

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



**Synthesis Report of the First Phase of Public Interface Meetings
(PIM)**

Phase - I

April- June 2011

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Contents

1. Background	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Objectives of PIMs.....	4
4. Details of PIMs.....	4-5
5. Proceedings of the Meetings.....	5-10
6. Highlights	11
7. Glimpses of Media Coverage	12

1. Background

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, in turn, would contribute to national interest.

The objective of the project is to generate a more capable consumer, by equipping him with knowledge and skills to build up proactive grassroots activists, through intensive training, capacity building and orientation programmes on consumer protection issues, to create an enabling environment at the grassroots.

The duration of the project is of three years, i.e., January 2010 to December 2012, covering all seven divisions of Rajasthan, comprising 12 districts, namely, Tonk, Chittorgarh, Kota, Bundi, Alwar, Banswara, Jodhpur, Jalore, Churu, Sikar, Dholpur and Dausa. The districts have been highlighted in the map below:



2. Introduction of PIMs

Under the project, two public interface meetings (PIMs) are required to be conducted annually in each of the 12 project districts. It has been decided to conduct the PIMs in 2 phases. To increase the outreach of PIMs to block & *Panchayat Samiti* level, within the given budget of the first phase, total 24 PIMs were conducted in 12 districts of Rajasthan, instead of proposed 12.

The overall purpose of this second round PIM was to raise the level of awareness and voice of consumer rights further at the lower level, so that people become aware of their rights as consumers and the available redressal mechanism under the existing law.

3. Objectives of PIM:

The overall objectives of the PIM were to:

- 3.1 raise consumer awareness at the grassroots to build a strong consumer movement at the grassroots level in Rajasthan.
- 3.2 share the existing appropriate mechanisms for exchange of information on measures of consumer protection, nationally and regionally;
- 3.3 empower consumers to make informed choices and thereby protect their health and safety and get more value for money;
- 3.4 obtain feedback from the people about the existing redressal mechanism condition, environment and accessibility; and
- 3.5 To bridge the gap between consumers and service providers/officials responsible for consumer protection.

4. Details of PIMs

As per feedback from the year 1 activities, in the first phase of 2nd year of the project, PIMs were conducted at the block level. The details of the venue, along with dates of the meetings, are mentioned in Table 1.

Details of PIMs in first phase of 2011

S. N.	District	Date	Station	Total Participation	External Resource Persons
1.	Banswara	May 04, 2011	Ghatol Panchayat Samiti	29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neemraj Shehlot, Project Director, Wagad Vikas Sansthan
2.	Chittorgarh	May 03, 2011	Chittorgarh	37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shyam Sundar Sharma, DSO
3.	Bundi	April 28, 2011	Nainwa Panchayat Samiti	63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ram Bahadur Kulshreshtha, Member District Consumer Forum, Kota and temporary in-charge of Bundi Consumer Forum • Samrendra Singh Sikharwar, Judicial Magistrate, Nainwa and local media persons
4.	Kota	April 27, 2011	Kota	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ram Bahadur Kulshreshtha, Member, District Consumer Forum, Kota & temporary in-charge of Bundi District Forum • R P Gupta, retd Secretary, Prodh Siksha Samiti
5.	Jodhpur	May 03, 2011	Luni Panchayat Samiti	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Murlidhar Vaishnav, Ex-President, District Consumer Forum
6.	Jalore	May 04, 2011	Sayla Panchayat Samiti	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B L Trivedi, Branch Manager, LIC • Murari Lal Sharma, local teacher • Paras Mal Sharma, Sr. local teacher
7.	Churu	April 26, 2011	Ratangarh Panchayat Samiti	59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pradeep Poonia, Secretary, Manav Pragati Sansthan • Bhupendra Singh, Coordinator, Manav Pragati Sansthan
8.	Tonk	April 22, 2011	Jhelai Gram Panchayat in Panchayat Samiti Niwai	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kanta Devi Sharma, Sarpanch • Babulal Saini, Dy. Zila Pramukh •
9.	Dholpur	April 29, 2011	Dholpur	56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indra Singh Pawar, Principal, Government School • Alka Singh, Member, Consumer Forum • Dr. Vijay Singh, Doctor

10.	Alwar	April 22, 2011	Thanagazi Panchayat Samiti	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subhash Chand Sharma, Secretary, Upkaar Sansthan • Ram Prasad Sharma, Retd. Principal, Govt. School
11.	Dausa	April 29, 2011	Lalsot Panchayat Samiti	46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ram Prasad Bhinda, Chairman, Nagar Palika, Lasot • Babu Lal Hada and Satya Narain Sharma, both lawyers • Anil Benada, a local businessman and also a public representative
12.	Sikar	April 25, 2011	Sri Madhopur Panchayat Samiti	82	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rameshwar Meena, Sarpanch • Smt. Bhagwani Devi, Sarpanch
13	Banswara	June 02, 2011	Bagidora Panchayat Samiti	53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Khem Singh, Asst. Engineer, Electricity Deptt. • Narendra Chopra, Manager, Bharat Gas • Wazi Bai, Sarpanch, Bagidora • Badami Lal Jain, Dy. Sarpanch • .
14	Chittorgarh	May 27, 2011	Bhadesar Panchayat Samiti	41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gangadhar Solanki, Social Worker and Volunteer • Umesh Agala, Lawyer
15	Kota	June 02, 2011	Ladpura Panchayat Samiti	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rambadhur Kulshreshtha, Member, Consumer Forum, Kota • Nalchand Malav, Dy. Sarpanch • Kunj Bihari, Secretary, • Jayshree Goutam, Advocate
16	Jodhpur	May 23, 2011	Bilada Panchayat Samiti	58	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. D.R.Chouhan, CMHO, • Rakesh Sharma, Block Programme Administrator • Bakhu Ram, Secretary, Samagra Vikas Samiti
17	Jalore	May 28, 2011	Bhawrani Gram Panchayat in Ahore Panchayat Samiti	65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Govind Ram Tailor, Professor • Suresh Dave, Teacher
18	Churu	June 11, 2011	Sardarshah ar Panchayat Samiti	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pradeep Ponia, CE, • Radheshyam, Secretary, NYMS • Bhupendra Singh, Project Officer
19	Tonk	May 31, 2011	Duni Panchayat Samiti	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashrar Jaha, Prerna Education Society • Santosh Nama, Social Worker • Gopal Saini, MMM
20	Dholpur	May 31, 2011	Rajakheda Panchayat Samiti	66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramesh Chandra Soni, Secretary, Nagar Palika • Umashankar Dixit, Principal • Shabh Singh, Agent, LIC

21	Alwar	May 28, 2011	Laxmangarh Panchayat Samiti	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rajneesh Sharma, Advocate
22	Dausa	May 25, 2011	Sainthal Panchayat Samiti	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramdayal Sharma, Public Prosecutor • Satya Narayan Sharma, Senior Advocate • Ramgopal Sharma, Advocate • Govind Narayan, Social Worker
23	Sikar	May 29, 2011	Gondh	103	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satya Narain, District Partner and also Lawyer • Prabhu Dhan, Eng. PHED • Suresh Choudhary, Sarpanch
Total number of participants in 23 PIMs organised in 1st phase of 2011				1275 (One thousand two hundred and seventy five)	

5. Proceedings of PIMs

Two members out of the GRANIRCA project team (**Deepak Saxena, Amarjeet Singh, Arjun Kant Jha & Dharmendra Chaturvedi**) visited each district to help district partners in organisation of PIMs and play key role as a moderator and resource persons in one PIM. The second PIM was organised by the District partner at own as per given agenda and instructions.

Apart from them, representatives of various departments related to consumer services and peoples representatives were also invited as key speaker or external resource person.

5.1 Registration of participants and distribution of resource material

As per the agenda, the meeting started with registration of participants and *distribution of resource material on consumer protection.*

5.2 Introductory Session

The District Partner welcomed the participants and representatives for giving their valuable time. In the beginning, the District Partner informed the participants of the agenda set for the day.

5.3. Background and Introduction about the Project

In the session, the project team member talked about the project, its objective and the purpose of the PIM etc. He briefed about the project's activities, which will

further build a network of activists to take care of consumer at rural and urban areas.

Information was given to the participants about six departments and their role in safeguarding consumer interest at the district level, which are the District



Consumer Forum, the Collector's Office, the District Supply Officer, the Chief Health and Medical Officer, the Weights and Measures Department.

5.4 Session on Consumer Rights

The session was focused on consumer rights provided under the Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) 1986 and other laws.

Information was provided about various consumer rights, present 3-tier redressal mechanism under COPRA Act, the procedure to file the complaint etc.

Apart from the Consumer Fora, there are several other fora to redress the grievances of consumers in different sectors such as electricity, telecom, insurance, banking, etc. The participants were informed by the resource persons, based on the training manual prepared under GRANIRCA.

The role of various departments working at the district/block level is to safeguard different aspects of consumer interests and ensure healthy, safe,

transparent, accountable and respectable life of consumers. The departments are



District Supply Officer; Chief Health and Medical Officer; Drug Inspector and Legal Metrology Department.

5.5 Open Session

At every block, participants enthusiastically participated in the programme



and raised queries in the open session. Most of the issues were related with the whereabouts of the different redressal bodies in government departments

(electricity, water, telecommunication, PDS, etc.), irresponsible attitude of the authorities, delay and non-availability of bills/support from local vendors.

5.6 Discussion on Future Strategies

The participants were informed of the existence of Complaints Handling, Information and Advisory Services (CHIAS) at office of the District Partner.



Partner informed the participants to get support and guidance on consumers' issue through the operation CHIAS either through visiting the office or vide postage/phone.

The District Partner also made an appeal to the participants to spread the message down the line for making the movement more vibrant, through participation of more people. Information was provided about forthcoming activities in the district, like media and district level training workshops.

5.7 Closing Session

In the closing session, participants were asked to provide their feedback and suggestions and mention the systemic problems prevailing.

6. Highlights

Some key observations and highlights of PIMs:

- Overwhelming response was received from media, youths, *panchayat* representatives and women.
- Majority of participants at blocks were unaware of consumer rights, availability of redressal mechanism and procedure of filing complaint at their respective districts.
- Unawareness towards packed items, standardisation and food adulteration was prevalent at rural areas.
- Public Distribution System (PDS), electricity and mobile phone emerged as one of the main problematic areas among other district level departments.
- At most of the places people at the level of *Zila Pramukh, Zila Up Pramukh, Chairman, Sarpanch, Pradhan* and members of District Consumer Forum etc. actively participated.
- Participants raised good points and shown keen interest on several issues.

7. Glimpses of Media Coverage

