

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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Technology is the only Answer to Make Information Dissemination More Effective

Government is like an ocean and if applicants are not aware about the right department and the Public Information Officer (PIO), then it can take months to get satisfactory information. It is onus of the applicant to frame right questions, file before the right PIO, so that information can be received within the stipulated time", said T Srinivasan, State Information Commissioner, while delivering the keynote address in a seminar as the chief

guest on 'Five Years of RTI in India: Challenges and Opportunities in Rajasthan' organised by Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS). He further said that the technology, e-governance and computerisation of all records in a digital format is the only answer for the effective implementation of RTI in India.

J S Yadav, Regional

Transport Officer, Jaipur said that there is a strong need of training of all PIOs and First Appellate Authorities (FAAs) on RTI Act about their duties and responsibilities so that they can work well. He also said manual/guide has to be prepared for all the categories mentioned in Section 4(1) and a standard format for disclosure of information has to be in place. He also responded to the queries raised by PIOs & RTI activists.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS International in the introductory remarks analysing the five years of the RTI Act, said the Act surviving in its original form, in the midst of threats for amendments from the beginning, is the biggest achievement on completion of five years. He further said that positive changes can be made in the Act to further strengthen it.

The extensive use of the RTI by the citizens shows a sense of 'power of information'. Along with solving individual problems, people are using RTI to initiate systemic changes in the governance. The Act is moving in the right direction towards achieving its objective of 'informed citizenry and transparency of information', which is vital to democracy and for containing corruption, Cherian concluded.

Sharwan Yadav, Senior Journalist, *Rajasthan Patrika* shared his experiences of filing RTI applications in various state departments and stated that there are number of problems in obtaining information. Madhu Sudan Sharma, Project officer, briefed about the National and State statistics related to ground realities which came out of various studies. He further said that in rural areas awareness about RTI is very low especially among the women. He also shared the findings of the RTI survey conducted by CUTS in Rural Development Department.

A briefing paper entitled 'Analysing Five Years of Right to Information in India' published by CUTS was released on the occasion. More than 60 representatives of PIOs, FAAs, RTI activists, NGOs and media participated in the seminar.



State level ToT on Community Score Card

A State-level Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop was organised under the project '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 Jaipur during October 27-31, 2010. Gopa Kumar Thampi, Chief Operating Officer, Affiliated Network for Social Accountability South Asia Region (ANSA SAR), presented the objectives of ANSA SAR. Dr Santosh Kumar (Ahmedabad) along with George Cherian facilitated the ToT. The documentary films were also shown and appreciated by the participants.



Field exercise was held in *Khandel* and *Sinodia Gram Panchaayts* of Sambhar block of Jaipur district.

Divisional Level ToT on CSC

The first Divisional level ToT was held at Swaraj Campus of Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society (CECOEDECON) during December 01-04, 2011. 20 representatives from Jaipur, Ajmer and Bharathpur division were trained in the workshop. The field exercises were performed in Dehlala and Bapugaon *Gram Panchayat* of Chaksu block of Jaipur district.

Campaign on Financial Consumer Protection with CI

CUTS joined hands with Consumers International (CI) and other consumer organisations around the world in calling G20 to take urgent action to protect consumers of financial services, through the establishment of an Experts Group on Consumer Financial Protection.

Through a letter, Pradeep Mehta Secretary General, CUTS urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee to raise the issue at the G20 Summit. The informal meeting of consumer organisations held in Delhi on October 21, 2010 unanimously adopted a resolution calling the G20 nations to set up an expert group.

Another letter was sent to Lee Myung-bak, Hon'ble President of South Korea requesting to include the issue in the Summit agenda on October 26, 2010. The media had given wide coverage for this campaign. On inclusion of 'Enhancing Consumer Protection' in the G20 action plan, CUTS welcomed it through a press release on November 15, 2010.

In this connection, George Cherian attended a core group meeting on 'Financial Services Campaign' organised by the CI in London on November 29-30, 2010 to review the progress of the campaign and finalise the future strategy.

Advocating with the State to Strengthen the Consumer Protection Mechanism

Experts, consumer activists and consumer groups, participating in a State-level round table meeting organised by CUTS in Jaipur, India on December 15, 2010, urged the Centre and states governments in India to implement the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act (COPRA), 1986 more effectively. The participants lamented that consumer protection remained a neglected area for the governments which failed to create a basic infrastructure for dispensation of justice under the law.



The meeting held under the project entitled 'Grassroots Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action (GRANIRCA)' marked the conclusion of the activities of the first year of the project and shared the findings emerged out of the interventions.

A large number of participants attended the meeting. M L Mehta, President CUTS and former Chief Secretary; Rao Rajendra Singh and Sukhram Kohli (both MLAs); Sunny Sebastian, Media Person; Haneef Mohd, former President, Jaipur Consumer Forum; and G P Gupta, President, District Forum, Churu were speakers on the occasion.

State Level Media Consultation Workshop

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a State-level Media Consultation under the GRANIRCA project in Jaipur on October 25, 2010. The main objective of the consultation was to sensitise the state and district level media representatives (from print and electronic) on consumer protection issues and discuss the possible interventions to strengthen and take the consumer movement effectively to common masses.

Two important documents under the project were released on the occasion. A research survey was conducted and its findings were collated in the form of a research document entitled, 'Status of Consumer Protection in Rajasthan' which analyses the status of consumer protection/welfare regime in Rajasthan.

A 'Training Manual on Consumer Protection' focuses on all aspects of consumer protection, COPRA, its provisions,



information about other link departments and the redressal mechanism available at different levels.

More than 51 representatives of print and electronic media attended the workshop from Jaipur as well as 12 project districts.

Mainstreaming Disability in Rajasthan



A state level consultation was organised on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disability in Jaipur on December 03, 2010. Aditi Mehta, Principal Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment was the Chief Guest and Prasanna Pincha, Special Rapporteur, National Human Rights Commission delivered the keynote address. Nitin Sharma, Sightsavers spoke on Millennium Development Goals and its linkages with Persons with Disability (PWD).

More than 50 representatives from various disability and mainstream NGOs, media, educational institutes and government departments participated actively. The consultation brought together all the participants on a common platform and provided an opportunity to share their views on the theme.

Three sensitisation workshops were also organised in Urmul (Bikaneer), GRAVIS (Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti, Jodhpur) and Institute of Rural Management (IRM, Jodhpur) on October 25, November 24 & 25, 2010 respectively.

'Access Audit of Buildings'

A two-day ToT on 'Access Audit of Buildings' under the project 'Mainstreaming Disability in Rajasthan' was organised in Jaipur on November 29-30, 2010. In the ToT, theoretical and technical aspects of access audit were discussed and practically done at the venue and one government building (SSA) and Sightsavers office for conducting access audits. In the ToT, two external resource persons Anil and Rohit Kumar from ARUSHI, Bhopal, known for conducting such audits, facilitated two-day activities.

Securities and Market Awareness Campaign

Three Securities and Market Awareness Campaign (SMAC) workshops with the support of Bombay Stock Exchange were organised in Jodhpur on October 21, 2010; in Baran on November 20, 2010; and in Dholpur on December 18, 2010 respectively. More than 46 participants attended the Jodhpur workshop; 40 attended the Baran workshop; and 55 attended the Dholpur workshop.



Another SMAC workshop in association with Securities & Exchange Board of India was organised at Phagi in Jaipur district on December 30, 2010. Around 80 investors participated in the programme.

Consumer Education Workshop

CUTS with the support of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India under Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund organised a District-level Telecom Consumer Education Workshop at Ajmer on December 18, 2010. The workshop was attended by 70 participants including telecom consumers.

