

**Grassroots Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan
through Consumer Action
(GRANIRCA)**

**Orientation cum
Partners' Meet**

March 15, 2012, Jaipur, Rajasthan



CUTS CART

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1. Introduction

Lack of consumers' access to adequate information, improper understanding of the redressal mechanism/procedure as well as other socio-economic vulnerabilities of consumers are the reasons that, despite unique and very progressive laws for consumer protection, consumers are still struggling to get justice. To address the problem, CUTS is partnering with the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, under the Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) to implement the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reachout & Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action' (GRANIRCA) in 12 districts of Rajasthan. The purpose of this project is to enhance strong consumer movement at the grassroots in seven divisions of the State by ensuring an enabling environment for protecting consumer interests, which will, in turn, contribute to national interest.

The project is building a strong consumer movement at the grassroots, by equipping consumer activists with skills and creating a networking of zealous grassroots activists, through intensive training, capacity building and orientation programmes on relevant consumer protection issues.

This project is moving ahead with its mandate of providing adequate information to consumers for understanding the redressal mechanism/procedure as well as other socio-economic vulnerabilities as consumer.

2. Project Objectives

The objective of the project is to build a strong consumer movement at the grassroots by equipping consumer activists with skills and creating a network of zealous grassroots activists through intensive training, capacity building and orientation programmes on relevant consumer protection issues.

3. Objectives of the Meeting

- To evaluate the second year activities and outcomes
- To plan project activities for the third year, which is also the last year of the project

Proceedings (Please refer annexure 1 for Agenda)

4. Welcome Remarks: Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator, CUTS

After formal introduction, Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator welcomed all participants and briefed them about objectives of the meeting.

5. Opening Remarks: George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS

George Cheriyan, Director congratulated the partners on the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day and further explained the importance of this project in his opening remarks. He said that this year, the Indian Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) has completed 25 years, which came into existence in 1986 and coincidentally this is also the 50th year of John F Kennedy's historical speech to the American Congress on March 15, 1962, which he delivered to uphold four basic rights of consumers. His speech led to the start of modern consumer movement. Looking at these two important issues, government has taken up consumer protection on high priority in its agenda and there is a big debate going on across the country that to what extent we have achieved so far in last 25 years of the enactment of the Act, what all are the challenges we are still facing and how to overcome these.



Cheriyan quoted the recent survey conducted by CUTS in Rajasthan in 2011, which shows that 63 percent and 35 percent of the people of Rajasthan were still not aware of the Act and rights respectively. He stated that it is a very crucial time and all stakeholders must come forward.

Further, Cheriyan explained the expected outcomes in detail and inked one outcome to another step. Starting from first outcome, i.e. awareness and empowerment of people as the first step, which will lead assertive consumers to uphold their rights and fight for justice. Once the consumers are empowered, they would be capable enough to raise questions and thus lead to development of a questioning society and civil society organisations (CSOs) will act as 'watchdogs'.

In the second step, due to active questioning society, improvement in the overall system will be seen, which eventually will lead to better service delivery and efficient redressal mechanism in place. This will further result in an enabling environment, where consumer will feel him/herself protected.

In the last step, when an enabling environment is created then one can really feel a sense of good governance and when it is achieved, then definitely project like GRANIRCA will

serve as replicable model, which should pave the way for an opportunity to work further in other districts and states as well.

6. Recap of Project's: Jai Shree Soni, Project Officer, CUTS

Jai Shree shared the project governance structure through presentation. She briefed about overall objective of the GRANIRCA project. Then, she shared about no. of events and participation during last year under the project.



6.1 Public Interphase Meeting

Jai Shree explained that during last year, a total of 36 public interphase meetings were conducted against proposed 24 in a year in 12 districts with wider participation of more than 2397 participants as against proposed 1200.

6.2 District Level Media Workshops

She emphasised that as media has key role in raising awareness, so the district level media workshop was very useful to sensitise media representatives. Total 12 such workshops were organised in 12 districts through which 466 media representative were sensitised against proposed 600. Since media participation was less, participants were suggested to do more networking with media representatives and keep regular contact and follow up with them.

6.3 District Level Training Workshops

Total 12 workshops were conducted, where 610 participants against proposed 360 got benefited out of it.

6.4 State Level Feedback Roundtable Meeting

Its objective was to consolidate and share the key findings from year two activities and identify the points for advocacy. One such meeting was organised in 2011 and more than 57 participants attended the meeting.

6.7 Outcomes

Jai Shree mentioned few developments, which took place in Rajasthan in the benefit of consumers through CUTS' efforts, which is actually an outcome within the GRANIRCA project. Some of included filling up of vacancies in consumer fora; re-constitution of

district consumer protection councils; sensitisation of media; first time appointed persons qualified to be a District Judge as President District Forum in some districts; establishment of two more district foras in both Jaipur and Jodhpur districts and State Department of Food, Civil Supply and Consumer Affairs started monthly interaction meeting with voluntary consumer organisations.

Jai Shree also shared the additional activities conducted by CUTS such as World Consumer Rights Day, National Consumers Day, Consumer Complaints Handling & Advisory Services and representation at the International, National and State level.

7. Evaluation of 2nd year activities and outcomes: Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator, CUTS

Deepak Saxena, CUTS shared the performance at the level of district partners regarding each conducted activity and hard copy of evaluation was circulated. Performance was on grading bases; Best, Good, Fair and Poor. He discussed drawbacks and achievements of each activity one by one and asked for their feedback. Partners mentioned their problems in conducting programmes, whereas few suggested some varied ideas for better and effective conduction of programmes.



7.1 Field Research and Public Interface Meetings

Research activity under year three was discussed. Deepak Saxena said that research and data emerging from survey is very important for advocacy and suggested participants to do survey as per given methodology and due honesty.

Feedbacks/suggestions:

- For public interface meetings (PIMs), usually most of the participants were literate, so illiterate were not getting information about their rights. Therefore, the need was felt to organised these meetings at *Gram Panchayat* level and more illiterate people should be included.
- This should be streamlined for every NGO, and request them to show one or two clippings related to consumer issues or discuss in their events/meetings.
- The discussions in the meeting should be on area specific issues. One of the participant cited examples related to agriculture for farmers.
- There should be provision for providing incentives to resource persons.

- Speeches should be less; requirement of multi-media like LCD, radio, traditional system of creating awareness like *nukkad natak* etc. for illiterate people. Creating awareness through puppet dance in rural areas would be better as compared to providing reading IEC material, speeches etc.
- More practical exercises should be organised during meetings to make people understand.
- Certificate of participation should be provided in the meeting to promote more outreach.

7.2 District Level Media Workshops

Fair grade was given for this activity. It was observed that representatives from media were less and also district partners' effort was not so good.

Feedback/suggestions

- More networking with media representatives, regular contact and follow up with them is required.
- Letter of thanks and appreciation should be given to each media person for participation on behalf of CUTS.

7.3 District Level Training Workshops

In this activity, overall performance was fair. Deepak Saxena suggested partners to invite president of consumer forums and ensure their participation in workshop.

Participants complained that they always invite but they depute members to attend meetings.

One of the district partners suggested that letter should be sent to Principal Secretary, Consumer Affairs to ask DSO to participate in such meetings and workshops. Until and unless they do not receive any official order to attend, they do not take seriously.

Further, Deepak informed about grading that is poor for viewing and distribution of training manual and newsletter, using internet and responding CUTS email sent through GRANIRCA, quarterly reporting, advocacy and networking and CHIAS. He suggested partners that they should build their capacity regarding accessing e-mails and respond to concerned persons. They should forward e-newsletters to other persons and send quarterly reports according to given format and on time. and mention about progress of CHIAS in quarterly report.

8. Status of Consumer Protection in Rajasthan

8.1 25 years of Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) in India: Abhimanyu Singh, Project Officer, CUTS

Abhimanyu made a presentation and shared the achievements of COPRA. He stated that India is the only country in the world, which has exclusive courts for consumer redressal, succeeded in bringing about fair play in the supply of goods and services to a large extent. In the 1990s the movement has struck root in rural areas as well as many of the states in India.

He further briefed about the drawbacks including consumer awareness in India which is spreading very slowly, consumer redressal process is very cumbersome, expensive and

time consuming, consumer forums too became replica of legal courts, as the procedure is no longer simple and quick, orders of the consumer courts are compensatory in nature and not punitive.

8.2 Public Service Guarantee Act: Deepak Saxena, Senior Programme Coordinator, CUTS

Deepak Saxena shared hard copy of one document in Hindi on Rajasthan Guaranteed Delivery of Public Services Act, 2011 and stated that Rajasthan government implemented Rajasthan Guaranteed Delivery of Public Services Act, 2011 on November 14, 2011 with the aim to provide time bound and hassle free delivery of certain services to the people of the State by the public authority. State government made a provision of the penalty imposed for failing to provide a service or for a delay. The penalty would be recovered from the salary of the concerned designated officer.

The Act covered 108 services of 15 major government departments, envisages a time-bound performance of duties by government officials and possessed a provision of cash penalty for offenders. The Public Service Guarantee Act included services pertaining to departments of police, finance, energy, medical, traffic, public health engineering, food, housing, water resources and social justice among others. He also informed about few provisions under this Act.

8.3 State Level Regulators: Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS

Amarjeet Singh explained that if we want to aware common people and solve their issues then first we have to be updated and have better understanding of regulators at State level. He coated few of the regulators like RERC in electricity sector, Banking Ombudsman within RBI for financial services sector, etc.



8.4 Realising Consumer Rights: Where do we stand? Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Project Officer, CUTS

Dharmendra said that all partners should have the knowledge of six rights provided by COPRA, and take corrective actions against violation of consumer rights. He cited one example that if anybody was found guilty in any packed food items, such as absence of manufacturing date, details of contents, no mention of quantity etc. then they should file complain to respective departments. He suggested participants to have updated knowledge of district departments and concerned officials like District Supply Officer, Health Officer and Controller of Weight & Measures Department etc.

9. Planning for 3rd year activities: GRANIRCA Team

After all the sessions, planning of project activities for next third year was done in consultation of 12 district partners. The following decisions were taken:

- Filled survey questionnaire will be sent to CUTS CART office by March 31, 2012 by 11 district partners. Jalore district partner will send by April 15, 2012, since they received late.
- Every district partner will send three-four case studies indicating the achievement and success of the project.
- After receiving quarterly reports from partners 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th payment will be released to district partners by April 15, July 15, October 15, and December 31, 2012 respectively.
- 1st, 2nd, and 3rd round of PIMs will be organised in 12 districts during April, September and November 2012 respectively.
- District Level Training Workshop will be conducted during July-August 2012.
- State Level Media Workshop and Feedback Roundtable Meeting will be organised in October and December 2012 respectively.
- External review and evaluation may be held in July 2012 by external evaluator and team.

10. Summing Up & Vote of Thanks: Abhimanyu Singh, Project Officer, CUTS

Abhimanyu narrated all the discussions and decisions taken. He thanked all district partners for actively participating and providing their valuable inputs/suggestions. He expressed gratitude towards Deepak Saxena, Amarjeet Singh and other GRANIRCA team members for providing their important suggestions to achieve success.

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GRANIRCA Partner's Orientation
March 15, 2012

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

S.N.	Time	Subject	Facilitator
March 15, 2012			
1.	10.00- 10.30 10.30- 10.45	Registration, Tea, informal interactions Welcome & Introducing objective of the meeting	AKJ
2.	10.45- 11.00	Opening Remarks	GC
3.	11.00-11.15	Recap of Project's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective • Expected outcome • Measurable indicators 	JSS/ Interactive
4.	11.15– 12.30	Evaluation of 2nd year activities and outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall & activity (Drawback & Achievements) • Status of CHIAS (followed by discussions) 	DS
5.	12.30-13.30	Status of Consumer Protection in Rajasthan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 years of Consumer Protection Act in India: Achievements, low lights and concerns • Public Service Guarantee Act • State Level Regulators 	DS & AS7
13.30- 14.30		Lunch Break	
6.	14.30-16.00	Realizing Consumer Rights: Where we stand?	
6.1		Right to basic needs	AS7, DC & Team
6.2		Right to safety	
6.3		Right to be informed	
6.4		Right to choose	
6.5		Right to redress	
6.6		Right to consumer education	
6.7		Right to consumer representation	
6.8		Right to sustainable consumption	
7	16.00-16.30	Tea Break	
Open discussions			
8	16.30-17.00	Planning for 3rd year activities	GRANIRCA Team
9	17.00-17.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other issue • Feedback & Suggestions of partners 	
10	17.20-17.30	Summing up and Vote of Thanks - ABS	