

World Consumer Rights Day

Event Report – March 15, 2014

Consumers Demand to Improve Quality of Service from Telecom Service Providers

Phone has become indispensable part of the lives of billions of people from social interaction, digital identity; to banking and e-commerce. They have become essential to the way we live, spend, connect and express ourselves. By January 2014, India with total 922 million telecom subscribers is now world 3rd largest subscriber country. With the growth in telecom consumers and service, consumer problems are also on rise, despite consumer protection laws and regulations.



To commemorate the World Consumer Rights Day, CUTS organised an Interface Meeting with Telecom Service Providers and CSOs at CUTS International Conference Hall on March 15, 2014. The meeting was attended by 30 representatives of various other consumer organisations and CSOs and representatives of service providers namely BSNL (K K Kumawat), Tata Teleservices (Rishi Mansharamani), Aircel (Ankur Mathur), Idea (Partyush Sharma), MTS (Manmohan Swami), CSO and few media persons.

For the year 2014 World Consumer Rights Day was celebrated under the theme “Fix Our Phone Rights”. Purpose of the meeting was to discuss the demands raised by Consumer International (CI) as consumers envisage to raise and demand issues from service providers like providing them with fair contracts explained in clear, complete and accessible language; fair and transparent billing; security and power over their own information and listening and responding to their complaints.

Mr. George Cheriyan, Director CUTS International in his opening address said India has the fastest growing telecom network in the world with its high population and development potential, about 73.48 percent (as on October 31, 2013) having telephone. Though this is one of the sectors in the country where consumers' benefitted as a result of health competition and strong regulation and several initiatives are made to protect the consumers, still consumers are faced with numerous problems. He further explained about the background of WCRD, importance of the theme and highlighted key consumer issues in telecom sector.



Mr. Deepak Saxena Sr. Programme Coordinator CUTS, made a presentation about the WCRD, telecom issues and CUTS intervention in the area.

The key consumer issues emerged out of discussion were need of fair contracts, transparent billing, to improve redressal system, to protect consumer data privacy, unsolicited calls/SMSs, undue deduction for value added services, network problems, unsatisfactory services, no data card portability etc. It was demanded that free national roaming facility should also be started soon and compulsion of filing First Information Report (FIR) to police for issuing a duplicate SIM should be removed. Organisations agreed to advocate the issue with TRAI.

In the discussions, consumers demand from service providers providing them with fair contracts explained in clear, complete and accessible language; fair and transparent billing; security and power over their own information and listening and responding to their complaints.