

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



Synthesis Report of
Public Interface Meetings
(PIM Phase II, Year Three)

November- December, 2012



Submitted by
Consumer Unity and Trust Society
D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park,
Jaipur – 302016, Rajasthan

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1. Background

CUTS in partnership with the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, under the Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF), is implementing a 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 the 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) were required to be conducted annually in each of the 12 project districts. Overall, there were 72 PIMs to be conducted during three years of the project period. In the first year, 48 PIMs were organised against the proposed number of 24 and in the second year, it was 23. It was decided to conduct the PIMs during two phases as previous years. 12 PIMs were organised in the first phase of the current year. It was decided to conduct PIMs at Block and *Panchayat* level to increase the outreach of PIMs.

The overall purpose of this first round PIMs 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 PIMs

The objective of the PIMs of phase II of year three were to:

- raise consumer awareness at the grassroots by strengthening the capacity of networkers in selected blocks of respective districts in Rajasthan;
- build a strong consumer movement at the grassroots level in Rajasthan;
- establish a contact institution in projected district to guide and motivate buyers as well as sellers for developing faith in the judiciary and the administrative system;
- share the existing appropriate mechanisms for exchange of information on measures of consumer protection, nationally and regionally;
- empower the urban and rural populations to make informed choices and thereby protect their health and safety and get more value for money; and
- obtain feedback from the people about the existing redressal mechanism

4. Details of PIMs

As per feedback from the first round of PIM of the year three activities, PIMs were conducted at the block level. The details of the venue, along with dates of the meetings, number of participants and resource persons are mentioned in the table below.

Details of PIMs Second Phase in the year 2012

S. N.	Partners District	Date	Venue	Partici-pants	Resource Person
1	Jila Upbhokta Jagaran Samiti, Sikar	November, 20, 2012	Nechwa	59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS CART • Prof. J D Saini, Retd Joint Director, College Education of Govt of Rajasthan • S N Sikhwal, District Partner
2	MMM Shikshan Evam Jan Sewa Sansthan, Tonk	November, 23, 2012	Arnianeel	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amarjeet Singh, Project Coordinator, CUTS CART • Dr Rajendra Gurjar, Deputy Director, Women and Child Development Department • Santra Verma and Sheila Vijay, Aanganwadi workers • Gopal Lal Saini, District Partner
3	CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS CHD), Chittorgarh	November, 27, 2012	Chittorgarh	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abhimanyu Singh, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Gangadhar Solanki, Activist • Madan Giri Goswami, District Partner

S. N.	Partners District	Date	Venue	Partici- pants	Resource Person
4	Shubham Mahila Prashikshan Sansthan, Alwar	November, 27, 2012	Rajgarh	47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepak Saxena, Sr Programme Coordinator, CUTS CART • Kishan Snehi, Activist • Umesh Kumar Nandaria, Lawyer • Sushila Devi, District Partner
5	Vagad Vikas Sansthan, Banswara	November 28, 2012	Partapur Gadi	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abhimanyu Singh, Project Officer, CUTS CART • V K Jain, Branch Manager, Bank of Baroda • Kalka Prasad and Prateek Shrimali, JEN, Discom • Nemraj Shehlot, District Partner
6	Samajik Vikas Samiti, Dholpur	November 30, 2012	Taseemo	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Ramveer Singh, President, Jal Upbhokta Sangam • Rakesh Kumar Parmar, District Partner
7	Manav Pragati Sansthan, Churu	December 05, 2012	Taranagar	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Indra Kumar, Lawyer • Bhupendra Singh, Representative of District Partner
8	K B Social Welfare Society, Dausa	December 06, 2012	Chandrana	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepak Saxena, Sr Programme Coordinator, CUTS CART • Dinesh Sharma, Ex Additional Public Prosecutor • Narendra Sharma, Lawyer • Sushila Devi, Sarpanch • Kamlesh Kumar Bohra, District Partner
9	Oxford Shikshan Prasikshan Vikas Sansthan, Kota	December 06, 2012	Ladpura	81	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jai Shree Soni, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Hari Mohan Sharma, Inspector, Legal Metrology • Abdul Salim, Lawyer • Anwar Ahmed Khan, District Partner

S. N.	Partners District	Date	Venue	Partici- pants	Resource Person
10	Richmond's Kala Sahitya and Shikshan Society, Bundi	December 07, 2012	Matunda	62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jai Shree Soni, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Ayodhya Bai, Sarpanch • Mukesh Dhadhich, Member, Distrcit Consumer Forum and Raj Kumar Dhadhich, Lawyer • Rajeev Saxena District Partner
11	Native Institute of Desert Awareness and Knowledge Society, Jodhpur	December 11, 2012	Balesar	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arjun Kant Jha, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Budha Ram, President, Rajiv Gandhi Youth Club, Khari Beri • Ashok Kumar, Ward Panch • Tejveer Choudhary, District Partner
12	Sankalp Sansthan, Jalore	December 12, 2012	Thumba	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arjun Kant Jha, Project Officer, CUTS CART • Ishwar Singh Thumba, Sarpanch • Govind Ram Tailor and Murarilal Sharma, Sr Teachers • M K Ojha, District Partner
	Total Participants			717	

5. Proceedings of PIMs

One member of the GRANIRCA project team (**Deepak Saxena, Amarjeet Singh, Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Arjun Kant Jha, Jai Shree Soni & Abhimanyu Singh**) visited two districts to help district partners in organising PIMs and played key role as a moderator and resource person.

In these programmes, local officials from government, *panchayat samitis*, *gram panchayats*, members of district consumer forums etc. served as resource persons.

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 (*For agenda please refer Annexure A*)

5.2 Introductory Session

PIMs commenced with the welcome remarks by district partners in which they welcomed all the participants and guests present as well as team of CUTS and shared the agenda of the PIMs.

5.3 Background and Introduction about the Project and Origin of CUTS

PIMs started with a brief description of the project, its objectives and the purpose of the meeting. The team briefed the participants about the project's activities, which aims to build a network of activists to take care of consumers at rural and urban areas. The team also provided a brief introduction of CUTS, its origin and working area.

5.4 Session on Consumer Rights

The session focussed on consumer rights provided under the Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) 1986, meaning of consumer and six rights given to consumers under this Act. The session was interactive and the discussion was in a very simple manner with citation of examples. Discussion took place on the status of consumers after the completion of 25th years of the Act and the need for the GRANIRCA project. Duties of consumers were also discussed.

Information was provided on various consumer rights, present 3-tier redressal mechanism under COPRA, the procedure to file complaints etc. Apart from the Consumer Fora, there are several other foras to redress grievances of consumers in different sectors, such as electricity, telecom, insurance, banking, etc. While mentioning the redressal mechanism, participants were informed how to complain, where to complain, fee structure at District Forum, State Commission, National Commission and Supreme Court. Participants were also explained the process of writing a complaint and the importance of mentioning all pieces of information which contribute towards making the case strong.

Participants were informed by the resource persons, based on the training manual and leaflet 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.

5.5 Address by Chief Guest/Speakers

The chief guests after delivering their speeches appreciated CUTS and district partners' efforts to implement the project at different level. They also agreed to extend their support as and when required.

Imparting Awareness through local folks and dance



After the address by Chief Guest puppet shows/*lok sangeets*/poems on consumer rights were also organised in local language of each district to make the people more familiar with the rights & acts. This was a unique initiative taken in the last phase of the PIM which was successful as people from rural as well as urban areas showed their interest during the show and were keen to know and discuss their rights and duties. As, it was in their local language people got the chance to interact and address their problems more confidently.

5.6 Discussion on ‘Plight of Electricity Consumers in Rajasthan’

Participants were also informed about the survey on the electricity sector in the last year of the project and key findings of the survey were also shared with them. It was mentioned that total 2419 respondents from 12 districts were interviewed; out of which almost quarter of percentage were female. 96 percent of the respondents avail electricity connection. Almost 65 percent are still unaware of Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission and its functions. 45 percent respondents found difficult to get the connection and it almost took more than 30 days to get it. In continuation, 53 percent were charged separately as additional amount while given connection. To get clear picture of the survey findings, handouts consisting findings were also circulated among the media persons.

5.7 Open Session

Participants actively 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.), irresponsive attitude of authorities, delay and non-availability of bills/support from local vendors.

5.8 Discussion on Future Strategies

Participants were informed of the existence of Complaints Handling, Information and Advisory Services (CHIAS) at office of the District Partner. 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. As this was the last PIM participants were also asked to make the CHIAS run successfully and solve their complaints.

5.9 Closing Session

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

6. Highlights of the Interface

Some key observations and highlights of PIMs:

- Overwhelming response from media, youths, *panchayat* representatives and women
- Advocating rights and duties as a source of entertainment in the form of *lok sangeet*/street play/puppet shows
- Majority of participants were aware of consumer rights, but they were unaware about the availability of redressal mechanism and procedure of filing complaints at their respective districts
- Public Distribution System, 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 *Sarpanch, Pradhan, Tehsildar*, principals of schools, government officials and members of District Consumer Forum etc. actively participated
- Participants raised good points and shown keen interest on several issues
- Dissemination of the findings of ‘Plight of electricity consumers in Rajasthan’ was done at the local media at district as well as block level

7. Some Burning Issues/Suggestions

- Consumers should be strengthened and made aware so that unfair trade practices would automatically stop
- Need to inform each citizen about the rules of electricity sector through media such as newspapers/TV/radio, etc.
- Website of Electricity Regulatory Commission need to be updated, one knowledge officer should be appointed who can answer the query online
- Electricity department should monitor the proper functioning of meters and also inform the consumer
- Electricity consumption should be fixed as per the consumption in watt
- Fee levied on consumers by consumer fora should be waived off because many times consumers fighting for a small cause, fee of even Rs 100 seems sort of a burden on him
- State government has to activate consumer welfare fund in order to make it more useful to local voluntary consumer organisation
- Consumer Counselling Centre should open at the block level to attend rural population, etc.
- Consumer fora to move down up to the level of sub-division for wider outreach
- Filing procedures has to be simpler in order to give relief to a layman

- State and district level protection councils need to be activated with seriousness and their work and functioning to be overseen by a committee set up by CCPC. Non-functioning of these councils is violation of Act

8. Some Success Stories

During a couple of PIMs, partners mentioned some cases, which were resolved through their interventions:

Interventions by Partners

(i) Deepak Sharma, a resident of Dausa district purchased a mixer grinder of Maharaja Brand from Vipul electronics, Dausa. But only after one month of purchase it stopped working. Seeing this, Deepak approached the owner of the shop Kailash Chand Sharma and asked him to replace the product as it was still in warranty period. But the owner refused to replace the product. After this the consumer went directly to the agency and asked for the replacement, but he was denied.

Deepak contacted K B Memorial Social Welfare Society, District Partner in Dausa under GRANIRCA project and narrated the whole incident. On this organisation sent a letter to the owner and asked them either to return the product or be ready to meet in the consumer court. After receiving the letter the owner personally came to meet Deepak and assured him that the defective product will be replaced within seven days. The mixer was replaced within the given time and relief to the aggrieved consumers was provided.

(ii) Sanjay Kumar, a resident of Banswara purchased a Micromax X600 handset from a shop named Aadinath Telecommunications in Banswara on January 27, 2011 which cost him around Rs 4200 with a warranty period of one year. After few days mobile was not working properly. He asked the shopkeeper to repair it but he was not given satisfactory reply by the shopkeeper. He tried to contact the shopkeeper for help but all his efforts were in vain.

At last he contacted *Wagad Vikas Sanstha*, District Partner in Banswara under GRANIRCA project and asked to look into the matter. The organisation wrote a letter to the shopkeeper mentioning that if the customer's mobile is not replaced or repaired within the stimulated time the organisation will be bound to file a case in the consumer forum. Seeing the letter, the shopkeeper assured the consumer that the defective mobile will be replaced within seven days and it was replaced within the given time.

Glimpses of PIMs



Annexure A

Grassroot Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action (GRANIRCA)

Public Interface Meeting-Phase II (Year Three)

Agenda

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction of Participants
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction of GRANIRCA and Objectives of PIM
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brief introduction of COPRA and its important features• Consumer Rights & Duties in detail• Brief on complaints filing in consumer forums• Brief on complaints to be filed to various service providers before going to consumer forum.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address by Chief Guest/Speakers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dissemination of message on consumer rights through local programme (dance/music), street play and puppet show
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion on ‘Plight of Electricity Consumers in Rajasthan’
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open Discussions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vote of Thanks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lunch and Departure