

Catalyst



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About CART

Established in 1983 as a small voluntary group of concerned citizens, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) expanded its activities and CUTS CART was set up in 1996 as a programme centre to pursue 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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Empowering Tomorrow's Consumers

Consumers International (CI) is the independent apex consumer organisation and the global voice for consumers, having 220 member organisations in 115 countries. CI's 19th World Congress on the theme 'Empowering Tomorrow's Consumers' was held at Hong Kong Conference and Exhibition Centre during May 03-06, 2011. The Hong Kong Consumer Council, a member of CI since 1976, was the local host. Over 700 delegates from more than 60 countries have taken part in the Congress. Climate Change and Financial Consumer Protection was high on the agenda. George Cherian, Director, CUTS represented CUTS in the World Congress.



Several fringe events were held on May 03, 2011. Donald Tsang, Chief Executive, Special Administrative Region, Hong Kong was the Chief Guest in the inaugural session held on May 04, 2011, who delivered the inaugural address. He spoke about HK's commitment to free flow of information, and the role of NGOs and free media. CI's President Samuel Ochieng spoke about CI's successes in putting consumer protection in financial services at the heart of the G20 agenda, strengthening the WHO's work on marketing of junk food to children and successfully contributing to the recent completion of ISO on corporate social responsibility.

CI Vice President, James Guest delivered a keynote address on one of the key themes of the Congress: "The Fight for Fair Financial Services: A Battle Our Movement Must Win". Participating in the discussions in the Plenary session on 'Towards Fair Financial Markets' by Sue Rutledge, Coordinator for Global Programme on Consumer Protection and Financial Literacy, The World Bank, George Cherian said access to formal financial services is still a big problem in countries like India. Only 40 percent people own a check in account in India. Further, he raised a question about the financial protection mechanism that World Bank is insisting while doing lending with governments.

Gerd Leonhard, CEO of The Futures Agency, attracted a lot of attention with his views. Consumer organisations must network to have greater impact, they must share and publish; this is how you engage and enable others, he suggested. The difference between MTV and YouTube is the difference between 'the network' and networked, he said.

The General Assembly and a meeting of CI member organisations from Asia Pacific region was held on May 06, 2011.



PIMs on Emerging 3G Consumer Issues

As part of the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANICA) supported by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India, 23 Public Interface Meetings (PIMs) were organised in 12 districts in Rajasthan (India) during May-June 2011. The meetings were attended by stakeholders comprising media, line departments, local elected representatives, legal practitioners, consumer activists, students and teachers, CSOs along with common consumers.



The objective of the meeting was to raise awareness, sensitise and trigger debate on some burning consumer issues in the state. In addition to highlighting issues related to emerging third generation consumer issues such as insurance, financial services, telecom etc. the meeting socialised the definition of consumer, services and goods, purchasing precautions and remedies, redressal mechanism/procedure, ways to access to adequate information and responsible department at the local level.

The meeting also highlighted schemes and activities implemented by the government, which safeguard consumers and address their concerns. Local electronic and print media widely covered the meetings.

Evolving Community of Practice



About 55 master trainers and facilitators of Community Score Card (CSC), covering the entire state of Rajasthan, India trained by CUTS under the ANSA 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*' met in Jaipur on April 18-19, 2011 to finalise the future plan of action.

The get-together was aimed at strengthening the bond among the members of this evolving Community of Practice. The two-day event reviewed the capacity of facilitators to implement CSC on the ground in Mahatma Gandhi National

Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and re-visiting various steps of CSC. Sessions on process of MGNREGS and using RTI as a social accountability tool were held.

CUTS Advocacy Impact

Disabled-friendly Roads in Jaipur City

'Traffic Control Board' (TCB) in its recent meeting decided to make three busiest roads of Jaipur city disabled-friendly by making ramps and connecting the pedestrians' pathways in such a manner that 'Persons with Disability' (PwDs) can move without any barrier. Initially Jauhari Bazar, Bapu Bazar and M.I. Road have been selected for this purpose. This was one of the suggestions made to Rohit Mahajan, DCP (Traffic) by a team of PwDs lead by CUTS, as part of an access audit of Traffic Police headquarters, which was taken it forward by the DCP (Traffic) in the TCB meeting.



CUTS staff along with a trained group of access auditors which included disability activists, PwDs volunteers of hearing impaired, blindness, locomotor disability, parents of autistic child, sign language interpreter and architecture engineer and legal expert conducted an Access Audit at Yaadgar, DCP (Traffic) Office Headquarters building on June 30, 2011. As per the recommendations of the group, Mahajan accepted the demand of making Jaipur city roads disabled-friendly and proposed the recommendations in the meeting of 'Traffic Control Board', which was held on July 01, 2011.

The group also visited parking areas, main gate entrance and reception desk of the office and went to pathways, corridors, public facility areas such as waiting room near entrance, wash room or toilet facilities to look into accessibility aspects and identify the barriers for different PwDs. It also examined first floor offices including office of DCP and other offices where PwDs come often for some work and found many hindrances in the way which needs to be tackled with immediate effect. Later, the detailed report of the access audit was submitted to the DCP with specific recommendations.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity on Sustainability Criteria for Bio-Energy

Amjeet Singh represented CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre in the workshop on 'Strengthening Institutional Capacity on Sustainability Criteria for Bio-Energy' (ISO 13065), organised by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment & Swedish Standards Institute (SIS) with support from Swedish International Development Agency in Kathmandu, Nepal, on April 19-21, 2011.

The objective of the workshop was to involve stakeholders from the South & Southeast Asian region on draft ISO for Sustainability Criteria for Bio-energy and build their capacity to effectively participate in the standardisation process. SIS is working as a secretariat for this ISO Project Committee (ISO/PC 248). More than 52 representatives comprising national standard bodies, CSOs, energy & standardisation experts from Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, India and Indonesia attended the workshop.



Decentralisation and Good Governance with Gender Perspective

Om Prakash Arya participated in the International Training Programme (ITP) on 'Decentralisation and Good Governance With Gender Perspective' phase IV in Cambodia during May 5-12, 2011. ITP is offered by the International Centre for Local Democracy commissioned by the SIDA. ITP consists of five phases. Phase I included conceptualisation of the change project and the assignment of a mentor, Phase II consist of a four-week training in Sweden, phase III is the implementation of change project with the support of mentors, phase IV is a regional seminar in one of the participating countries and the phase V is the completion of the change project and assessment.



During August 28-September 26, 2010, Om participated in the phase II in Sweden. In the phase IV held in Cambodia, for the benefit of the participants from five Asian countries, a workshop on 'Democratic Local Governance in Asia: Reforms and Innovations in Local Democracy' was also piggybacked on May 13-14, 2011.

Building Negotiation and Advocacy Skills



Affiliated Network of Social Accountability-South Asia Region (ANSA SAR) organised a one-day consultation on May 22, 2011 to discuss its future and sustainable aspects on May 22, 2011 and a workshop on 'Building Negotiation and Advocacy Skills' at Bangladesh, Dhaka during May 23-25, 2011. Representatives from selected organisations from the South Asian region and 22 partner organisations of ANSA-SAR participated in the workshop.

Jeff Thindwa, Lead Specialist and Social Accountability Cluster Leader at the World Bank Institute, Washington DC delivered the opening remarks and provided information about the social accountability initiatives and the role of World Bank Institute in the region. Madhu Sudan Sharma of CUTS participated in the consultation as well as in the workshop.

CUTS Awarded for Tobacco Control Interventions

CUTS was awarded by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Rajasthan for its outstanding contribution in the Tobacco Control Interventions in Rajasthan in last five years, on the occasion of 'World No Tobacco Day', on May 31, 2011. On behalf of CUTS, Amar Deep Singh received the award.

REPRESENTATIONS

Integrity Pact

Om Prakash Arya attended a workshop organised by Transparency International on Integrity Pact at Management Development Institute, Gurgaon on April 09, 2011.

Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund

George Cherian attended the first meeting of the reconstituted 'Committee for Utilisation of Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund' under the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India held in New Delhi, on April 11, 2011.

Financial Consumer Protection

Amarjeet Singh facilitated a session on financial consumer protection in a Training of Trainers for project staff of Centre for Community Economics and Development Consultants Society organised at their office at Sitapura, Jaipur on April 16, 2011.

Governance and Accountability Mechanisms

George Cherian attended the workshop for World Bank Staff on 'Governance and Accountability Mechanisms' held in New Delhi on April 28, 2011 and made a presentation on Community Monitoring Model in NRHM.

Road Safety Vision 2020

Arjun Kant Jha attended the first International Conference on Road Safety Vision 2020 on at Udaipur, on May 21-22, 2011 with a focus on role of education in road safety and road crashes and its status and challenges.

Workshop on Non-PDS Consumer Items

Deepak Saxena, Amarjeet Singh and Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended a daylong orientation jointly organised by the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs of Government of Rajasthan and the newly constituted Food and

Civil Supplies Corporation of Government of Rajasthan at Indira Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sansthan on June 13, 2011.

Amendments in the Consumer Protection Act, 1986

Deepak Saxena attended a workshop on 'Possible Amendments in Consumer Protection Act, 1986' organised by Consumer Association of India, Chennai and sponsored by Indian Institute of Public Administration, in Chennai on June 18-19, 2011.

Right to Education

Om Prakash Arya and Kanak Srivastava attended a two-day conference on Right to Education organised by the Rajasthan Right to Education Consortium at Jaipur, on June 10-11, 2011. Madhu Sudan Sharma attended the inaugural session of the conference on June 10, 2011.

Internal Trade and Futures Market

George Cherian attended the first meeting of the Sub Group on 'Internal Trade and Futures Market' constituted under the Working Group on Consumer Protection for the 12th Five Year Plan organised by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India held in New Delhi, on June 22, 2011.

12th Five Year Plan

Om Prakash Arya attended a two-day civil society consultation on 12th Five Year Plan of Rajasthan organised by the Budget Analysis Rajasthan Centre at Jaipur, on June 29 & 30, 2011.

Future Project

A project entitled 'Holding Broadband Service Providers to Account' in partnership with Consumers International



CART IN MEDIA

The image shows a collage of newspaper clippings from Indian publications. The clippings are in Hindi and discuss various topics related to consumer protection and education. One clipping from 'The Times of India' discusses the 'Right to Education' and '12th Five Year Plan'. Another clipping from 'The Economic Times' discusses 'Consumer Protection Act amendments'. A third clipping from 'The Indian Express' discusses 'Consumer Protection Act' and 'Right to Education'. The clippings are arranged in a overlapping, non-linear fashion.