

Mid-Term Evaluation Report

GRASSROOTS REACH-OUT & NETWORKING IN RAJASTHAN THROUGH CONSUMER ACTION (GRANIRCA) PROJECT

Programme Implemented By

PROGRAMME CENTRE

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Consumer rights are an integral part of our lives like the consumerist way of life. We have all made use of them at some point in our daily lives. In the modern times, consumer is supposed to be the center of all business activities. Business activities are carried out to satisfy, the wants of consumers. A commercial organization totally depends on the customer not only for its survival but also for its growth.

However, in reality, the position of the consumer is different. He is exploited by well organized and well informed sellers by charging higher prices, by supplying poor quality goods, even by supplying adulterated goods, shot weight, misleading advertisement, etc. Customers are still un-organized and have no idea about their basic rights of safety, right to choose, right to be heard, etc.

In the word Consumerism, "Consumer" means the user or customer and "ism" means movement", and hence, consumer movement is popularly known as "Consumerism". It is an organized and collective movement of consumers, the main object being to educate and unite consumers and to fight for the protection of their rights. Consumer movement is a collective approach to solve the malpractices and injustice done by any organization.

Thus, it is a movement of the consumers, for the consumers and by the consumers because it is a social movement of consumers and it has come into existence to educate and unite consumers to fight for their rights.

CUTS-CART's GRANIRCA project was initiated in 2010 to address the lack of consumers' access to adequate information, improper understanding about the redressal mechanism/procedure as well as other socio-economic vulnerabilities of individuals and households are the reasons that the under-privileged classes are not getting justice.

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

Several activities have been envisioned for successful accomplishment of the project. As a milestone for monitoring, a mid-course Evaluation was planned in July 2011 the overall objective of which has been to review the approach, process, activities conducted during the project so far.

The present Report on the Mid-Term Evaluation is being prepared and submitted by the undersigned to CUTS following a methodology decided in consultation with Organization. The Report is divided into five chapters. The Mid-Term Evaluation was taken up during 4th – 6th July 2011, the details of which are provided in **Chapter 1 on Introduction**. The chapter also contains the backdrop of the Consumerism and Consumer Movement in India, the present status and challenges of the consumer rights that serves as the background of GRANIRCA. The subject matter of **Chapter 2 is Methodology**, dealing with the processes followed for collection of qualitative as well as quantitative data; and the method in which it was analyzed. **Chapter 3 on Findings** analyses the data, and **Chapter 4** attempts to put forward some of the **Recommendation** that need to be considered for successful implementation of the GRANIRCA project for the remaining period. The last **Chapter 5** provides a brief **Conclusion** to the Report.

This evaluation would not have been possible without a collective effort of the team at CUTS and a positive environment provided by CUTS. I express my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. George Cheriyan, Director CUTS-CART for inviting me to conduct evaluation, which was more a learning experience than actually an Evaluation, as successfully ruling the complex maze of activities through different partners, as envisaged in the project, appearing simple apparently but complex in nature, is a challenge in itself. The team comprising of Mr. Deepak Saxena, Mr. Dharmendra Chatrurvedi, Mr. Arjun Kant Jha and Mr. Amarjeet Singh, all of them on the mission of spreading the Consumer awareness, extended their absolute support in conducting the evaluation process smoothly. I would be failing in my duties if I do not extend a word of appreciation to all the other staff of the organization for making my life comfortable during the three day exercise.

At a different level, I must acknowledge the good work that is being done by the partners of CUTS in GRANIRCA. I thank all the participants of both the group

meetings held at Kota and Tonk on the second day, as well as the heads of the partner organization who came to Jaipur office for discussions on the final day. The enthusiasm of the partner organizations is infectious and the courage they exhibit in forwarding the cause of consumer awareness is praiseworthy.

This Report is dedicated to the enthusiasm, passion, zeal and courage of CUTS-CART and its partner organizations. I am hopeful that the journey of GRANIRCA that has been set forth as a pilot will be carried forward and up-scaled not only in the state of Rajasthan but also in other parts of India.

SANTOSH KUMAR
Ahmedabad

20th July 2011



CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

BACKDROP

According to Philip Kotler and G. Armstrong, "Consumerism is an organized movement of citizens and government to impose the rights and powers of buyers in relation to sellers." Thus, it is a movement of the consumers, for the consumers and by the consumers because it is a social movement of consumers and it has come into existence to educate and unite consumers to fight for their rights. In short the process of uniting consumers is nothing but Consumer Movement¹. The consumer movement in India is as old as trade and commerce itself. Even in Kautilya's *Arthshastra*, there are references to the concept of protection of consumers against the exploitation by trade and industry, short weights and measurements, adulteration along with the punishment for these offences. There was, however, no organized and systematic movement actually safeguarding the interests of the consumers. Prior to Independence, consumer interests were considered mainly under laws like the Indian Penal Code, Agricultural Production Grading and Marketing Act 1937, and Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. Even though different parts of India had varying degrees of awareness, in general the level of awareness was low.

It is generally believed that the consumer movement in India as of today is quite strong when it is compared with other developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. India is a vast country with a very large population of which a sizeable percentage lives below the poverty line. Because of economic inequality, low level of literacy and ignorance, particularly amongst women, the level of consumer awareness is not too high and, therefore, the consumers are not able to assert and protect themselves. They easily get exploited by trade and industry and service providers. With the liberalization process which started in 1991 the entire economic scenario is undergoing a complete change from a government-driven economy to a market-driven economy. Protecting the interests of consumers has, therefore, become one of the paramount concerns of the Government than ever before. Hence, policies

¹ <http://www.indiastudychannel.com/resources/127859-What-Consumer-Movement.aspx>

are being designed and legislations enacted to protect the consumers' interest and grant them the right to choice, safety, information and redressal.

IMPORTANCE OF CONSUMER MOVEMENT IN INDIA

The importance of consumer movement is to protect consumer rights. Importance of consumer movement can be studied with the help of the following points²:-

1. **Protection from Unsafe Products:** An important object of consumer movement is the united fight of consumers against harmful and unsafe products produced by manufacturers and sold by traders. The examples of such products are medicines causing side effects, sold without any written warning, sale of stale products, etc.
2. **Protection against Unfair Trade Practices:** Businessmen do various unfair trade practices like overcharging the customers, using inaccurate weight and measures, selling inferior quality goods, resorting to black marketing, etc. Consumer movement protects the consumers from such malpractices.
3. **Protection against Pollution:** Due to consumer movement, business organizations are under pressure to take the necessary measures to control air, water and noise pollution.
4. **Bringing Consumers Together:** It was very easy for business organizations to exploit unorganized customers. However, due to consumer movement, customers are collectively fighting for their rights. Thus, consumer movement has succeeded in uniting and getting a fair deal for consumers from the business world.
5. **Control on Monopolistic & Restrictive Trade Practices:** Many Laws and Acts have been introduced to protect the interest of consumers against monopolistic and restrictive trade practices of businessmen.
6. **Creating Consumer Awareness:** Consumer movement creates awareness among consumers and educates them through lectures, seminar, workshops, media, public meetings, etc. regarding consumer rights.

² <http://www.indiastudychannel.com/resources/127854-Importance-Consumer-Movement.aspx>

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7. **Timely Supply of Essential Commodities:** Consumer movement has made it possible for consumers to form Consumer Co-operative Societies for production and distribution of essential commodities on co-operative basis so as to ensure their regular supply at reasonable prices.
 8. **Right to get After Sale Service:** After sale service is provided by manufacturers and sellers to the customer even after effecting sales. Seller must provide after sale services in case of consumer durable products. The seller is supposed to undertake free repairs and maintenance of products sold during the warranty period. The awareness about this right of consumers has been brought through consumer movement.
 9. **Pressure on Government:** Since consumers are now united, they are able to exert pressure on the government to enact various laws and introduce measures for consumer protection.
 10. **Link between Consumers and Business Community:** Various consumers, by passing on consumer grievances, their suggestions, etc to business organizations are getting justice for consumers.
 11. **Legal Help:** Various consumer protection associations help the consumer to get their complaints against malpractices of traders, redressed through Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies or Civil Courts.

RIGHTS OF CONSUMERS

The significance of the Consumer movement also lies in the fact that the consumers have been extended essential rights for providing them protection from being slaves to the service providers. Consumers are very important in society. The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (COPRA) provides for the following rights of consumers:-

1. **Rights of Consumers Safety:** Every consumer has a right to get protection against marketing of hazardous goods which are dangerous to life and health. The right to safety is against the selling of goods which may create health problems or endanger the life itself. This is in relation to medicines, drugs, food and electrical goods. Consumer has a right to receive assurance from producer about the quality, reliability and performance of goods.

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2. **Rights of Consumers to be informed:** Every consumer has right that he should be informed about price, quality, name of manufacturer, instructions to use, manufacturing date, expiry date, etc. This information must be given on the packet or on the label of the product. Information should not be misleading. For example: "Made in India" is written as "Made as India", here the customer will that the product is "Made in India".
 3. **Rights to Choose:** This right indicates that consumers must be given full liberty to select that product which will satisfy his needs i.e. he should be shown variety of products from which he can make a selection but should not be compelled to buy. This will encourage competitions.
 4. **Rights to be Heard:** Every consumer has a right to complaint against companies and government. As per Consumer Protection Act, 1986, there are various agencies at different levels to listen and to register the complaints of consumers. Consumers can make complaints and can give suggestion about quality, price, packing, packaging, durability, etc. Even consumers can suggest for services provided by the companies, its policies, etc.
 5. **Rights of Consumers to Redress:** This means the consumers must have a right to receive the compensation for inferior quality goods. When the just and fair claims are made by the customers, they should be settled immediately. This right is relating to the change of product, repair of product or refund of money, etc. This right protects victimized consumers from misleading advertisements.
 6. **Rights of Consumers Education:** It means right to acquire knowledge and skills. This right is important because consumer protection is not possible without proper education and guidance. Consumer education alerts consumer while buying the products. It can be done through various media's like newspapers, magazines, television, radio, hoardings, demonstrations, etc.
 7. **Rights of Healthy Environment:** This right suggests that the consumers should be protected against environment problems like polluted air, water and sound. This is very essential for present and future generation. Any type

of pollution i.e. water, air or sound is not only dangerous to human life but also to society and environment at large.

PROBLEMS IN THE CONSUMER MOVEMENT IN THE COUNTRY

Consumer is the most neglected being in the present scarcity ridden society. A business unit can not dare to ignore its consumers, if it wants to flourish. But even after a lot of Acts and Rules, a number of problems are suffered by the consumers. Some of the major problems faced by consumers are as follows:

1. **Lack of Information:** The main problems faced by consumers are lack of information. The customers even do not know the sources of getting information.
2. **Illiteracy:** Most of the consumers in urban and remote areas are illiterate and they are not able to understand the policies of the organization or the government, even they do not understand uses or misuses of products.
3. **No Fair Return:** The customer, though pay high price for the goods the purchase, but many times they do not get satisfaction from the goods they have purchased.
4. **Exploitation:** The consumers in Indian market are exploited by the sellers. Sellers create artificial scarcity, hoarding, black marketing, high prices etc.
5. **Adulteration:** Most of the times consumers even after paying high price, do not get pure or we can say quality goods. The organization usually supplies adulterated goods for their profit maximization.
6. **Irregular Supply:** One of the common problems faced by consumers is an irregular supply of goods. This is because of shortage of goods. The organizations create artificial scarcity of necessary goods by hoarding these goods resulting in high prices.
7. **Attractive Packing:** The packed goods supplied in the market, are not up to the mark. The packing is very attractive and it attracts the attention of consumers. The packets may contain inferior goods thereby fooling consumers.

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8. **Disorganized Customers:** This is also one of the most common problems faced by consumers nowadays. The customers are widely scattered and they are not united. As against this the producers are organized and united. Because of various reasons it is not possible for customers to come together and fight. This results in consumer exploitation.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS IN THE CONSUMER MOVEMENT IN RAJASTHAN

Along with these issues that consumers face at the macro level, the consumers in the state of Rajasthan also face the problems as stated under:

1. The Consumer Protection Councils (CPCs) are not fully functional.
2. The vacancies in districts have not been filled for some time and it has adversely affected the functioning of the Consumer Fora.
3. Some of the government departments, meant for the protection of the consumer interests are not proactive in taking up the issues, and have hardly fulfilled the minimum targets.
4. There is no separate department for legal metrology.
5. Bigger districts face the crunch of the staff and have only one permanent District Forum, which is grossly insufficient.
6. There is lack of follow up and monitoring of cases registered.
7. There is a lack of transparency and accountability in the departments in making proactive disclosure of their functions, schemes and action taken by them. Till date, the Consumer Fora, Department of Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, Legal Metrology etc. do not have their websites even at the state level. In these cases, increasing use of information Right to Information (RTI) Act is the only way out.

Against this backdrop of the macro and micro issues at the level of the country as well as the state, CUTS, in partnership with the Department of Consumer Affairs of the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, is implementing a three-year project, from January 2010 to December 2012, entitled '*Grassroots Reachout and Networking in Rajasthan through Consumer Action*' (GRANIRCA), in twelve districts of Rajasthan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background

Lack of consumers' access to adequate information, improper understanding about the redressal mechanism/procedure as well as other socio-economic vulnerabilities of individuals and households are the reasons that the under-privileged classes are not getting justice.

To address the problem, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS international) has partnered with the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India to implement the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reach-out & 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's interests, which will, in turn, would contribute towards the national interest.

Specific Objective

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

Supported & Implemented

The project is being implemented by CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART), a program centre of CUTS International, with financial assistance under the Consumer Welfare Fund (CWF) by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, Government of India.

Project Activities

- State Launch cum orientation of district partnering organisations at Jaipur

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- Research activities include identification of NGOs, diagnostic survey of the consumer protection, needs assessment, field study, data collection, compilation and analysis of relevant consumer issues.
 - Public interfaces/hearings and outreach meetings on consumer issues.
 - District level training workshops at each of the 12 district headquarters.
 - State feedback roundtables to share and consolidate the learning's from various districts and build and strengthen the network.
 - Media sensitisation workshops in each of the 12 districts and at the state level.
 - Advocacy with the government agencies in identified divisions, state and Central Government.
 - Complaints handling, information and advisory services (CHIAS) through a dedicated cell at the district headquarters.
 - Publication of reports, briefing papers and newsletters and creation of a programme website and a collective communication device for wider outreach.

Project Duration & Coverage

The project is for a period of three years, i.e. January 2010 to December 2012 covering all seven divisions of Rajasthan, comprising 12 districts (88 Blocks and 3327 Gram Panchayats in these 12 districts) namely Alwar, Banswara, Bundi, Chittorgarh, Churu, Dholpur, Dausa, Jalore, Jodhpur, Kota, Sikar, and Tonk.

Expected Outcomes

- *Empowerment:* People in 12 districts will be empowered as assertive consumers to uphold their rights and fight for justice.
- *Questioning Society:* 12 civil society organizations (CSOs) capable of playing a “watchdog” role in their respective district.
- *Improvement:* Better service delivery areas related to basic needs and efficient redressal mechanism in place, particularly in rural areas in the target division.

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- *Enabling Environment*: Protecting consumer's interests in 12 districts, which will ultimately create an enabling environment towards protecting the interest of the state.
 - *Good Governance*: The programme will contribute towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the state level.
 - *Replicable Model*: The programme will result in a model of empowering consumers through networking, and thus offer a model for further expansion in the identified district and elsewhere.

Background of the Evaluation

The project reached its halfway on June 30, 2011. As per the terms and conditions, as laid down in MoU with the Ministry, a midterm evaluation was needed to be conducted as soon as the project reaches its halfway, which was conducted during July 4th to 6th, 2011.

Purpose

The purpose of the external midterm evaluation was to review the progress so far and examine the highlights and the lowlights of the project in this span of one-and-a-half-years and suggest measures to be taken at this point of time by the implementing agency, so that the lowlights could be converted into highlights in the remaining period and this project could achieve its mission and objectives.

OBJECTIVE AND STEPS IN EVALUATION

The overall objective of the evaluation exercise was to review the approach, process; activities conducted during the project so far and arrive at certain key recommendations as well as suggestions for mid-course corrections, if any, required in achieving the expected outcomes. The key objective of the evaluation was to evaluate the effectiveness of activities conducted so far in achieving their specified objectives as well as contribution towards overall project objectives.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The following points defined the scope of the mid-term evaluation.

- **Implementation of the Project:** The evaluator would undertake a detailed exercise about the implementation and execution process followed during the course of the project. The activities conducted by CUTS CART as well as partners, would be examined.
- **Outputs from the Project:** The evaluator will be required to undertake a detailed review of key outputs, such as synthesis reports, training manual, vernacular handouts, event reports, E-newsletter, Newsletter, quality and content of web page etc. The evaluator would examine the relevance, quality, simplicity of these documents.
- **Outcomes of the Project:** As per the objectives of the project, the evaluator would define the expected outcomes of the project activities conducted so far, specifying some measurable indicators for each of the outcomes. Then, a logical analysis would be undertaken comparing the expected outcomes with the achieved outcomes. Further, the factors responsible for poor/non achievement (if any) of the targets would also be analyzed.
- **Project Management:** The issues in project management such as constitution/expertise of project team and the district partners should also be examined. The efficacy of communication and involvement of these stakeholders in key developments/events should be studied.
- **Recommendations and Suggestions:** On the basis of findings from evaluation process, the evaluator would come with key recommendations and suggestions for CUTS, partners as well as donor agency to be taken in future course of work.

The next chapter highlights the Methodology, steps followed for the evaluation and also the process of analysis of data thus collected.

CHAPTER - 2

METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the process was decided by the organization in consultation with the Consultant. A detailed schedule was drawn in order to have maximum interaction with the team responsible for the implementation of the project as well as the partners.

Overall process of the evaluation included the following activities:

- Review of project proposals-objectives, activities, outputs, outcomes, etc.
- Review of project documents pertaining to various activities conducted as part of the project such as process documents, various publications, research activities undertaken, etc.
- Review of reports (project progress and financial)
- Review of other relevant materials & publications, such as webpage, newspaper clippings, newsletters etc.
- Formulation of measurable indicators to assess the impacts, outputs and outcomes of the project
- Travel to two project territories to collect data and undertake interviews with relevant stakeholders, if required.
- Meeting and discussion with the project management team and partnering organizations.
- Debriefing of main findings and recommendations with project management team at CUTS CART.

To cover the stated activities, considered significant from evaluation point, the schedule included:

- A. Introductory Meeting with Mr. George Cheriyan, and discussion on project at CART office.
- B. Review of project documents/ publications

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- C. Presentation on Project Activities
 - D. Meetings with Principal Secretary, Food and CA, Project Advisory Group Member(s), President, CUTS & Media Representative
 - E. Visit to Target Districts - Meeting with district partners of Kota and Tonk, selected beneficiaries. Meeting with key officials and departments (DSO/President or Member, DF) etc.
 - F. Review of Financial Progress Report (Visit to Finance Section and Meeting with Mr. G. C. Jain and team)
 - G. Interaction and meeting with project district partners mainly on impacts/outcomes
 - H. De-briefing meeting with Project Team

The following chapter on Findings presents the analysis of the activities and finding as per the major activities of the Evaluation.



FINDINGS AND OBSERVATION

This chapter presents the finding on the basis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected during the process of evaluation. The source of data collection has been discussion with Mr. George Cheriyan, discussions with the project implementation team, documents review, meeting with the State Project Advisory and Resource Group, representatives of Media covering the projects at different points of time, field visit and discussions with the various stakeholders and district level officials, and staff in the finance department of CUTS-CART to understand the financial administration and if there were any critical issues regarding the financial administration.

A. DISCUSSION WITH DIRECTOR, CUTS-CART, MR. GEORGE CHERIYAN

The Consultant held discussion with the Director on the following points:

1. The origin and development of the project,
2. Governance structure of the project,
3. The rationale for selection of districts, and
4. The rationale of selection of District Partners.

The following paragraphs present the findings as per the issues stated above.

1. The origin and development of the project

The Consultant was briefed about the origin of the GRANIRCA project. It was initially conceived to be an inter-state Project, and later was considered for a project to be implemented at the level of the state of Rajasthan, the proposal for which was submitted in June 2006. However, on advice of the Department of Consumer Affairs, ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, this three-year project was launched on a pilot basis in the 12 Districts with funding support from Consumer Welfare Fund for the period of January 2010 till December 2012. The Consultant suggested that though CUTS-CART as an organisation was capable of handling such projects at up scaled levels, the Pilot Testing of the Concept did provide them with an opportunity to

test the capabilities of the partner organisations and also complete the ground work and after the completion of the Pilot phase, the Organisation could take up the State level project, where the 12 districts of the first phase could play a significant role in providing leadership to the Project.

In the present shape of the project, GRANIRCA is of three year duration, covering 3327 Gram Panchayats in 88 Blocks in 12 districts.

2. Governance structure of the project

The Consultant appreciated the fact that there was a well defined governance structure that guided the implementation of the project in an unhindered manner. The Financial Support is being provided by the Consumer Welfare Fund under the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, GoI. For overall implementation and coordination at the State level, CUTS-CART is the State Coordination Unit, with guidance from the Project Advisory and Resources Group (PARG) and Department of Consumer Affairs, food and Civil Supplies, Government of Rajasthan, providing vision for the implementation at the macro level. The implementation team comprises of Mr. Deepak Saxena, Mr. Arjun Kant Jha, Mr. Amarjeet Singh and Dharmendra Chaturvedi, under the leadership of Mr. George Cheriyan. The 12 partners, as envisaged in the Project, are the backbones of the project, who have to implement the project at the District level.

3. The rationale for selection of districts

The Consultant was informed that the 12 districts selected for the pilot phase represented all the Divisions of Rajasthan, CUTS had a presence in these Districts previously also and these were a judicious combination of the small and big districts. Another important consideration was that the NGO partner was available there and he was active.

4. The rationale of selection of District Partners

The District partners who were selected for the implementation of the pilot phase shared a common concern for the cause of consumer protection, and that was the

first and most important rationale for their selection. Secondly, their prior experience with the consumer activism and involvement with the cause was other rationale. Last but not the least, their prior work experience with CUTS-CART on the consumer or governance issues was another significant rationale for the partners. However, merely being true to these rationales did not qualify for an organisation to partner with CUTS-CART. They were subjected to the need-analysis and all those actually were found suitable in the need analysis, finally partnered in implementation of the project. This aspect of partner selection was found to be apt by the evaluator.

B. REVIEW OF PROJECT DOCUMENTS/ PUBLICATIONS

As a part of the project activity, there is a dedicated website <http://www.cuts-international.org/cart/GRANIRCA/>. There are several other documents are being published on periodic basis. The two newsletters (one e-newsletter and other in the print form) – Consumer Dialogue and Consumer in Action are being published regularly and have made significant contribution in fulfilling the objectives of the consumer awareness among the general masses. So far both the newsletters have been published as per the schedule and it was observed that several important inputs, in terms of case studies or news items, came from the partners, and on the other hand several significant information that were published in these newsletter was being used in constructive and practical approach by the partners.

There are two Briefing Papers that have been contributed as a part of the project. In addition to these periodicals, the research reports is also being published, which is an annual publication. First such report that was published in 2010 was on the Status of Consumer Protection in Rajasthan. This publication was found to be extremely informative about the gaps in “is and ought to be” in the structure and functions of the consumer protection. One important development as an impact of the Report was that all the positions in the District Fora and State Consumer Protection Cell has recently been filled up, and it has led to speedy delivery of the judgments.

Occasional publications also include the Training Manual on the Consumer Protection (1000 copies), majorly to be used by the Partner Organisation. It is again a very informative document and provided step – by – step information on the implementation of COPRA, 1986. The Manual also contains the brief history of the evolution of the Consumerism and Consumer Movement.

There are several other publications such as posters, IEC material, Brochures, Activity Reports and Progress Reports, some wall magazines (not part of the project), used very innovatively in GRANIRCA. In fact, it was heartening to see the ideas taken from the wall magazines were taken to develop into full posters by the partners. The Advocacy Document will be brought out on the specific areas of consumer awareness in the 2nd and the 3rd year. Hence one can state that the synergy of the Consumer Right Activism in CUTS is facilitating all the projects being implemented by them. However, one would suggest that as far as possible these materials, especially Reports of the study should also be available in local language. The Consultant has been informed that the Training Manual is already being translated, and the future Research Reports will be published in local language.

C. PRESENTATION ON PROJECT ACTIVITIES ON IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. Amarjeet Singh presented a holistic picture of the GRANIRCA project. The presentation consisted of the activities conducted so far and their results, impact and measurable indicators. In between the presentation, the Consultant raised a few queries, which were responded adequately by the team. The information on publications and documents related to project were provided to him. The Consultant appreciated the fact that the website on the GRANIRCA was designed well and that it was simple and user friendly. The presentation stated that the project envisages that there will be 72 Public Interface Meetings, 36 District Level Training Workshops, 3 State Feedback Roundtables and 12 District Level Media Sensitization Workshops and 2 State Media Sensitization Workshops to be completed in three years' time. It was reported that most of these activities have been completed on time.

The highlights of the presentation were research questionnaire, the questions raised in that, questions pertaining to agmarking of two food products *aata* and *ghee*, few general questions asked and to be asked from the respondents through the questionnaire; suggestions came with regard to research on financial inclusion hindrances, benefits from Public Interface Meetings (PIMs), level of enhanced awareness through the activities like PIMs, District Level Training Workshops (DLTWs) etc., and the increased number of consumer-related complaints, system of CHIAS and how many of the consumers have been motivated to take the complaints to consumer for a and level of improvement in service delivery system which came as a result of GRANIRCA activities etc.

In addition to these, discussions with the team were also held on issues related to district partners' role, participation of district stakeholders, measurable indicators, partners' reporting process, research methodology etc., along with the outcome of project activities and their connection with the sanctioned project.

The findings could be explained in terms of the observable qualitative indicators and quantifiable measurable indicators. As regards the former, the consultant feels that it is slow process that the qualitative changes would be evident immediately, however changes in the perspective of the people about consumer rights from *Chalta Hai* to *Hamara Hakk Hai* is a big transition. In terms of the quantifiable indicators, the indicative figures about the increase in the number of cases disbursed or the number of cases being filed every month or number of people those who are attending the various activities such as training session at different locations, etc. are critical indicators. For example, in Kota, the number of cases has gone up from 550 to 1100. Similar is the situation in most of the districts.

One important quantifiable indicator is the increasing number of participants in Public Interface Meetings (PIMs). The project originally envisaged a target of only 24 PIMs covering 1,200 participants, however, till the time of evaluation, actually 48 PIMs were conducted covering 2146 participants. Also it was told that the project was moving from initial scheduling at the district headquarters to the blocks.

Similarly, the total number of participants in the various District Level Training Workshops has also been more than the originally envisaged number.

As regards the Teams' representation in the external Networking and Advocacy efforts, it was reported that most of the team members have participated in most of the conferences, seminars, or advocacy meetings at the national and international levels. All these richness that have emerged are being utilized in the implementation of GRANIRCA.

D. MEETINGS WITH PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, FOOD AND CA, PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP MEMBER(S), PRESIDENT, CUTS & MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE

The met Justice V.S. Dave, Former President State Consumer Commission and Sunny Sebastian, Special Correspondent, The Hindu, and discussed the project outcomes/impacts so far. Both are members of the Project Advisory and Resource Group (PARG) and have actively participated in some project activities. It has been found that the PARG has been appreciative of the efforts of the GRANIRCA hand has provided support and vision for the implementation of the same.

E. MEETING WITH DISTRICT PARTNERS OF KOTA AND TONK, SELECTED BENEFICIARIES. MEETING WITH KEY OFFICIALS AND DEPARTMENTS (DSO/PRESIDENT OR MEMBER, DF)

As a part of evaluation exercise, field visits to Kota and Tonk was organized to meet the district partners, the beneficiaries of project activities implemented in these districts, key concerned officials involved in the activities and to see the project impact and outcome as a result of those at the grass roots.

At Kota, Mr. Anwar Ahmed Khan, Secretary, Oxford Shikshan Prashikshan Evam Vikas Sansthan, facilitated the meeting. About 15 consumer representatives/activists gathered, which also included Mr. Rambadhur Kulshrestha (RK), Member, District Consumer Forum of Kota.

The beneficiaries informed that due to awareness on consumer issues, they have advantage in bargaining on issues like MRP, standardization marking, packaging dates and weights and measures. A few of them shared their experience of filing their grievances, which they came to know from the project meetings. Most of the issues discussed were related to the common man. The district partner displayed enough awareness in answering about the activities conducted through his networking and associations, which would be strengthened to sustain the project even after its completion.

After the meeting with the consumer activists, Mr. Kulshreshtha informed about the functioning of the consumer forum. He said that GRANIRCA had made their work easy. He further intoned that within the last 18 months, the number of consumer cases had gone up by almost three times. He also said Consumer *Adalats* also are being organised for speedy redressal of complaints.

Further, the team met Mr. Rakesh Kumar Jaiswal, District Supply Officer (DSO), and discussed the status of consumer protection, mechanism and the District Consumer Protection Council, which was constituted recently.

On the way back from Kota, the team visited Tonk district and met the district partner, Mr. Gopal Lal Saini, MMM Sikshan Evam Jan Seva Sansthan, to evaluate and measure the progress made so far under the project. Around 10 participants including Mr. B.L. Bairwa, Chief Planning Officer, District Planning Department, were present at the district partner's office. As in Kota, the Tonk beneficiaries and district partner had similar experience.

It was found that the GRANIRCA was able to qualitatively and quantitatively able to have its impact on the consumer awareness as well as the number of cases being registered and resolved on month-to-month basis. It was also found that the mandatory structures for the implementation of the consumer welfare as well as redressal of the consumer grievances were in place and these bodies were conducting their business with sense of sincerity and dedication.

F. REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT (VISIT TO FINANCE SECTION AND MEETING WITH MR. G. C. JAIN AND TEAM)

A meeting with the Finance Section of CUTS was inevitable in the course of Evaluation. Hence a meeting with the Assistant Director, Finance and Administration was held to understand their perspective on the Financial Management of the Project.

It was found that as such there were no major problems faced in the financial management of the project as was in accordance with the processes laid down by the Consumer Welfare Fund financial management system. However, it was reported that sometimes, the demand from the documentation gets repeated with every sanction, which leads to repetition in the documentation process. It was also reported that Ministry sometimes asks for some for furnishing the financial details at the last hour, which gets cumbersome.

Though, not a major concern, still this aspect of streamlining the financial reporting needs to be looked into.

G. INTERACTION AND MEETING WITH PROJECT DISTRICT PARTNERS MAINLY ON IMPACTS/OUTCOMES

Of the 12 District Partners, only 10 could attend the Interaction. The objective of the session was to explore “*What had been done so far*”, “*What were the impacts*” and “*How to sustain the activities after completion of project*”? The partners were found to be extremely enthusiastic and full of zeal about implementation of GRANIRCA, and took pride in the fact that they were involved in implementation of the first phase.

As regards the activities undertaken so far, it was found that the additional activities were undertaken. The impact, as reported by them, could be seen in qualitative as well as quantitative terms. While in most of the mandatory activities, they had well surpassed the number of beneficiaries, additionally they were using all the other available channels such the SHGs, Gram Sabhas or the other informal CBOs to spread the awareness pertaining to consumer rights. All of them stated in unison that along with their usual activities, activities related to consumer issues was imbedded that would further keep the movement alive, even

if the Project was withdrawn or completed. However, a few issues that emerged from the discussions were as under:

- Monetary expenses for resource persons to provided;
- Intensive activities to be initiated, apart from the project activity;
- Resource materials to be developed in Hindi.

On the whole, the partners have exhibited a sense of ownership as far as the project is concerned, though there is an expectation that the project would continue even after December 2012.

H. OVERALL OBSERVATION AND FINDING

There are a set of Expected Outcomes as stated in the Project document which are as follows:

- *Empowerment*: People in 12 districts will be empowered as assertive consumers to uphold their rights and fight for justice.
- *Questioning Society*: 12 civil society organisations (CSOs) capable of playing a “watchdog” role in their respective district.
- *Improvement*: Better service delivery areas related to basic needs and efficient redressal mechanism in place, particularly in rural areas in the target division.
- *Enabling Environment*: Protecting consumer’s interests in 12 districts, which will ultimately create an enabling environment towards protecting the interest of the state.
- *Good Governance*: The programme will contribute towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the state level.
- *Replicable Model*: The programme will result in a model of empowering consumers through networking, and thus offer a model for further expansion in the identified district and elsewhere.

Of the Five, in the present times the last two could not be assessed as these are to be observed when the Project is coming to an end. However, the following could

summarize the **major outcome/impact** of the project pertaining to the envisaged Outcomes:

- The Project has been able to build capacities of 12 CSOs who are now capable of playing the role of a watchdog in respective districts.
- There is an empowered consumer which is assertive to uphold their rights and fights. This has become a possibility due to the District level Training Workshops and Personal Interface Meetings. There have been a total of 4358 direct beneficiaries as against the target of 2360.
- Positive steps have been taken by the State Government and all the vacant positions have been filled in the State Commission as well as the District Forum. Additionally, the District Consumer Protection Council has also been constituted in all the districts of the state.
- State Government has started PDS Reform process and State Consumer Helpline.
- As per the suggestion of the Project, the State Department has started monthly meeting with the VCOs, and the Department has also recommended the name of CUTS for CCPC.
- The project has helped in increased grievance redressal through CHIAS at the district and state levels.
- The Advocacy Document will be brought out in the second and third year of the project implementation cycle.

I. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The Consultant, through the discussion with the Director, the Implementation Team and the CSOs could find the following problems:

- There is a lack of budget in certain heads such as District Level Training Programmes, Personal Interface Meetings and the honorarium to be paid to the District Partners. The lack of budget is especially critical as in most of the cases, the number of the activities have already been surpassed. The need to have more activities has been felt by the CSOs, as these activities have direct qualitative as well as quantitative impacts and outcomes.

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- Sometimes, there has been lack of support from some of the officials in getting required information and conducting various activities.
 - It has been found and there have been too many activities as such the delay in accomplishment of the activities have been seen. There have been some discomforts created among the service providers and merchandisers due to this increased consumer awareness.
 - Some of the District Partners have found it difficult to mobilize local officials and consumer in the initial phase of the Project; however they are confident that after sometime, they will be supported by the officials.



CHAPTER - 4

RECOMMENDATIONS

The project is just half way completed, and the impacts and the outcomes, as has been observed and recorded, indicate a successful completion of the same. However, as an external actor, the following recommendations can be put forth by the Consultant. It is desired that these are implemented for the success and sustainability of the Project. These are as follows:

1. As regards, the Documents that are being produced, it is desirable that more and more material, whether research or other documents, is produced in Hindi as it is the language of the masses. It would ensure better reach and assimilation, especially in the rural hinterland. In the same manner, if the posters are printed in local language, this would be an effective tool for creating awareness.
2. Partners need constant nurturing and encouragement. This could be done through inserting success stories column in the newsletter. For that it is important that the period Reporting format has space to write success stories, which need to be published for wider reading through e-newsletter and newsletter.
3. A team of dedicated and effective resource persons need to be built up and used frequently in the trainings and other activities.
4. Expectations from the partners, project activities and the overall outcome, as envisaged from the project, need to be communicated to the partners on and off.
5. To conduct next year research in sequence/way to measure the impact of project.
6. To continue the project web-page, as it is user friendly and simple.

CHAPTER - 5

CONCLUSIONS

Any good Project such as GRANIRCA would be effective, sustaining and will be able to create an impact if it is implemented by CUTS-CART and its team of the 12 District Partners in its letter and spirit. However, for the same to be accomplished a synergy is also to be created in the eco-system in which it operates. The eco-system comprises of not only the PARG, the envisaged SARG, the implementation team or the 12 CSOs, it would also include the state and central administrative structures. The factors external to the project also need to be sensitized and their cooperation is sought in implementation of the project.

A proper competition policy need to be in place so that there is stricter regulatory mechanism and the lesser instances of consumer being cheated. The projects are created, implemented and an impact is felt. However, for a sustained effect, it is significant that a culture of proper service delivery is nurtured in the society. To that extent, GRANIRCA's objective of setting up *Good Governance* so that a contribution can be made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the state level can be accomplished.

The Consultant is hopeful, and this hope is generated through the positive impact – qualitative and quantitative – that has been created, that this will be milestone project in the state of Rajasthan in the field of Consumer Protection and Awareness.

The 12 partners, who have been selected in the pilot phase, have the potential of being the resource persons in the up-scaled phase of the project, and one yearns to see that they are able to continue their fight against the injustices that are being done on the regular basis to a common consumer.

The documents that are being created as a part of the project are setting the benchmark in creating the advocacy instrument. One would long to see these in local language so that there is better reception of the newer ideas and a culture of protest against the injustices emerges in the society.

