

Consumer Dialogue

Volume 1, Issue 3, May-June 2010

Bi-monthly GRANIRCA E-newsletter

Food Security for All – Will it Benefit the Poor?

The much talked about 'Food Security Scheme' was launched in Rajasthan on May 10, 2010. With an estimate of reaching out to over 36 lakh below poverty line (BPL) families in Rajasthan the Chief Minister of the State, Ashok Gehlot launched the scheme at Tonk district in Rajasthan.

Under the scheme BPL families would receive 25 kg wheat at the cost of Rs 2 per kg. The wheat would be distributed between 15 and 21 of every month by 23,000 existing ration shops in the state. The number of ration shops would now increase to 27,000, as the CM has announced to open 4,000 new ration shops on the occasion.



Gehlot said that the government has increased commission of ration shop dealers and the distribution of wheat would be done in the presence of a government employee. Both, decision are aimed at checking any misappropriation.

He said that Food Supply Corporation has also been constituted for the distribution of ration material. The CM said that those who have been left

out of BPL list of 1997 and 2002 would be included in the list of state BPL to extend them benefits of the scheme. He exhorted public representatives to inform people in their constituencies about the scheme. Every family should have knowledge of the scheme.

He said that the government would continue its war against adulteration, hoarding, black marketing and the public distribution system would also be implemented effectively and honestly.

The scheme was hugely opposed by critics claiming that it would not benefit the poor owing to the lesser quantity of food supplies (25 kgs) to the poor compared to what could have been offered by the Union Ministry (35 kgs). The scheme is advertised as a pro-poor scheme which will ensure easy access of food grains by the BPL families.

(Daily News Analysis, May 11, 2010)

25 years
1983 2008
CUTS
International



Ministry of
Consumer Affairs,
Food & Public
Distribution
Government of India

सत्यमेव जयते



CUTS CART

Upcoming Events

A Training of Trainers (ToT) for resource persons would be held on July 27, 2010. A series of District Level Training Workshops (DLTWs) would be organised in all 12 districts of Rajasthan. The main aim of these training workshops is to provide information to networkers on how to deal with consumer issues/cases. These networkers will utilise the information down the line by benefiting the rural masses in these districts.



Diagnostic Survey in Rajasthan

CUTS conducted diagnostic survey in 12 districts of Rajasthan as part of the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reachout & Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANIRCA). The survey carried out with the support of GRANIRCA district partners was aimed towards gauging the current status and functioning of six important government departments which deal with consumer issues in Rajasthan: District Collector Office, District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum, District Supply Office, Drug Inspectors Office, District Medical and Health Department and Legal Metrology Department.

The survey revealed that only 25 percent of cases are being solved in stipulated time of 150 days and three percent of consumer cases are being represented by consumers themselves or by consumer organisations.

Findings of the survey was shared with each of 12 districts in structured Public Interface Meetings (PIMs). The officials from the surveyed departments were invited to the PIMs. These PIMs witnessed the presence of public representatives in several districts, which added to the purpose of these meetings.

GRANIRCA Survey – Quick Look at Findings

- ◆ Only 25 percent of cases were disposed within a deadline of 90-150 days
- ◆ Out of 12 only 7 district consumer disputes redressal forums are fully functional
- ◆ 58 percent of total complaints were disposed off by the Weights and Measures Department in the financial year
- ◆ Amount allocated to consumer organisations for providing legal assistance to peruse consumer complaints in forum was only Rs 300
- ◆ Amount provided for free legal assistance to consumers was only 17 percent
- ◆ Financial support was provided to consumer clubs in 25 percent of districts only
- ◆ Only one consumer organisation was provided financial support from SCWF in the last financial year
- ◆ In most of the districts either the post of drug inspector was vacant or a single drug inspector was in-charge of more than one districts

Public Interface Meetings

The first phase of Public Interface Meetings (PIMs) in collaboration with the district partners was held in 12 districts of Rajasthan: Dausa, Chittorgarh, Alwar, Banaswara, Sikar, Jodhpur, Churu, Jalore, Bundi, Kota, Dholpur and Tonk in May 2010. Representatives from civil society, media, educational institutions, legal system and others were targeted in these PIMs. The main objective of PIMs was to share the findings of the survey conducted by CUTS and its partner organisations in 12 districts of Rajasthan. The findings were shared with the participants of these PIMs and an open house discussion was carried out based on its findings.

These PIMs would serve as a platform for fruitful interaction between the common mass and government representatives from the districts. Representatives from the surveyed departments as well as other important officers participated and suitably answered to the queries raised by the participants. PIMs were successful in terms of participation, interacting & sensitising government departments and raising debate on consumer issues.





Defective Supply of Water Pump Motor

Geeta Patel, a resident of Jaipur, purchased a Symphony air cooler from local electric supply dealer Shika Electronics, Jaipur. The cooler was under one year warranty from the date of purchase for which Warranty Card was issued. Patel immediately registered a complaint before the company about non-working of water pump of the cooler. After several follow-ups, the company sent a vendor to check the cooler who found that the pump in the newly purchased air cooler was faulty. The next day, he brought a locally made water pump to replace it but Patel objected and requested him to install the new pump of the same company for which the vendor refused.

Then she brought her complaint before CUTS' Complaint Handling and Information Advisory Service (CHIAS) to arrange to rectify the problem at the earliest. CHIAS issued a notice in the name of Shikha Electrical urging them to solve the complaint immediately. After some time the complainant sent a letter of thanks to CUTS informing that the vendor has replaced the faulty pump with a new one of the same company, hence there were no further complaints by the complainant on this issue.

(CHIAS)

Denial of Policy Benefits by the Insurance Co.

Nand Kishore Sharma, a resident of Pali, holding a medi claim policy from New India Insurance Company in 1998 met with an accident while driving and diagnosed with traction injury on left shoulder and advised to rest. Information of the incident was provided to the Insurance Co. on March 18, 2004. While undergoing the treatment, Sharma was on leave during March 17, 2004 to May 13, 2004, i.e. for eight weeks. As per the terms and conditions of the policy he was entitled for Rs 1500 per week and since he remained on leave for eight weeks, therefore, he was entitled to get a sum of Rs 12,000 from the Insurance Co.

On applying for the claim of Rs 12,000 under the policy, the company refused on the ground by saying that the treatment papers submitted by the complainant clearly reveals the treatment for cervical spondylosis and not of any injury treatment related to any accident and hence repudiated the claim. The complainant filed a case before the Consumer Redressal Forum Jaipur where the forum directed the insurance company to pay the amount of compensation of Rs 10,500 (i.e. Rs 1500 per week for seven weeks) along with interest @ nine percent per annum towards the cost of filing the complaint.

The forum further added that 'as per medical science traction injury could be received due to fall, therefore, the injury in the present case could be treated as received from an accident and not due to some internal problem.' And because he obtained a medi claim policy that covers accidental insurance he was entitled to receive the claim from the insurance company.

(NCDRC Judgments)

Consumer wins EPF loan 'denial' case

In a case, where complainant Shashi Shekhar had applied for a loan of Rs one lakh for his son's higher education, but the amount was reduced to Rs 50,000 by the employer even though there was a balance amount of over Rs two lakh in his funds.

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) has held that management and operation of the employees' provident fund (EPF) is "service" under the law and non-payment of loan from it amounted to denial of service.

The apex consumer body passed the order on a plea of Mineral Area Development Authority (MADA) employee challenging the order of Jharkhand State Commission which had set aside the district forum's direction to pay damages and cost of Rs 10,000.

"The objection of the respondent (MADA) that the dispute does not fall within the domain of consumer fora has no legs to stand since the law on the subject has been settled by the apex court," a bench, comprising members B N P Singh and S K Naik, said while rejecting the plea of the authority that operation of the contributory EPF scheme was not service under Consumer Protection Act.

While setting aside the order of the State Commission, the apex forum directed the MADA to pay balance amount of the loan to the complainant from the Provident Fund (PF), in addition to Rs 10,000 as damages and cost.

(Financial Express, June 01, 2010)



BIS Standardisation

– Benefits to Consumers

FAQ

What is Standardisation?

It is an activity giving solution for repetitive application to problems essentially in the spheres of Science, Technology and Economics, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context. Generally the activity consists of the process of formulating, issuing and implementing standards.



Where are these standards formulated?

National Standards Bodies vested with the task of standardisation are established all over the world. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is the National Standards Body in India, which is engaged in promoting the cause of Indian consumers through its wide range of standardisation activities, one of which is formulation of standards.

What does Quality of product means?

Quality specifically means those attributes of a product or a service which provide customer satisfaction or ensure 'fitness for purpose'. Quality is what consumer wants. For any consumer, usefulness of any product depends on its ability to fulfill a particular need or purpose for which it is intended.

What is the relationship between standardisation and quality?

Standardisation aims to exercise controls which result in improvement of quality. Standards enable a product, process or service to fulfill a particular need.

How can a common consumer select a quality product from a range of goods available in market?

Third party certification schemes are born out of a need to help common consumers to exercise their rights to choose a product. Products bearing a certification mark carry a third party assurance, which implies that the product has been produced according to a specific standard and that its production has been carried out under well defined systems. It also indicates that it has been appropriately inspected and tested according to the agreed standards.

In India, BIS certification scheme is for the use of the ISI mark operated under the provision of BIS Act, 1986. It is largely voluntary in nature but in case of items involving safety and public health there is a need to bring certain products under compulsory certification.

Hence to the consumer, standardisation brings assurance of product quality and services. Standards and standardisation are tools for consumer protection.

(www.bis.org)

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