

## 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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## Three Years of RTI in India: Problems and Possibilities



CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) and Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), New Delhi in collaboration with the Rajasthan State Information Commission and Department of Administrative Reforms, Government of Rajasthan (GoR) organised a day-long State Level seminar on 'Three Years of RTI in India: Problems and Possibilities' in Jaipur, Rajasthan, on October 22, 2008.

The objective of the seminar was to commemorate the three years of Right to Information (RTI) Act in India, which came into force on October 12, 2005; analyse the problems in the way of effective implementation of the Act; and rejuvenate the immense potential and possibilities of this Act in special reference to Rajasthan state. More than 80 participants including Public Information Officers (PIOs)/Appellate Authorities (AAs) of various government departments, media persons and NGOs/CSOs working toward areas of good governance and others, from various parts of Rajasthan participated in the event.

Madhu Sudan Sharma of CUTS CART welcomed the participants. R K Sharma of CUTS CART, in his introductory remarks, said that RTI Act has a potential of overturning the corrupt government system but sufficient proactive actions are not initiated by the Government to implement the Act effectively.

Sohini Paul, Senior Project Officer, RTI Programme, CHRI, New Delhi opined that such a seminar provides good opportunity to assess the success of the RTI Act.

R P Jain, Principal Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms (DoAR), Government of Rajasthan (GoR) said that there are so many problems in the way of effective implementation of this Act. He advised PIOs/AAs to provide available information to the public in order to improve their performance.

The guest of honour, C D Arha, State Chief Information Commissioner, Andhra Pradesh said that such legislation will strengthen the democracy by demystifying decision-making process of the Government and check corruption automatically.

In his concluding remarks, George Cheriyan of CUTS CART emphasised on issues regarding effective implementation of the RTI in Rajasthan and requested all participants to share their valuable experiences.

In the technical session chaired by J S Yadav, Deputy Secretary, DoAR, GoR, Sohini Paul and Madhu Sudan Sharma presented various issues related to the problems and possibilities, related to RTI with special reference to Rajasthan. During the session, queries raised by participants were also answered in an effective manner. A set of recommendations emerged out of the seminar.

## Boosting the Consumer Movement in Vietnam

CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre (CUTS HRC), in partnership with the Vietnam Standards and Consumer Protection Association (VINASTAS), and with support from The Ford Foundation, Office for Vietnam and Thailand, organised two training workshops under the project entitled, 'Strengthening the Consumer Movement in Vietnam', in Hai Phong, on November 18, 2008; and in Vung Tau, Vietnam, on November 20, 2008 respectively.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS participated in the workshops as a resource person. He made presentations on 'Consumer Redressal: Legal Framework & Mechanism', which was followed by an open session, answering and clarifying various questions. The workshops deliberated on legal issues (litigation) as well as the practices of consumer redressal mechanism. On November 21, 2008 George visited HRC, met with the staff and discussed various issues. In the evening, he



also had a dinner meeting with Tran Thi Thu Thuy, Deputy Director General, People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM), which is responsible for granting permission and also monitoring all foreign NGO activities in Vietnam, including CUTS.

## Get Active Programme Took off

CUTS CART organised the 'Launch-cum-Teachers Training Workshop' under the project entitled, 'Get Active' in collaboration with Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth (HRIDAY), New Delhi at Hotel Maharani Plaza, Jaipur, on December 12, 2008. The main objective of the workshop was to generate awareness among teachers about the importance of Diet, Nutrition and Physical Activity in student's life with an aim to make students realise the importance of nutritional intake and physical activity and provide training to teachers for the effective implementation of project activities in their respective schools.



Around 70 participants including Samuel Mawunhanidze, Chief, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), State Office for Rajasthan; Swati Parmar and Anika Singh from HRIDAY; teachers from 25 selected English medium schools of Jaipur city; and media persons attended the workshop.

The workshop started with a welcome address by Khushbu Parnami of CUTS CART, which was followed the introductory remarks by George Cheriyan, Director CUTS, who informed about a survey conducted by CUTS CART entitled 'Lunch Box Challenge' in schools of Jaipur city on the eve of World Consumer Rights Day 2008. The survey revealed that

65 percent children preferred junk and fast food and the main reason identified was the aggressive advertisement of these products by the media. Khushbu Parnami made a brief introduction to the 'Get Active' Project including forthcoming activities under it through a PowerPoint presentation.

Samuel Mawunganidze Chief, UNICEF Rajasthan, appreciated CUTS for its focus on the issue of nutrition in today's scenario. Mawunganidze opined that the habit of early rising has a direct relation with the consumption pattern of breakfast among children. Mawunganidze emphasised on the need for educating teachers and parents about making food more nutritious, healthy and attractive, which can tempt young children, and should be taken as a challenge in the contemporary world.

Swati Parmar from HRIDAY presented a brief introduction of HRIDAY, including its association in activities under the 'Get Active' Project. She reiterated a strong need for sensitising the children, parents and teachers about the importance of breakfast and the growing tendency of skipping it in children these days.

Anika Singh from HRIDAY, through her PowerPoint presentation on Module 1 entitled, 'Breakfast Makes Me Smart', emphasised how the classroom activities should be carried upon by the teachers and the importance of maintaining a balance between calorie intake and expenditure. This presentation was followed by a very interactive discussion among the teachers of different schools. A quiz session was also conducted for the teachers with an objective to check their attention level and grasping power.

Finally, Khushbu Parnami proposed a vote of thanks to all guests and participants for being part of the workshop. She closed the session with the hope to receive support and cooperation from all participants to implement the programme in their schools in an effective and efficient manner.

**Grassroots Interface Meetings (GIMs)**

Under the project 'Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Select South Asian Countries' 10 Grassroots Interface Meetings (GIMs) were organised during November-



December 2008 with the objective to reach out to the stakeholders such as farmers, commercial users, distribution companies, etc. at the grassroots level and make them aware of the role they need to play in regulatory reforms in the electricity sector and to transfer key advocacy skills to them. In addition, the partners also organised four sub-GIMs in each of the districts.

**Institutional Partnership with ASCI on SAC**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Administrative Staff Collage of India (ASCI), Hyderabad for writing two modules of E-content on social accountability for World Bank Institute (WBI) was signed on October 23, 2008 as part of the Social Accountability (SAC) curriculum development in South Asia. As per the MoU, CUTS CART team is responsible for writing the modules on 'Sustainability' and 'Impact Assessment'. In continuation, a writeshop was held in Hyderabad, on December 18-19, 2008 for holding initial discussions among the authors of modules being developed, in which R K Sharma and Om Prakash Arya participated.

**Tobacco Law Enforcement in Jaipur**

Selling of tobacco products within a radius of 100 yards of any educational institutions is banned according to Section 6 of National Tobacco Control Law (NTCL, 2003). But in a survey this provision was found violating in Jaipur city in 22.22 percent schools. An assessment done by CUTS CART, which is involved in tobacco control initiative from a consumer perspective, revealed the fact. A positive finding came out of the survey is that 100 percent schools are aware about the ban of tobacco selling to minors, however only 95.55 percent schools are found aware of the ban of sale within 100 yards of educational institutions. In 4.44 percent schools, teachers and students were found consuming tobacco products.

**'Make Road Safe' Campaign**

In December 2008, CUTS became part of the 'Make Road Safe' Global Campaign, led by FIA Foundation (UK) which emphasises that in 2009 the scheduled UN Ministerial Conference on global road safety should declare 'Decade for Road Safety Action' (2010-20) along with financial support of US\$300mn for 10 years and ensuring multilateral, bilateral and World Bank donors to provide 10 percent of their budget for road safety measures, with an aim to cut the projected global road deaths by 50 percent by 2020.

**Survey on the 'Rajasthan Assembly Elections' 2008**

A Public Opinion Survey was carried out by social organisations before the elections for the 13<sup>th</sup> Rajasthan State Assembly under the banner of the wall newspaper, 'Gram Gadar'. The survey conducted in November 2008 in 105 villages under the 70 panchayat samities of 30 out of 33 districts in Rajasthan intended to gauge the opinion of the representatives from NGOs and social organisations.

**National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC)**

Post proposal workshop of sanctioned NGOs was held in Jaipur, on November 15, 2008 in which 154 participants participated. B S Nathawat, Deputy Secretary, Department of Environment, GoR, was the chief guest.

**Tobacco Control Interventions**



Date	Activity	Location/Place
October 03, 2008	A quick response survey on 'Ban on Smoking in Public Places'	12 selected public place of Jaipur city
October, 2008	School Survey on Section 6	45 selected schools of Jaipur city
October, 2008	Divisional Level Survey	All seven administrative divisions of Rajasthan
October 23, 2008	Public lecture in school about ill effects of tobacco use	Government Senior Secondary School, Jhotwara
October 25, 2008	Meeting on 'Rajasthan Coalition for Tobacco Control'	Rajasthan Voluntary Health Association, Jaipur
November 13, 2008	Public lecture in school about ill effects of tobacco use	Government Senior Secondary School, Gandhi Nagar
November 18, 2008	Tobacco Control Awareness Rally	Alwar
November 26, 2008	Divisional Level Advocacy Meetings and Meeting on 'Rajasthan Coalition for Tobacco Control'	Jaipur
December 01-02, 2008	Divisional Level Advocacy Meeting and Rally	Dholpur
December 11, 2008	Divisional Level Advocacy Meetings	Kota

