

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 a more responsible society and encouraging changes at the policy level by advocating with the government machinery and sensitising it to the issues of concern of the common man. The Centre has spearheaded several campaigns and pioneered consumer empowerment.

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No Significant Effort to Promote COPRA

“Even after 25 years of enactment of the Consumer Protection Act (COPRA), there is no significant initiative by the government to promote it”, said Hon’ble Justice S Talpatra, Guwahati High Court. He was delivering the inaugural address in a two-day Knowledge Enhancement Workshop organised by CUTS in partnership with Consumer Protection Association (CPA), Agartala under the ConsumerUp project in Agartala, Tripura on May 18, 2012.

He opined that as compared to European market, Indian market is more open and with increasing access to remote rural markets with little regulations in place, investors/traders are maximising their profits at the cost of consumers’ interest. He further said that due to lack of awareness among consumers about provisions of consumer protection in the Act, they are unable to exercise their rights and avail benefits.



He spoke about ‘Lok Adalat’ and stressed that persons from District Consumer Forum should go to rural areas and give judgments there in order to speed up grievance redressal in rural areas. He mentioned that at present there are 2.4 crore cases pending for judgment in various courts across India. Such a situation is a threat to democracy.

He stated that it is very important to amend the Act accordingly to address this problem. He suggested that it should be made mandatory to provide cash memo/bill by shopkeepers and licence should be given to only those who provide cash memo/bills. This would help reducing the time to redress grievances and all states should adopt this.

While delivering the opening remarks, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS said consumer satisfaction is the key in the market economy and it means the process of realising consumer rights and ensuring quality of goods and services for which one makes payment. Consumer education, protection and grievance redressal are important in the new global order. He said that ‘Modern Consumer Movement’ started with the historical speech of John F. Kennedy in American Congress on March 15, 1962. But still the points raised by Kennedy are relevant.

He said the backbone of COPRA is the three-tier judicial mechanism at the District, State and National level, which is supposed to be speedy and inexpensive. However, the inordinate delay is making the mechanism non-functional. George shared that 54 percent of cases in the District Forum and 62 percent at the State level exceeded the stipulated time as per the study conducted in 2010. He raised few concerns related to access, availability, affordability and delays in decisions.

He further said that the biggest market is in rural India; however, they do not have any grievance redressal mechanism below the District level. He emphasised on the need for making the consumer protection law and the grievance redressal mechanism workable for the poor and rural consumers and the role of local administrative bodies in this regard.

Amrit Lal Saha, President, CPA Agartala & Chairman, Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) also spoke on various features and provisions of Indian COPRA. Various sessions of the workshop were facilitated by eminent resource persons. More than 90 participants attended the workshop.

Kick Start and Orientation Workshop of CitizensUp Project

A 'Kick Start and Orientation Workshop' under the project CitizensUp (Contributing towards Corruption Free and Transparent Service Delivery in 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' through Civic Engagement in Jaipur and Tonk districts of Rajasthan, India) project was organised in Jaipur on May 15, 2012.

The objective of the workshop was to provide a common platform to members of Consortium of Groups for Combating Corruption (CGCC) to get oriented about the project goals, objectives, outputs, activities and their role, responsibilities for achieving desired outcomes. It also provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences with team members and concerned officials.

In the inaugural session, RC Gupta, Additional District Programme Coordinator, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Jaipur; and P R Sharma, Adviser to Minister, *Panchayati Raj* and Rural Development, Government of Rajasthan were key resource persons. In the valedictory session, T Srinivasan, Chief Information Commissioner, Rajasthan participated as guest. More than 75 representatives of NGOs, media, elected members of *Panchayati Raj Institutions* (PRIs) and CGCCs participated.



Public Interface Meetings

As a part of the project, a total of 10 Public Interface Meetings (PIMs) under the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reachout & Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANIRCA) were organised at Sujangarh (Churu) on April 05; in Dausa on April 06; in Todaraisingh (Tonk) on April 07; in Rewasa (Sikar) on April 10; in Sarmathura (Dholpur) on April 11; in Kota on April 12; in Devpura (Bundi) and Bhensroadgarh (Chittorgarh) on April 13; in Balesar (Jodhpur) on April 21; and in Bansoor (Alwar) on April 23, 2012 respectively.



All PIMs were organised by the respective district partners with local support. In all, 550 participants from various categories of consumers participated in 10 PIMs. In Alwar, 35 school children also took part and were benefited from the interface. Resource persons included officials from government departments, ward members, *Sarpanch*, members of *gram panchayat*, district forums etc.

Two PIMs were organised at *Kawrara* village of Ahore Block in Jalore District on May 11; and in Banswara on May 19, 2012 respectively. Both the PIMs were organised with the local support and coordination of two district partners. Around 40 and 62 participants attended and shared their views/experiences in PIMs respectively. Resource persons included officials from government departments, Principal of the Government Secondary School, Branch Manager of LIC, *Sarpanch*, etc.

Community Score Card Training

CUTS organised a five-day training workshop on Community Score Card (CSC) in Jaipur during May 28-June 01, 2012 in which six participants from Pro Public, Nepal participated. The participants learned various steps of CSC and its process. Participants were also taken to a village named *Madhorajpura Gram Panchayat, Fagi* near Jaipur for conducting a field exercise as part of the training. As part of the field exercise the team conducted CSC at the Primary Health Centre. Participants also interacted with representatives of local CSO, *Sajag Sansthan*, which has already conducted CSC in its villages.

George Cheriyan made an introductory presentation on the overview of governance and accountability scenario in India and Nepal. He also made a presentation on SAc tools and its usages.



Knowledge Enhancement Workshops

CUTS with the support of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India has implemented a project entitled, 'Indian Consumers in the New Age: A Forward Looking Agenda to Address the Concerns of the Common People' (ConsumersUp).

The project is implemented in mainly four states; namely Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Tripura. But for the research purpose, 15 additional states and three union territories have been included namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The union territories are Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry.

In the series of first round of Knowledge Enhancement Workshops (KEW), the last KEW was held at Chandigarh on April 06-07, 2012. More than 40 participants attended the workshop. In the second round of KEW, remaining four KEWs were organised by state partners at Mysore on April 27-28, 2012; at Gurgaon, Haryana on May 07-08, 2012; at Ranchi, Jharkhand on May 14-15, 2012; and at Agartala, Tripura on May 18-19, 2012 respectively.



The objective of KEWs was to equip consumer organisations working in the project states, with knowledge and skills on relevant and new generation consumer issues to ensure improvement in service delivery and act as 'watchdogs' in their respective states.

Around 95, 35, 55 and 93 participants attended KEWs at Mysore, Gurgaon, Ranchi and Agartala respectively. Participation of consumer organisations, government officials, resource persons, media was very good and media coverage was excellent in all the places.

Gram Gadar Awards 2011

Chunaram Godara was selected for the *Gram Gadar* Award for best rural journalist for the year 2011. A jury headed by renowned journalist Rajendra Bora done the selection. Godara is a freelance journalist from Barmer district. The award was announced through a press release on April 13, 2012, which is the *Gram Gadar* day.

National Environment Awareness Campaign

A State level post proposal workshop on the theme 'Forest for Sustainable Livelihood' was organised at Rotary Club, Jaipur on June 20, 2012. The workshop was attended by more than 200 partnering organisations from all over Rajasthan.



Dharmendra Chaturvedi welcomed all participants and briefed them about activities, time frame, documentation and other useful things of campaign. Amar Deep Singh delivered introductory remarks and presented few thoughts on the theme.

K K Garg, Member Secretary of State Biodiversity Board, as special guest talked about the subject and also about interventions under newly established board. U M Sahai, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Department of Forests was the chief guest in the meeting and delivered keynote address.

Both guests also answered suitably to the queries of participants and ensured to provide resource materials and necessary support for environmental awareness. Resource materials collected from the State Biodiversity Board and others brought by civil society organisations (CSOs) were exhibited at the venue.

India Core Group Meeting of CoPSA

A meeting of the members of India country core group of Community of Practice on Social Accountability (CoPSA) was held at CUTS Delhi Resource Centre (DRC), New Delhi on May 19, 2012 with the objective to take the guidance from member organisations on country specific action plan of CoPSA to feed in to the regional action plan.

Members made a number of suggestions in terms of capacity building requirements on social accountability (SAC) tools as well as on the specifications of the web-portal. One of the important suggestions was to create a face book group on CoPSA.

In addition, a mapping of organisations working on SAc issues and the need for SAc curriculum development was discussed. Representatives of five member organisations participated and provided their suggestions.

REPRESENTATION IN MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS ETC.

Press Conference on Tobacco Issue

Amar Deep Singh attended a press conference jointly organised by Rajasthan Voluntary Health Association (RVHA) and Indian Asthma Care Society at Jaipur on April 03, 2012. The objective of the conference was to appreciate the steps taken by the Government of Rajasthan to raise taxes on tobacco products from 40 to 50 percent. Representatives of print and electronic media were present in the meeting.

Meeting of State Advisory Committee of RERC

Deepak Saxena and Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended the 13th meeting of State Advisory Committee of Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission (RERC) on April 27, 2012. The Advisory Committee has 19 members. It was attended by most of the members and presided by RERC Chairman D C Samant. In addition to discussions on the action taken report, members also raised issues, such as changes in the pattern of written submission to be presented before Commission for hearing, reduction in the number of copies, T&D losses of discoms circle wise, AT&C losses of discoms on half-yearly basis, consumption by flat rate agriculture consumers on half yearly basis.

Interactive workshop for RRAs

Amardeep Singh attended an Interactive Workshop for Regional Resource Agencies (RRAs) organised by the Ministry of Environment & Forest (MoEF), Government of India under 'National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2012-13' at New Delhi on May 11, 2012. The objective of the workshop was to exchange views of RRAs on performing activities, problems facing during the campaign and finding out solutions and getting suggestions to make the campaign more effective.

Jan Manch

Amardeep Singh participated in the discussions named 'Jan Manch' on tobacco control issue organised by ETV on June 13, 2012 based on tobacco control issue. Spoke persons of BJP and Congress, Sukhran Kohli (MLA), representatives of various CSOs were present in the discussion.

Consumers in the Digital Age

CUTS is a member of Consumers International (CI) expert group on 'Consumers in the Digital Age' since April 2012. The group of advisors will advise CI on its campaign and programmes on 'Consumers in the Information Society: Access, Fairness and Representation'. George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS is representing CUTS in the group. The other members of the group are: Felicia Monye (Nigeria), Jonathan Gadir (Australia), Marzena Kisielowska-Lipman (UK), Roxana Salazar (Costa Rica) and Veridiana Alimonti (Brazil). Dr Jeremy Malcolm, Senior Policy Officer, CI is the convenor of the group.

Future Project

Mainstreaming Disabilities in Government Ministries and Development Programmes of Civil Society Organisations in the State of Rajasthan, India in partnership with Sightsavers International.

CART IN MEDIA

