

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.

INSIDE

- Projects and Programmes
- Representation
- Meetings/Visits
- CART in Media



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Consumers' Action at the Grassroots

"CUTS is well known for its efforts to protect common consumers from the exploitation, which does not require a certificate from anybody", said, Babulal Nagar, State Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Civil Supplies, Government of Rajasthan while delivering the inaugural address during the launch of the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reachout & Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANIRCA) in Jaipur on March 17, 2010. He congratulated CUTS for the initiative and urged the Central and state governments to come forward in order to combat the current price rise.



In order to address the lack of consumers' access to adequate information, improper understanding about the redressal mechanism/procedure as well as other socio-economic vulnerabilities, CUTS in partnership with the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs (MoCA), Food and Public Distribution, Government of India under the Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) has conceptualised the GRANIRCA project.

Rajiv Agarwal, Secretary to Government of India, MoCA, Food and Civil Supplies stated that public awareness is the key to ensure consumer protection and there are various measures taken at state and district level to ensure awareness but unfortunately it is not reaching the grassroots. Here comes the importance of initiatives like GRANIRCA. Launching the website and the brochure of the project, he wished that that project will achieve its objectives and the expected outcomes.

Pradeep S Mehta spoke about the origin of the organisation and its emergence as a leading consumer protection organisation not only in India but also internationally. CUTS began its journey with a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper *Gram Gadar* (Revolution in Villages).

Appreciating the project concept and design M L Mehta stressed on the need for a proper support system in place to empower consumers along with providing necessary information to them. Justice S K Garg, President, Rajasthan State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission opined that Rajasthan tops the charts in India when it comes to ratio of case disposals in country.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS flagged off some burning consumer issues. Referring to the theme of 'World Consumer Rights Day', i.e. 'Our money, Our rights', he said consumers are having right to access to stable, unfair and secure financial services and protect themselves from abusive charges and unfair contracts. Though the disposal rate of the cases are quite high at the national level and specifically in Rajasthan, aggrieved consumers are facing inordinate delays. Only 32 percent cases are disposed within the stipulated period of 90-150 days.

In his presentation Amarjeet Singh briefed about the project rationale, its objectives, activities, key outputs, project duration & coverage, expected outcomes, project governance structure, strategies, number of beneficiaries etc. Deepak Saxena summarised the deliberations and proposed vote of thanks. More than 80 participants attended the meeting.

Reforming the Processes at the Grassroots

The mid term dissemination meeting under the project 'Reforming the Processes in the Rural Development Department through Policy and Civic Engagement, using RTI Act (2005) as a Tool, in Rajasthan, India' (RePoRDD) was organised in Jaipur, on February 23, 2010. The workshop was envisaged to disseminate the key findings of 'RTI Ground Realities and Corruption Vulnerability Analysis Survey' conducted in select three schemes, namely National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), *Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* (SGSY) and *Indira Awaas Yojana* (IAY) getting critical feedback from participants. More than 85 participants attended the workshop.



Accountability to Promote Governance

George Cheriyan and Om Prakash Arya participated in a five-day workshop on 'Social Accountability Tools and Approaches' organised by Affiliated Network for Social Accountability-South Asia Region and Global Partnership Fund (ANSA-SAR & Global) during March 07-11, 2010 at Dhaka, Bangladesh. The launch of ANSA-SAR & Global and MoU signing ceremony were the main attractions.

Barrister Manzoor Hasan (Director, Institute of Governance Studies) and Gopakumar Thampi (COO, ANSA) and Professor Md. Golam Samdani



Fakir (Acting Vice Chancellor of BRAC University) were present in the launch which was followed by a press meet at Journalism Training and Research Initiative (JATRI), BRAC University, Dhaka. George made a felicitation speech in the launch meeting along with representatives from other countries.

The event witnessed various sessions on the tools of social accountability and simultaneous discussions and dissemination of information from all over the world. It proved as an opportunity to establish CUTS as a leading organisation in the area of governance and accountability in the region by showcasing its work and to be recognised as resource agency.

George facilitated a session on Participatory Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) based on CUTS pilot work in Rajasthan.

Climate Change Mela

CUTS with the support of Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India organised a *Climate Change Mela* (State level workshop) under the National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC),



coinciding with the 'World Wetlands Day' in Jaipur, on February 02, 2010.

The theme for 2009-10 is 'Climate Change' and around 358 organisations are participating in campaign including civil society

organisations (CSOs), educational institutions covering 33 districts of Rajasthan.

Abhijeet Ghose, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Government of Rajasthan stated that consumers have a key role to play in climate mitigation through sustainable consumption practices. M S Rathore, Environmentalist called upon the participating organisations to set examples for others by adopting environment friendly measures.

While making the introductory remarks George Cheriyan requested partner organisations to come forward in addressing the global challenge of climate change through concrete action at the grassroots.

Make Roads Safe



Every year, Road Safety Week (RSW) is being celebrated across India in the first or second week of January with specific symbolic aim to create awareness among the citizens on road safety and traffic rules. This year, RSW was observed during January 04-10, 2010. CUTS put up a stall in a three-day exhibition and displayed its work on road safety. It also conducted a signature campaign on road safety with a slogan 'Make Roads Safe'. Rajasthan Transport Minister Brij Kishore Sharma visited CUTS stall, appreciated CUTS efforts and participated in the campaign.

The Missing Link in Health Systems

Global Health Council (GHC) jointly with Results for Development (R4D) Institute organised a seminar entitled 'Civil Society – The Missing Link in Health Systems?' at the GHC conference hall, Washington DC, on March 29, 2010. The objective of the seminar was to highlight the work done by CSOs which has led to improvement in various aspects of health systems, including human resources, efficiency of public spending, access to pharmaceuticals, and quality of healthcare; and explore ways in which CSOs could strengthen their existing work to bolster health systems and how others could support their work.

The seminar was mainly to convey the message that CSOs have existing capabilities and comparative advantages in studying the efficiency of health systems, recommending possible improvements for a variety of healthcare

components, and undertaking evidence-based advocacy to strengthen systems. Many CSOs cited specific success stories that have helped to improve the quality of and access to healthcare for marginalised groups with collaborations and support from other development agents which can make the work of CSOs more impactful and sustainable.

George Cheriyan made a presentation on 'Community Monitoring of Health Worker Absenteeism'.



Community Participation and Service Delivery

The World Bank and the Transparency and Accountability Programme (TAP), a programme of the Results for Development (R4D) Institute organised a peer review workshop for the grant recipients of Round II at the World Bank, Washington DC from March 23-26, 2010. The aim of the workshop was to bring together Independent Monitoring Organisations (IMOs) implementing PETS & Absenteeism studies in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia and the Pacific under TAP.



The main purpose of the workshop was to engage in peer-learning and peer review with other CSOs world wide conducting similar research, sharing best practices and strategies to conduct studies, discuss successful advocacy

and dissemination practices and share results and learnings from practitioners, including other CSOs, international researchers and donor community. More than 35 participants from 18 countries attended the workshop.

George Cheriyan participated in the workshop and made a presentation based on CUTS project entitled 'Ensuring Service Delivery through Community Monitoring in 30 Health Centres in Tonk District of Rajasthan, India' (TAP).

Demanding Good Governance: Inside & Out

R4D, in partnership with the Human Development Network at the World Bank, organised a half-day seminar entitled "Demanding Good Governance – Inside & Out" at the World Bank Washington DC, on March 25, 2010. The event featured real-world examples of demand-side interventions that have been incorporated into service delivery. Six teams of World Bank staff, officials from R4D Institute and representatives from IMOs funded through current and past TAP grant rounds and CSOs presented their experiences in improving service delivery through access to information and third party monitoring initiatives both inside and outside the World Bank. The discussions focused on efforts to improve the capacity of citizens to engage policymakers through access to use of information and evidences from the field.

George Cheriyan was one of the presenters' in the session II on 'Third Party Monitoring'. He made a presentation on 'Community Monitoring of Absenteeism and Service Delivery in Health Sector Rajasthan, India', sharing the findings of CUTS study under TAP. He also mentioned the status of 'Right to Information' in India. Several questions were raised which were suitably answered.

Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC)

CUTS, with the support of Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) under the Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC) organised two workshops in Jhunjhunu, on February 20, 2010; and in Sikar on March 25, 2010 respectively. More than 73 participants including small investors of Jhunjhunu attended the programme. Sikar meeting was attended by 45 participants.



REPRESENTATIONS

Child Rights and Protection

Amar Deep Singh attended a State Level Consultation meeting on 'Status of Child Protection' organised by the Child Line India Foundation (CIF) at Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Jaipur, on January 15, 2010.

Talk on Right to Education

Om Prakash Arya and Amarjeet Singh participated in a talk on "Right to Education" Act delivered by Ashok Aggarwal, Senior Advocate and Chairperson of a Committee to make recommendations for the enforcement and implementation of the 'Right to Education Bill' in Jaipur, on January 30, 2009. The event was organised by Save the Children (India).

Peer Review-cum-Learning Visit

Madhu Sudan Sharma and Dharmendra Chaturvedi as part of peer review cum learning visit to assess the progress of the projects supported by Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), Washington DC visited Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra (RLEK), Dehradun on January 27-28, 2010.

Corruption Hits NREGS Implementation

Madhu Sudan Sharma attended a National Level Roundtable on Corruption in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), under Citizens Against Corruption programme supported by PTF, in Bhubaneswar, Orissa on March 06, 2010. He also visited Jagdananda, State Chief Information Commissioner, Orissa on March 05, 2010.

Meeting with District Collector, Tonk

Om Prakash Arya and Amar Deep Singh met with Pramila Surana, District Collector Tonk on February 05, 2010 and updated her about the progress of the TAP project.

Meeting of Investor Associations

Deepak Saxena attended meeting of Investor Associations recognised by SEBI held at SEBI Bhavan, Mumbai, on February 11, 2010.

Meeting of NGOs on Road Safety

Arjun Kant Jha attended the meeting of NGOs working on road safety issues at the Transport Bhavan on February 19, 2010.

Meeting on Rising Accident Rates

Deepak Saxena and Arjun Kant Jha attended a meeting at the CMO called by Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot in order to discuss a serious issue of rising accident rates in Rajasthan on March 03, 2010.

Future Projects

Developing a culture of good governance and accountability in the state of Rajasthan, India through involving CSOs and building their capacity with a focus on improving the public expenditure outcomes in NREGS in partnership with ANSA-SAR.



CART IN MEDIA

