

**INDIAN CONSUMERS IN THE NEW AGE:
A FORWARD LOOKING
AGENDA TO ADDRESS THE CONCERNS OF THE
COMMON PEOPLE
(ConsumersUp Project)**

Report of the Knowledge Enhancement Workshop

Agartala, Tripura, March 23-24, 2012



CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART)

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1. About CUTS & CUTS CART

Established in 1983 as a small voluntary group of concerned citizens, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) expanded its activities and CUTS CART was set up in 1996 as a programme centre to pursue the cause of common consumers, initially being undertaken by CUTS as the mandate. The programme of the centre are primarily aimed at generating awareness, creating a more responsible society and encouraging changes at the policy level by advocating with the government machinery and sensitising it to the issues of concern of the common man. The Centre has spearheaded several campaigns and pioneered consumer empowerment.

For more information please visit: www.cuts-international.org/CART/index.htm

2. About the Project

India has been pioneer in consumer protection having Consumer Protection Act (COPRA), 1986 to provide not only easy and quick redressal of consumers' grievances but also a mechanism to promote and protect their interests. Now, as this Act has attained its Silver Jubilee in 2011, there is need of compressive and forward looking Consumer Protection Policy to address emerging consumer issues.

To address the gap, Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India and Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International) on November 04, 2011 to implement a one-year project, i.e. from November 04, 2011-November 03, 2012 to take the Indian consumer movement forward with an objective to create an enabling environment for protection and promotion of consumer interest contributing towards the national interest.

The long-term objective of the project is to create an enabling environment for protection and promotion of consumer interest contributing towards the national interest. The project is implemented in mainly four states, namely Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Tripura. But for the research purpose, 15 additional states and three union territories have been included namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The union territories are Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry.

CUTS in collaboration with the state partner Consumers Protection Association (CPA) Agartala, Tripura organised a Knowledge Enhancement Workshop (KEW) at Agartala on March 23-24, 2012.

In Partnership with

The project is supported by Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India under Consumer Welfare Fund.

3. Objective of KEW

The objective of workshop was to equip the consumer organisations with knowledge and skills on relevant and new generation consumer issues to ensure improvement in the service delivery and act as 'watchdogs' in their respective states.

4. Key Speakers and Resource Person

Hon'ble Justice A B Pal, President, State Commission; Koushik Roy, Ld. Advocate, Guwahati High Court; Sankari Das, Deputy Secretary of Law, Government of Tripura; Purushuttam Roy Barman, Ld. Advocate, Guwahati High Court; S C Das, Hon'ble Judge, Guwahati High Court; R Prasant, Assistant Project Officer, CUTS; and D K Das Choudhury, Retd. District Judge were present as speakers and played vital role on their respective topics prominently.

5. Participants

More than 70 participants comprising representatives from civil society organisations (CSOs) and different institutions, State Commission, advocates from High Court, Tripura, Government of Tripura, activists and ConsumersUp project team attended the workshop. Participants were from Agartala and nearby districts. *(Please refer Annexure 1 for list of participants)*

Proceedings

First Day: March 23, 2012 *(Please refer Annexure 2 for Agenda)*

6. Inaugural Session

After the registration of participants and distribution of resource kits, the workshop began with the inaugural session in which lighting of candle was done by Justice A B Pal, President, State Commission. After the inauguration, an introduction of participants took place in which they introduced themselves and then sharing of agenda took place.



6.1 Presentation about the Project

Prashant Ramakrishnan, Assistant Project Officer, CUTS

Prashant Ramakrishnan made a presentation and provided a brief introduction of CUTS, about the project and its activities. He shared the long-term as well as immediate objectives through research, advocacy, networking and knowledge enhancement. Regarding project areas, he informed that the focus states are Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Tripura. Only for the research purpose, 15 states and three union territories have been added.

He provided a brief overview of various project activities such as research including input papers on eight consumer rights, four regional consultations, eight KEWs and a National Conclave. Focusing on KEW, he said that it is the ongoing part of the Project.

6.2 Introductory Remarks

Justice A B Pal, President, State Commission

Hon'ble Justice A B Pal, delivered his introductory speech on various laws/regulations for consumer protection elaborately which are commonly unknown to maximum common consumers. In his speech, he mentioned that CUTS is one of the biggest organisation working for consumers in India. He said that suggestions should be provided to the state government to make the District Forum full time. He also emphasised on six consumer rights as per COPRA.



He pointed out that in spite of having 65 members in Tripura State Consumer Protection Council it is not functioning properly. It is supposed to meet at least once in a month, but the date of sitting is totally unknown. A handsome amount is allotted for its proper functioning but it fails to perform its main objective. This is the sole authority of the state to look into the interest of consumers. Since the introduction of COPRA, 1986 the country has passed 25 years, still majority of the people in the country are unaware of tools and mechanisms of COPRA, 1986. The privileged class, the black marketers and cheaters are united, and there is lack of unity among consumers.

7. Complaint Handling Information and Advisory Service (CHIAS)

Prashant Ramakrishnan, Asst. Project Officer, CUTS

Prashant made a brief presentation on Complaint Handling Information and Advisory Services (CHIAS). He explained how CUTS is providing relief to consumers by being a mediator between service providers and consumers. He further said that there is a system of CHIAS at CART where people can register their complaints online. Proper care is being taken and efforts are made to provide relief to consumers.

8. Use of Right to Information for Consumer Protection

Advocate Koushik Roy Guwahati High Court

Koushik Roy, Advocate, Guwahati High Court said that apart from including consumer organisations and activists, different merchant associations and members of Chamber of Commerce should also be invited in such workshops as they also deal with the similar issues. He also mentioned that Right to Information is one of the important instruments provided given by the Indian government. Every consumer has the right to know and be informed about the products he is going to purchase.



9. Drafting of Notice and Consumer Complaint

Advocate Purushuttam Roy, Guwahati High Court

While shared his experiences with the participants, he said that in 99 percent cases, consumers are not provided with either cash memo or bill and when asked they are provided with approval slips which does not bear any legal entity. NGOs are to be engaged for promoting awareness among consumers about rights and privileges. They should also be trained first so that fund resource can be managed skillfully.

10. Various Avenues (formal/informal) available to Consumer for Grievance Redressal Mechanism

Sankari Das, Deputy Secretary, Law, Government of Tripura

She took the session on various avenues (formal/informal) available to consumer for Grievance Redressal Mechanism and consumer participation in policy making/regulatory process and tools.



11. Feedback

Each session was followed by questions and answers so that participants can be made more aware and their queries can be clarified. First day of the KEW concluded after distribution of feedback forms and summarisation of proceedings of the first day.

Second Day: March 24, 2012 *(Please refer Annexure 2 for Agenda)*

12. Recap of Previous Day

The proceedings of next day commenced with the recap of previous day and by welcoming S C Das, Justice, Guwahati High Court.

13. Basic Research and Documentation Skills

Justice S C Das, Justice, Guwahati High Court

He stated that awareness among people of Tripura on consumer awareness is zero. More seminars and workshops needs to be organised on large scale especially in rural areas with slide shows, movies and dramas on consumer protection. Such kinds of seminars should be held in every block under the guidance of block level officers. Rights and duties of consumers should be included as special subject in social studies in upper primary, secondary and at degree level to make new generation aware. He also mentioned that different NGOs need to be funded for proper implementation of awareness camps in their respective areas. He also said that there should be some mechanism to generate funds in consumer forum.



He explained research methods such as quantitative, qualitative and sampling techniques with special reference to consumer organisations. He stated that unless civil society groups do scientific research and collect data, they cannot advocate effectively and research is an effective tool for advocacy.

14. Basic Advocacy and Communication Skills

Prashant Ramakrishnan, Assistant. Project Officer, CUTS

Prashant made presentation on 'Advocacy Skills'. He focused on characteristics and principles of advocacy. He asked participants to divide into groups and do group exercises by selecting different issues on which they want to do advocacy and made them write a press release, which was later judged by media. This session was very interesting for participants and they participated actively.





15. Resource Mobilisation Skills

D K Das Chowdhury, Retired District Judge

The last presentation was on 'Resource Mobilisation', which was covered by D K Das Chowdhury. He emphasised on the technique of raising funds. He mentioned that fund raising is a tough job particularly when funders stop funding projects in India. He said consumer groups should focus on local issues and charities for raising funds to overcome this challenge. He explained how and when proposals are to be prepared and informed that legal requirements to be complied before approaching funders. He stated that the Central and state government departments have lot of schemes through which funds can be obtained.



16. Summing Up & Vote of Thanks

Proceedings concluded after participants were asked to fill feedback forms. The representative of State Partner Simul Ranjan Chowdhury gave closing remarks. He narrated all the sessions in brief and expressed his gratitude to resource persons and representatives of CUTS. Prashant gave vote of thanks.

Annexure-1 (List of Participants)

**INDIAN CONSUMERS IN THE NEW AGE: A FORWARD LOOKING
AGENDA TO ADDRESS THE CONCERNS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE
(ConsumersUp Project)**

Knowledge Enhancement Workshop

March 23-24, 2012, Agartala (Tripura)

S.No.	Name	Name & Address of the Organisation	Mob./Ph.	Email
1	Nashu Chanda	Consumer Institute	03821-265222	-
2	Bimal Kr Chanda	Consumer Institute	2306995	-
3	Anjan Das	National Youth Project, Tripura State Unit	9436594178	anjantripura@rediffmail.com
4	MallikaDas	Kishalaya Mahila Samiti	9774425060	-
5	Pampa Bardhan	Manabi Social Organisation	9774425592	-
6	Narayan Ch. Saha	Ram Nagar Hr. Sec. School, Agartala	9436796188	-
7	Smt.Swapna Roy	Srinagar Milanchakra Road No. 4, A.D. Nagar, West Tripura	9862963822, 0381-2372037	
8	Tapan Kr. Saha	Mukti Samajik Sanstha, VP-Durjoynagar, Agartala	9612210783, 9436186154	mukti.tripura@gmail.com
9	Mantu Bhowmik	Mukti Samajik Sanstha, VP-Durjoynagar, Agartala	9612210783, 9436186154	mukti.tripura@gmail.com
10	Dwark Chakraborty.	Kishalaya Mahila Samiti	8575719624	-
11	Sandip Kr. Sinha	Integrated Youth of Tripura, Agartala	9615837538	
12	Koushambi Nath Majumdar	Narayanpur East	8794848833	-
13	Amar Bhowmik	Narayanpur	9862178689	-
14	Moon Basu	CPA	9774448593	moonbasu@yahoo.com
15	Tapas	Kishalaya Mahila Samiti	9862219278	-

S.No.	Name	Name & Address of the Organisation	Mob./Ph.	Email
16	Chapal Chanda	Reshambagan School	9862526556	
17	Minakshi	Sara Bharat Gana Santrik Samiti	8794229669	-
18	Jaydeep	Asstt. Secretary, CPA, Agartala	9436122848	-
19	Madhu Rani		8794040619	
20	Panna Bhattacharya	Jyoti Social Welfare Society	9863582793	panna050687@gmail
21	Jayanti Talukdar	Helpline Welfare Organisation	9862525736	jyoti1020@gmail.com
22	Mousumi Paul	Voluntary Health Association of Tripura	9436990728	-
23	Keya Bhowmik	Voluntary Health Association of Tripura	9774962576	-
24	Srikanta Shil	National advanced welfare society	9774837504	-
25	Gopal Nama	National advanced welfare society	9774601737	-
26	Shila Das	Namabi Social Organisation	9774431521	
27	Uttam Debrata	Educational Society of Tripura	9436570014	-
28	Abhijit Roy	Gurdian Forum Shiksha Niketan Society	9862479034	-
29	Sudhir Das Gupta	Aparna Cultural Society	9436455308	sudhir601@gmail.com
30	IndrajitDatta	sSarti	9089368441	
31	Samrat Chaudhuory	Sakalbelo	9862931326	-
32	Banasri Roy	Tripura Adibashi Mahila Samity	9774198648	-
33	Krishna Sahu	Ny P	8794172339	-
34	Helen Deb	Tripura Women's Consumers Forum	2308379, 9436465088	-
35	Debabsatra Deb	CPA India, Agartala	9771689369	
36	Laxmi Majumdar	CPAIndia, Agartala	9771340195	
37	Soma Debnath	ISWS,Agartala	9862280257	-
38	Topanku Bhowmik	Aparna Cultural Society	8014722914	-
39	Abhijit Das	Jyoti Social Welfare Society	9774447230	abhijitdas.029@gmail.com

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40	Pritam Datta	Jyoti Social Welfare Society	9774446470	
41	Sovapaul	Niredita Shishu Kalyan Samiti	9774739305	
42	Udai Shankar Singha	Jogendranagar	9774143163	-
43	Bithika Chakraborty	ISWS, Agartala	9774283827	
44	Koeshik Dev	Tripura Bar Asso.	9436127615	
45	Snbrata Bhowmik	Hill Regional Youth Organisation	9862410141	
46	Dhiraj Chakraborty	Sarathi	9774999310	Raj-chakroborty@2011.rediffmail.com
47	Mrinal Kanti Pandit	Jagriti Sanstha	9862217789	mrinalkantipandit@rediffmail.com
48	Tufani Ram Bin	Nabarupa Samiti	9436567051	
49	Bina Deb Barma	Bina Deb Barma Nagir Pukar	9862236770	debbarma.oliver@gmail.com
50	Oevel Deb Barma	Hill Women Society	9436127709	
51	Mithun Deb	Photographer	9774306815	
52	Ruma Sinha	Tripura Adibashi Mahila Samity	9612248892	
53	Sushmita Nandi	Jyoti Welfare Society	8794002986	-
54	Shilpi Choudhary	Tripura Bas Asso.	9436138185	
55	Bat Salya	Kathalio, PS Jatarapur		
56	Ranajit DE	Tripura State of War Association	9436128708	
57	Moumita Chakraborty	Indradhame Social Welfare Society	9774607657	
58	Sipra Bhattacharjee	Nivedita Shishu Kalyan Samiti	9436532936	
59	Sanjay Kr. Das	Jogendranagar Consumers's Protection Assotiaton	9862017550	
60	Bishvanath Das	Jogendranagar, Agartala	9436538965	
61	Pooimal Debrot	Society for Alternative Thiking & Action	9612420767	
62	Kajal Nandi	Ujam Abhaynagar	9862361148	
63	umar Debnath	CPA	9774707146	
64	Indrajit Debnath	Society for Alternative	9862445005	sata.tri@rediffmail.com

S.No.	Name	Name & Address of the Organisation	Mob./Ph.	Email
		Thiking & Action		
65	Justice A.B. Pal	President, State Commission		
66	Sankari Das	Deputy Secretary of Law		
67	Puroshtum Roy Burman	Advocate, Guwahati High Court		
68	S.C. Das	Judge, Guwahati High Court		
69	Simul Ranjan Chowdhury	CPA India, Agartala		
70	D.K. Das Choudhury	Retd. District Judge		
71	R. Prasant	CUTS, Kolkata		
72	Abhimanyu Singh	CUTS, Jaipur	8107794315	

Annexure-2 (Agenda)

INDIAN CONSUMERS IN THE NEW AGE: A FORWARD LOOKING AGENDA TO ADDRESS THE CONCERNS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE (ConsumersUp Project)

Knowledge Enhancement Workshop

March 23-24, 2012, Agartala (Tripura)

Day 1

Sl No.	Time	Subject of the Session	Facilitator
1	09.30-10.00	Registration	CPA
2	10.00-10.15	Inauguration by lighting Candle	Justice A B Paul & CUTS Team
3	10.15-10.45	Introduction of participants and sharing of Agenda	CPA
4	10.45-11.30	Brief Presentation about ConsumersUp Project	R Prasant
5	11.30-12.30	Introduction to various laws / regulations for Consumer Protection	Justice A B Paul
	12.30-12.45	Tea Break	
6	12.45-13.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to run Complaint Handling Information and Advisory Services (CHIAS)• Use of Right to Information for Consumer Protection	R Prasant & Koushik Roy
7	13.15-13.45	Simulation Exercise: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drafting of notice and consumer complaint• Role play of proceeding in consumer forum	Purushuttam Roy Barman
8	13.45-14.30	Various Avenues (Formal/Informal) available to Consumer for Grievance Redressal Mechanism	Sankari Das
9	14.30-15.30	Avenues for Consumer Participation in Policy making/ regulatory process and tools	Sankari Das
10	15.30-15.45	Feedback of day's proceeding and next day planning	Participants
	15.45	Lunch	

Day2

Sl No.	Time	Subject of the Session	Facilitator
1	09.30-10.00	Recap of the previous day	Participants
2	10.00-11.00	Basic Research and Documentation Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic research tools & techniques • Data collection and analysis How to write case studies	S C Das
3	11.00-12.00	Basic Advocacy and Communication Skills Session Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance of advocacy in the ConsumersUp project • Advocacy tools and types Basic rules of communication and importance/use for advocacy	R Prasant
4	12.00-12.15	Tea Break	
5	12.15-13.15	Resource Mobilisation for Consumer Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basics of resource mobilisation • Tools & Techniques • How to write a proposal Main sources for resource mobilisation	D K Das Choudhury
	13.15-14.00	Simulation exercise on writing a proposal and making presentation for resource mobilisation for consumer issues	D K Das Choudhury
6	14.00-14.30	Feedback and Evaluation of the Workshop Summing Up and Vote of Thanks	CPA and CUTS team