

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 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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Consumer Organisations like CUTS to Play an Important Role in Addressing Consumer Grievances Faster

Since justice is delayed in consumer fora, consumer organisations like CUTS should play an important role in addressing the consumer grievances faster", said Prof. K V Thomas, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India while releasing a CUTS report entitled, 'State of the Indian Consumer 2012', in a National Conclave held in New Delhi on October 11-12, 2012. The Conclave was part of the project 'Indian Consumers in the New Age: A Forward Looking Agenda to Address the Concerns of the Common People' (ConsumersUp) implemented by CUTS with the support of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India under the Consumer Welfare Fund.



Pankaj Agrawala, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Food & Public Distribution, Government of India said that there should be a proper relationship between the manufacturer and consumer and it should be mandatory for the manufacturer to provide details of the product.

Indrani Thurasisingham, Head, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, Consumers International appreciated the work done by CUTS. She also expressed her hope that the study done by CUTS will be helpful in taking the consumer movement forward and the recommendations will be implemented by DoCA.

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International emphasised on the need of establishment of an empowered investigating agency to deal with emerging unfair trade practices. George Cherian, Director CUTS International presented a brief overview of the project along with few key findings. Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator made a presentation on the key findings/recommendations emerged out of the research.

More than 100 representatives of noted consumer organisations from all over India attended the Conclave. The inaugural session was followed by six thematic sessions spread across two days, facilitated by eminent consumer experts/speakers. Dr Charles Dias, Member of Parliament delivered the valedictory address.

State of the Indian Consumer 2012

Though the Consumer Protection Act in India is currently in its 26th year of functioning, only 20 percent consumers in India have heard about the Act, though 42 percent are aware of their consumer rights.

Reserve Bank of India is the most known regulator in India (40 percent) followed by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (27 percent) and Electricity Regulatory Commissions (26 percent).

More than half of the respondents strongly believe that right to basic needs should be legislated. 70 percent feel that there is a need for a regulator for private schools. Though about 83 percent believe that certification and warnings are an important means to ensure right to safety, 40 percent do not refer to any safety or quality certifications.

These are some of the highlights of 'State of the India Consumer 2012'. The report consists of the key findings, based on an elaborate field survey of 11,500 respondents throughout India, and eight chapters on each of the consumer rights and a synthesis chapter. Each of the eight chapters on consumer rights also includes forward-looking recommendations to the government. The full report can be viewed at: www.cuts-international.org/CART/consumersup/pdf/Report_State_of_the_Indian_Consumer-2012.pdf

Social Accountability resulting in improved development outcomes

“The adoption of social accountability approaches in South Asia is creating significant impact around the world”, said Robert Chase, Lead Economist, South Asia Human Development, the World Bank in his inaugural address during the event “Social Accountability in South Asia: Improving Development Outcomes” organised by CUTS in partnership with Affiliated Network on Social Accountability South Asia Region (ANSA SAR) on December 18, 2012.

Bhavna Bhatia, South Asia Regional Coordinator, the World Bank Institute, spoke about the initiative of promoting knowledge exchange through ANSA and community of practices (CoPs), capacity building of relevant stakeholders, engaging CSOs in the budget process to demystify it,



motivating innovative practices and their documentation, use of information and communication technology and others.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS International, said that SAc interventions can play a vital role in improving the public expenditure outcomes and this has been proved through several pilots implemented by various organisations in several parts of South Asia and outside.

The event was organised to sensitise the government, media, donor agencies and CSOs on SAc approaches, adopt and support such approaches. The inaugural session was followed by presentation of case studies and a panel discussion on the theme moderated by Naimur Rehman, Chief Operating Officer, ANSA SAR.

‘My City’ Project on Urban Services Launched



Rapid urbanisation without proportionate increase in services and amenities is increasingly affecting the lives of citizens and pace of economic growth. The major reasons for the poor service delivery and lesser amenities are no devolution of power as envisaged in 74th Amendment of

the Constitution and low civic engagement in urban governance.

Considering the issue, CUTS in partnership with The Asia Foundation has conceptualised an initiative ‘MyCity’ and launched it on October 31, 2012 among 70 key stakeholders of urban governance including cooperators, officials of Jaipur Municipal Corporation (JMC), CSOs, media etc.

K K Bhatnagar, Chairperson, State Commission on Urbanisation appreciated the proposed activities of the project to engage citizens rigorously.

Jagroop Singh Yadav, Chief Executive Officer, JMC expressed his willingness to support activities of the project and be the beneficiary of outcomes.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS emphasised on the importance of local government and said it is the most direct interface between citizens and government in a democracy so it should be the most vibrant.

Om Prakash Arya, Senior Project Coordinator presented an overview of the project and made a detailed presentation about methodology and activities.

National Environmental Awareness Campaign

Under the National Environmental Awareness Campaign (NEAC) 2012-13, state level workshop was organised at Jaipur on November 20, 12. It was attended by more than 150 representatives of partnering organisations. Ashok Pareek, Manager, State Biodiversity Board, Rajasthan was the main speaker in the programme. He delivered a speech on the theme ‘Bio-diversity’. Dharmendra Chathurvedi welcomed the participants and shared the activity plan. George Cherian, Director, CUTS delivered introductory remarks in the programme and spoke on the theme ‘Bi-diversity conservation’. He also raised the issue of quality of activities conducted by partnering organisations which needs to be improved. Amar Deep Singh briefed participants about the campaign.



Exposure Visit to Andhra Pradesh

A nine-member delegation visited Andhra Pradesh from December 16-21, 2012 for witnessing the existing service delivery patterns in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and functioning of social audit processes in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. This exposure visit was under the project '*Contributing towards Corruption Free and Transparent Service Delivery in 'MGNREGS' through Civic Engagement in Jaipur and Tonk Districts of Rajasthan, India (CitizensUp)*' implemented by CUTS with the support of Partnership for Transparency Fund, US.



The visit aimed at learning the existing best practices in service delivery mechanisms in MGNREGS and functioning of social audit processes in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. The delegates who were part of the exposure were mainly working to ensure better governance and transparency.

CCC Consumer Convention

A national consumer convention was organised by Consumer Coordination Council in partnership with NOCER at Kochi, Kerala on December 29-30, 2012. Prof. K. V. Thomas, Minister of State (I/C) for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India attended the convention as the Chief Guest and delivered an address. George Cherian attended the convention and delivered an address on the 'State of the Indian Consumer'. Amrit Lal Saha (Chairperson, CCC) provided leadership to the convention.



Need for Continuous Consumer Awareness Prevails in Rajasthan

"As low as 0.3 percent cases are filed at the consumer fora due to lack of awareness", said Ashok R Patil, Professor, Chair Consumer Law & Practice at National Law School of India University Bengaluru, referring to the 'State of the Indian Consumer Report 2012' published by CUTS International. He was delivering the keynote address in the final state level feedback roundtable meeting organised by CUTS under the project 'Grassroots Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANIRCA).

"The biggest challenges facing consumers in Rajasthan is the lack of awareness about consumer protection laws and making the three tier quasi-judicial consumer grievance redressal fora accessible and workable for rural consumers and extending it below the district level," said George Cherian, Director CUTS International.

Rajendra Prasad Bora, Senior Journalist applauded the efforts of the organisation for arriving at a logical conclusion in terms of outcome as the project nears its end in December.

Liyaqat Ali, representative of the State Department of Consumer Affairs and additional District Supply Officer, Jaipur asserted the need for creating consumer activists who generate pressure on concerned authorities, while P N Pandey, Joint Director of Legal Metrology, Department of Industries,

Stakeholders' Consultation



To gather the feedback of partner and other organisations on the Community Score Card (CSC) process and its impact, a Stakeholder's Consultation meeting was organised at Jaipur on November 19, 2012 under the Short Action Research Project. The consultation was attended by representatives of 10 partner organisations and six other NGOs working on the issue.

Ramvilas Chandel, Sarpanch, Tordi Gram Panchayat, Tonk and Mahaveer Meena, Member, Jila Parishad, Bhilwara also took part in the consultation and shared their views and experiences about the CSC process. Amar Deep Singh presented an overview of the project and Om Prakash Arya presented the finding of data gathered through Citizen Report Card. George Cherian delivered special remarks on the findings and interacted with participants.



Government of Rajasthan emphasised on the need for citizens to combine awareness with informed action and decisions.

The role and provisions of the electricity grievance redressal mechanism in Rajasthan were elucidated by Electricity Ombudsman D R Mathur. Shiv Prasad Gude, from the Bureau of Indian Standards elaborated on their complaint redressal mechanism.

Along with district partners from all 12 target districts, about 100 consumer activists representing all 33 districts of Rajasthan, media representatives and other stakeholders were present in the meeting.

REPRESENTATION IN MEETINGS/WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS ETC.

CCC Northern Regional Consumer Convention

Kaveri Dutt and Deepak Saxena attended the Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) Northern Regional Consumer Convention in Shimla, on October 06, 2012. Consumer Education: A Need of Today and Electronic Medical Prescription of Drugs were two topics discussed in the convention.

Divisional Railway Users' Consultative Committee

Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended the second meeting of Divisional Railway Users' Consultative Committee at Jaipur Railway Divisional Office on October 10, 2012.

Meeting of RRAs

Amardeep Singh attended a consultative workshop of RRAs organised by the Ministry of Environment & Forests at Ahmedabad on December 06, 2012.

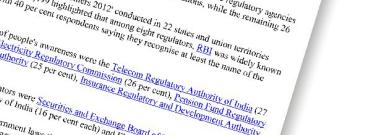
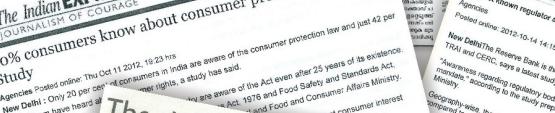
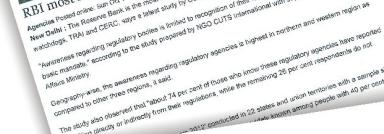
Meeting of the CCPC

Deepak Saxena attended the 27th meeting of the Central Consumer Protection Council held in Kochi on November, 2012.

National Budget Convention

Madhu Sudan Sharma participated in the National Budget Consultation organised by Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, in New Delhi on December 05-06, 2012.

CART IN MEDIA



Science Express: Bio-diversity Special Train in Jaipur

Science Express-Biodiversity Special (SEBS) train arrived in Jaipur on December 06, 2012 with the exhibition on biodiversity in India and remained in Jaipur at Durgapura Railway Station from 06 to 09 December, 2012. The Science Express is a unique collaborative initiative of the Ministry of Environment & Forests and the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India with the aim to create awareness on the biodiversity in India, climate change etc. George Cherian along with Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Badrinarayan Sharma & Arti Pandey Tiwari visited Durgapura railway station and witnessed the inaugural session.



Governance and Public Service Transformation

George Cherian attended a two-day International Conference on 'Governance and Public Service Transformation in South Asia' organised by Institute of Governance Studies of BRAC University and ANSA-SAR, and in collaboration with United National Millennium Campaign – Asia & Pacific Region, Public Affairs Centre, Governance and Public Policy Programme of North-South University and the Governance Research Unit, Monash University in Dhaka, Bangladesh on December 07-09, 2012.

Corporate Sector Participation in Rajasthan's Higher Education

Om Prakash Arya attended a discussion on 'Corporate Sector Participation in Rajasthan's Higher Education' in Jaipur, on December 07, 2012.