role of Voluntary Sector in Quality Implementation of Government Schemes' organised by the Department of Planning, Government of Rajasthan along with ARAVALI at HCM RIPA on July 25, 2008. Dr Sayeda Hameed, Member Planning Commission, chaired the meeting. The focus was on Andhra Pradesh flagship schemes, like NREGS, National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) etc.

'Civil Society Review' of AP Information Commission

George Cheriyan was part of the Civil Society Panel, along with RTI activists Arvind Kejriwal (*Parivartan*, New Delhi) and Harinsh Pandya, (*Mahiti Adhikar Pahel*, Gujarat), which critically reviewed the functioning of the Andhra Pradesh Information Commission (APIC) on its invitation. The meeting was held at the office of the APIC, Hyderabad on September 25, 2008, which was chaired by CD Arha (Chief Information Commissioner).

National Discussion Group on 'RTI Call Centre'

George Cheriyan attended a national dialogue on 'RTI Call Centre' on September 25, 2008 at Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad. The meeting aimed to get the comments on the plan of Andhra Pradesh (AP) Government to set a RTI call Centre, in line with the *Jankari*, Bihar mainly to facilitate the filing of RTI application by the rural masses. The meeting was attended by selected RTI activities from across the country, senior official of Government and the CIC and Commissioner from APIC. George made a presentation on 'RTI Call Centre - Capacity Issues'.

Local MDG Monitoring in India

George Cheriyan attended a National Consultation & Planning Workshop on Local MDG Monitoring in India, held at the UN Conference hall on September 29-30, 2008 organised by United Nations Development Programme/Participatory Research in Asia (UNDP/PRIA). The consultation aimed to examine existing methodologies of citizen and civil society engagement in preparing a composite framework to monitor MDG progress at the below-state level. The meeting was inaugurated by Maxine Olson, UN Resident Coordinator and attended by senior staff of various UN organisations and CSO representatives.

VISITS

Visit of International Team on RTI

A team of 7 RTI activists, from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Uganda, as part of an exposure visit to India facilitated by CHRI visited CUTS on September 20, 2008. George Cheriyan, R K Sharma & Om Prakash Arya met the group and briefed them about the CUTS interventions in the area of RTI.

Visit of SEBI Officials

Amarjeet Singh (Regional Manager, SEBI, New Delhi) and Rakesh Banot (Deputy General Manager, SEBI) along with Usha Sharma (Acting Executive Director, Jaipur Stock Exchange) visited CUTS and had discussions on further strengthening the collaboration between SEBI and CUTS. George Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and BN Sharma made a presentation on CUTS interventions in the area of investor education and had detailed discussions on taking it forward. The team also visited CUTS Head Office and met with RD Mathur, Executive Director.

Visit of Cambodian Civil Society Practitioners

A team from Cambodian Civil Society Practitioners under the Programme for Enhancing Capacity on Social Accountability (PECSA) of the World Bank as part of an exposure visit to India, facilitated by PRIA, visited CUTS on September 26, 2008. George, RK Sharma, Om Prakash Arya and Madhu Sudan met with the team and interacted in detail. Om Prakash made a presentation on the CUTS interventions in the area of good governance and social accountability.



CART IN MEDIA

Rural women feel empowered through NREGS, says study
Jaipur: Nearly 75% rural women in the state feel that their status within the family has increased after they began earning through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), says a study. The scheme has thus turned out to be a vehicle for social and economic transformation which resulted in the economic empowerment and decision-making process of women in rural areas. The findings are part of a sample survey and study of social accountability conducted by CUTS CART, an NGO, in partnership with the World Bank in Sirohi district of Rajasthan. The study was conducted in 65 households spread in five blocks in the district. Around 100 women admit to improve their living standards, increased income through the NREGS. 50% of the world scheme have done the main job while the 10% of the women workers were very low at 19%.

जनता की सरकार कहां है-सिंह
कट्स की रजत जयन्ती पर गोष्ठी
जयपुर. 18 अगस्त (कांत्.)। राजस्थान में एक अलग संस्था भी आम जन को उनके अधिकारों और दायित्वों के प्रति जागरूक बनाने में सफल हो रही है। नवगठित कट्स की रजत जयन्ती पर गोष्ठी का आयोजन किया गया। कार्यक्रम में मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में राजस्थान के मुख्यमंत्री अशोक गहलोत की अध्यक्षता में एक बैठक का आयोजन किया गया।

जलवायु परिवर्तन चिंता का विषय
जयपुर. 13 अगस्त (प.सं.)। स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं को जागरूकता प्रदान करने के लिए कट्स की रजत जयन्ती पर गोष्ठी का आयोजन किया गया। कार्यक्रम में मुख्य अतिथि के रूप में राजस्थान के मुख्यमंत्री अशोक गहलोत की अध्यक्षता में एक बैठक का आयोजन किया गया।

Employment scheme checking migration
Also an increase in incomes of the local population in Sirohi district of Rajasthan
97% employment for locals
Migration down by 93%
work under the scheme and a total of 18,507 of them were provided the same. CUTS director George Cheriyan, who presented an overview of the project, said that the workers were found to be a major reason for lower participation of labourers in the scheme. "There are in an information only 4,840 per cent of the

स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं का राज्यस्तरीय सम्मेलन
जयपुर. केंद्रमूर यूनिट एंड ट्रस्ट सोसायटी अक्सर पर सोमवार को कार्यक्रम के प्राथमिक स्वयंसेवा संस्थाओं का राज्यस्तरीय सम्मेलन हुआ। सम्मेलन का उद्घाटन करते हुए विधानसभा अध्यक्ष सुमित्रा सिंह ने कहा कि प्रजातंत्र में संवेदनशील व हितकारी सरकार वह है जो जनता के द्वारा जनता के लिए हो, लेकिन हमारी आजादी के साठ साल बाद भी ऐसा संभव नहीं हो सका। यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है। अब यह समना दिखता है। इस सपने को पूरा करने के लिए स्वयंसेवी संस्थाओं को आगे आना होगा तथा लोगों को जागरूक करना होगा। सम्मेलन की अध्यक्षता

निवेशक सुरक्षा पर सेमिनार आयोजित
जयपुर. कट्स पर आयोजित सेमिनार को संबोधित करते अतिथि पर उपस्थित लोग।

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