

Consumer Care Centre (Grahak Suvidha Kendra), Jaipur

Quarterly Report (July-September, 2015)

1. Introduction

Grahak Suvidha Kendra (GSK) an initiative of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Government of India as a **ONE STOP CENTRE** catering to a spectrum of services for consumer welfare. The portal will function as an extended arm of State Helpline and on a common IT platform of National and State Consumer helplines. It will have local language, English & Hindi service with trained personnel, experienced in counselling, drafting complaints and providing information.



Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) has been selected for managing one such GSK for the western region based in Jaipur. The provisional sanction for the GSK to CUTS was issued by Shri Ram Vilas Paswan, Hon'ble Cabinet Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution on March 18, 2015 during the National Conference on Consumer Rights organised in Delhi in connection with the World Consumer Rights Day. The formal MoU was signed between the DoCA and CUTS on June 30, 2015. The GSK started its functioning on July 01, 2015. Consumer Complaint Handling, Information and Advisory services are provided by GSK.



2.3 Completing the formalities and receipt of first instalment of funds

The bond was submitted on July 6, 2015 along with other related documents like stamped duly signed pre-receipt, bank details etc. The same was re-submitted with some minor modifications on July 13, 2015. On the query from the department, had send the revised UCs of earlier grants received from CWF along with the resolution for the signing authority. Regular follow ups were made with DoCA on routine basis for the release of 1st installment funds. The first installment of Rs. 26.1 lakh has been received in CUTS bank account on August 19, 2015.

2. Formation of Advisory Committee

Formation of the advisory committee is in the process. A visit was made to the District Forum-Jaipur I, II, III and IV and met presidents and few members to acquaint them about GSK and pursuing them for inviting to be a member of Advisory Committee of GSK. Later visit also was made to State Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission and met Mahaveer Prasad Sharma, Registrar and gave him a letter requesting to nominate a President and a member of District Forum, as suggested, as the President and member of the Advisory Committee respectively. The response is awaited. As required, two members, **Dr. Seema Joshi (Social Worker from Jaipur) & Rakesh Parmar (from Dholpur as VCO representative)** have already given the consent to be part of the Advisory Committee. The discussions with regard to joining Advisor Committee by two other members i.e. a District Forum President and a member of District Forum is going on and shall be finalized in the month of October.

3. Training Programme for Coordinators and Counsellors of GSKs at IIPA, New Delhi on August 24-26, 2015

A Training Programme for Coordinators and Counsellors of GSKs and State Consumer Helplines on Consumer Protection and Consumer Welfare was organised by Centre for Consumer Studies (CCS) at IIPA, New Delhi from August 24-26, 2015. Representing CUTS GSK, Deepak Saxena (Coordinator), Dharmendra Chaturvedi and Gajendra Khichi (Counsellors) participated in the training. The training was successful in terms of better understanding the role and functions of GSKs, build capacity to manage GSKs and to handle complaints/redress the complaints and to enhance knowledge and skill to provide consumers with information related to various products and services.

4. Formal Launch

Grahak Suvidha Kendra (GSK) was formally launched on 15th September, 2015 in the auspicious presence of Justice V. S. Dave, former High Court Judge & ex-President Rajasthan State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission; Shri Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General CUTS, Shri Anant Sharma, President CANS and Shri Sanjay Jhala, Deputy Director, Consumer Affairs, Govt. of Rajasthan. Apart from this, there was participation from various VCO and representatives from civil society and government organizations, representatives from various service sectors like electricity and telecom and representative from SEBI as part

of regulator. The event concluded with presentation on composition, role & functioning of Grahak Suvidha Kendra and discussion on various consumer issues.



Then there was a power point presentation on composition, and functioning of Grahak Suvidha Kendra. Thereafter, guest speakers expressed their views on the consumer issues and how the redressal system can be made more efficient. *(a copy of the report of the launch is attached herewith)*

5. Complaints Handling and Advisory

Grahak Suvidha Kendra has been receiving consumer complaints through all modes viz. in person, telephone, through post and email. Since its inception in July and till September, 2015, GSK has received and attended a total of 46 complaints pertaining to telecom, education, electricity, online shopping, real estate, consumer durable buying etc. On all the complaints regular follow up has been done through e-mail or telephone. There has been positive response from the side of consumers and sellers/service providers. In very few cases consumers have opted to approach the consumer forum for resolution of their complaint. And efforts were made to solve the complaints amicably.

The complaints records has been maintained in registers as well as on excel in soft copies.

Most of the complaints were from telecom sector and online store sector. When a complaint is received, first it is forwarded to concerned seller and in most of the cases there is positive response from their side for amicable resolution of the problem. If doesn't get resolved at this stage the same is forwarded to the regulatory authority. *(copies of the complaints received and advisory given month wise by GSK, Jaipur is attached herewith in excel sheets)*

The above complaints and advisory relates to:

- a. Providing authentic information
- b. Giving pre-purchase and post-purchase advise
- c. Giving advice on consumer rights

- d. Giving advice on methods for resolving consumer disputes
- e. Giving solutions on disputes of consumers
- f. Pursuing for mediation in case it required
- g. Follow up of cases, which are already registered

5.1 In future, GSK plans to under few issues as campaigns in the coming quarter, which may probably be taken up as class action suits depending upon the data and information received. GSK also plans to undertake discussions and small meetings with service providers like telecom, water and health etc and apart from service providers and consumers, efforts would be to bring regulator also under the common umbrella.

6. Attending Complaints on GAMA

GSK is also started receiving complaints referred from GAMA (Grievances Against Misleading Advertisements) portal, pertaining to the region. Three complaints have so far been received from GAMA portal referred by the department, out of which one was attended immediately, resolved and reported the action on the GAMA portal as well. This complaint was against the Big Bazar show room in Sri Ganganagar regarding the misleading advertisement about an offer price. The other two complaints posted at GAMA, were withdrawn back as they were rejected because these were not related to misleading issues but still GSK, Jaipur got in touch with these two complaints and asked for further information on the basis that these were general consumer complaints.

7. GSK, Jaipur on Website, Facebook and Whatsapp Group

7.1 A webpage has been created in CUTS website and all the postings with latest update of complaints handled and other activities are posted from time to time.

7.2 Similarly, a Facebook account has also been created in the month of September, where consumer related information is posted regularly, which includes latest news, decisions and

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action Research & Training (CART)

Consumer Care Centre (Grahak Suvidha Kendra)

Project Overview

Grahak Suvidha Kendra (GSK) is a new initiative of the Dept. of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Government of India as a ONE STOP GSKER catering to a spectrum of services for consumer welfare. It will function as an extended arm of State Helpline and will function on a Common IT platform of National and State consumer Helplines. It will have local language, English & Hindi service. It will have trained personnel, experienced in counselling, crafting complaints, and providing information.

Recognising the importance of digital governance and to provide a simple, efficient and integrated solution that will link these various platforms is underway. The DoCA is now working on integrated electronic platform that will provide a nation-wide consumer grievance network. This will be part of a network of Grahak Suvidha Kendras to serve as integrated consumer advocacy centres that will extend a host of services – information dissemination, counselling, grievance redress, mediation, class action, product testing, capacity building and training and mobilising popular support to the consumer movement. The Grahak Suvidha Kendras will be run and managed by Voluntary Consumer Organisations.

Grahak Suvidha Kendras would also be given an interface to access Grievances Against Misleading Advertisements (GAMA) for lodging the grievances of consumers (gama.gov.in). Any citizen can go to any of these centres to lodge his/her grievances against Misleading Advertisements.

Services available at Grahak Suvidha Kendra:

- Advice on consumer protection related issues and complaints
- Publication of books, pamphlets, magazines and other materials on consumer related issues, and



government initiatives for consumer's interest. Besides, consumers are given an option to post their complaints on this Facebook page. Till now we have received one complaint through Facebook page, which has been resolved.

7.3 A Whatsapp group has been created comprising of all the coordinators of five GSK, all the counsellors and most of the members of National and State Helplines, which contributes in sharing each other's experience, a specific

consumer related news, government decisions and various other issues on consumer's interest.

CUTS is in the process to construct an **Online Mobile Application** of complaints handling, which will be available on the GSK webpage and consumers will be able to submit their complaints online also directly on this application. Besides, an answering phone machines is also being installed at GSK, Jaipur, which will be a dedicated phone cum fax line and which will enable consumers to lodge their complaints even after office hours at any time or any day, so that these are attended on the next working date.

8. GSK Initiatives to Interact with Service Providers and Regulators

In the process to develop relations with service providers of various consumer services, a series of discussions have been initiated, which comprises of regulator, consumers and the service providers.

In the reporting period of July-September 2015, one such meeting was organised with an electricity regulator and followed by number of meetings either organised by telecom regulator or telecom service providers, which comprising consumers, telecom service providers and regulator. GSK team attended all the mentioned meetings, the details are:

8.1 Consultation with Consumer Organisations Working in Electricity Sector

A consultation of CSOs with RERC Chairman was organised on power sector reforms on July 15, 2015 at CUTS Conference hall, Jaipur. Around 20 CSOs from Jaipur and other districts took part in the consultation and interacted with Vishwanath Hiremath, Chairman of RERC. The consultation was woven around the ways to utilize the fund, which RERC has allocated to discoms for consumer education and effective redressal of grievances. Many

ideas and suggestions came out from the discussion, which will further be imparted to RERC. In addition, several issues such as lack of awareness, grievance redressal mechanism, consumer advocates etc. were discussed in detail.

8.2 Telecom Customer Outreach Programmes

GSK Team has been regularly participating in various Customer Outreach Programme organised by TRAI and the Telecom Service Providers in different Parts of Rajasthan. Till now Team has attended 5 of such events. These Workshops and Open Houses are organised with the basic purpose of making consumer more informed and more aware with the telecom sector issues and to acquaint them with the redressal mechanism.

9. Spreading Awareness

9.1 In order to spread awareness about GSK, several methods have been adopted like news on All India Radio of Jaipur Centre; spreading news about GSK in other CUTS meetings, seminars, workshops etc. by way of distributing pamphlets and taking a small session etc on GSK and press releases etc.

9.2 Few more measures will be taken in the coming days like distributing pamphlets etc through local newspapers and exploring possibility of imparting information through local TV channels.

10. Human Resources & Infrastructure

10.1 Building: GSK started function at D-218 A, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur-302016 w.e.f July 1, 2015. A sign-board regarding the Consumer Care Centre has been fixed outside GSK office. Besides, all the from office staff including 4 counsellors, coordinator and data entry operator are equipped with computers, dedicated phone line connected to answering machine and fax and individual telephone lines connected to EPABX.

10.2 **Staff:** As required the staff team is put in place including one coordinator, 4 counsellors and back office has been in place, the details of which are:

Deepak Saxena	Coordinator	09799996095	gsk@cuts.org ; ds@cuts.org
Gajendra Khichi	Counsellor	09887211344	gak@cuts.org
Dharmendra Chaturvedi	Counsellor	09414202868	dc@cuts.org
Renu Beniwal	Counsellor	08764200317	rb@cuts.org

Arawat Kumar Thalia	Counsellor	09414788283	akt@cuts.org
Manish Pareek	Accountant		
Vikram Rathore	Data Entry Operator		
Badri Narain Sharma	Data Entry Operator		
Jodhu Adhikari	Messenger		

For more information:

Grahak Suvidha Kendra,
c/o Consumer Unity & Trust Society
D -218A, Bhaskar Marg, Banipark,
Jaipur 302 016

Ph. cum fax: 0141- 4015395

Email: gsk@cuts.org