

CUTS Annual Report Specifically on Telecom Related Issues

Period: December 2016-November 2017

1. Renewal of Registration on 12th February, 2016 by TRAI

Registration no TRAI/CAG/17/2014-CA dated 3rd March 2014. Later renewed for two more years vide letter no. 321-1/2015-CA/172 dated 12th February, 2016 with effect from 1st April, 2016. (Upto 31st March, 2018).

2. CUTS Intervention in Telecom Sector:

- Serving as “Consumer Advocacy Group” with TRAI since 2001 (Ref: TRAI/CAG/17/2014-CA)
- CUTS have been a member in the *Committee for Utilization of Telecommunication Consumers Education and Protection Fund (CUTCEF)* of TRAI during 2011-12.
- Have been instrumental in organizing many Telecom Education Workshops with the assistance of TRAI in between the period 2010 to 2012 under the financial support of CUTS-CEF.
- Have been part of consultations/meetings organised by TRAI and several open houses organised by telecom service providers.
- Served/serving as member appellate authority with various service providers like BSNL, Aircel, MTS and Tata Docomo.
- Campaign for ‘Holding Broadband Service Providers to Account’ in partnership with Consumer International in 2012. (Please refer: http://cuts-international.org/cart/Campaign_for_Holding_Broadband_Service_Providers_to_Account.htm)
- Study of status of law enforcement and study to analyse and document knowledge gaps for the issues/challenges arising from UTP and misleading ads through internet and mobile services in 2012-13. (Please refer: http://cuts-international.org/cart/pdf/Study_on_the_Status_of_Law_Enforcement_for_Misleading_Advertisements_in_India.pdf)
- Attended a seminar "Consumer Protection in Telecom Services: Indian Perspective and framework" organized by TRAI-ITU on 21-23 March, 2016 at New Delhi, where Mr. George Cheriyan, Director taking a session in it.

3. CUTS Advocacy for Fixing Phone Rights of Telecom Consumers is Based on:

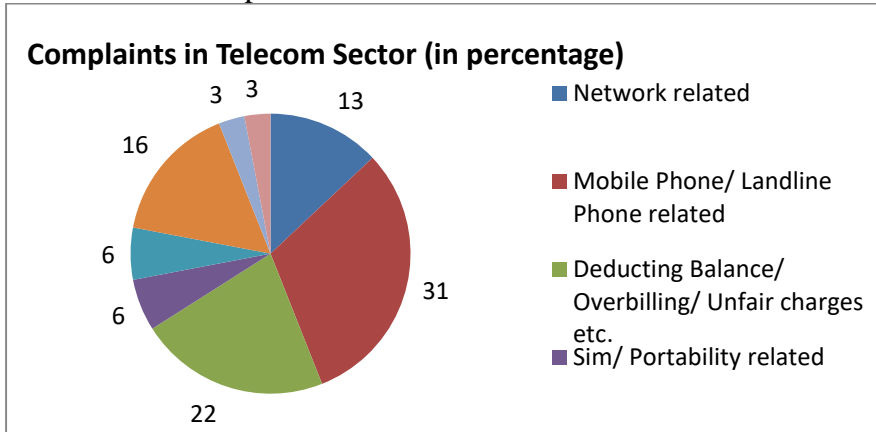
- Fair contracts explained in clear, complete and accessible language.
- Consumers to receive the service they have been promised.
- Fair and transparent billing.
- Consumers to have power over their own information.
- Phone companies to listen and respond to consumer complaints.

4. Telecom Complaints Handled by CUTS- During the Reporting Period:

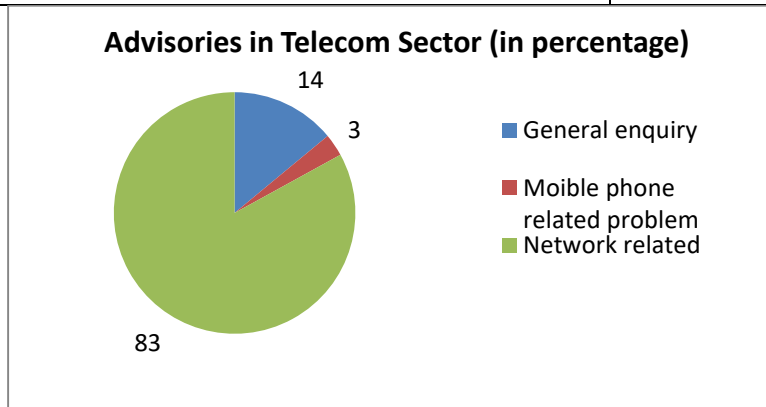
Apart from participating in various consumer awareness programmes in the telecom sector it has been continuously providing its assistance to consumers in handling consumer complaints. During the reporting period of one year i.e. December, 2016 to November, 2017, complaint handling was done under the name of Consumer Support Centre. Consumer Support Centre is providing information & handling consumer complaints against all the sellers and service providers. The complaints on telecom issues specifically were mainly related to:

- Service complaints
- Billing/metering complaints

- New connection activation
- Termination of service related complaints
- The details of complaints and advisories as shown in the below charts:



Complaints in Telecom Sector (in Percentage)	
Nature of Complaint	Percentage
Network related	13
Mobile Phone/ Landline Phone related	31
Deducting Balance/ Overbilling/ Unfair charges etc.	22
Sim/ Portability related	6
Plan activated without information/ consent of consumer	6
Defencies in Services	16
Misleading/ Bait advertisement	3
Others	3
Total	100



Advisories in Telecom Sector	
Nature of Advice Seeking	Percentage
General enquiry	14
Mobile phone related problem	3
Network related	83
Total	100

5. Other Activities on Telecom Issues During the Reporting Period:

- There has been active participation of CUTS in various consumer awareness programmes organized by TRAI during last one year. Since December 2016 to November, 2017, CUTS has participated in several Customer Outreach Programmes organized by TRAI in different parts of Rajasthan on various occasions.
- Apart from participation in Customer Outreach Programmes organized by TRAI, CUTS has been regularly involved with consumer awareness activities organized by various Telecom Service Providers (TSPs) and during the reporting period, CUTS has attended eighteen such activities.
- CUTS has also been involved in couple of projects supported by other agencies during the period, which have been reported below.
- Organised a workshop on ‘Building a Digital World-Consumers Can Trust’ on March 16, 2017 on the occasion of World Consumer Rights Day, 2017.



http://www.cuts-international.org/CART/pdf/Event_Report-World_Consumer_Rights_Day_March_16_2017.pdf

- Prepared a research report on ‘Mobile Internet Services _QoS’ under the project supported by IIT, Delhi.
 - http://www.cuts-ccier.org/QOSII/pdf/Mobile_Internet_Services_in_India-Quality_of_Service.pdf
- Organised a project partners meeting ‘Consumer Broadband Labels: For Greater Transparency & Informed Consumers’ at New Delhi on April 6, 2017.
http://cuts-ccier.org/broadbandlabel/Meetings-Project_Partners_Meeting_Consumer_Broadband_Labels_April06_2017.htm
- Organised a project launch meeting ‘Consumer Broadband Labels: For Greater Transparency & Informed Consumers’ on April 7, 2017 at New Delhi. The project is supported by Ford Foundation, New Delhi.
 - http://cuts-ccier.org/broadbandlabel/Meetings-Project_Launch_Meeting_Consumer_Broadband_Labels_April07_2017.htm
- Organised an roundtable Discussion on Net Neutrality on April 11, 2017 at Jaipur.
 - http://www.cuts-ccier.org/Event-Roundtable_Discussion_on_Net_Neutrality.htm
- George Cheriyan visited Washington DC from April 17-21, 2017 mainly to attend a workshop on ‘*Digital Financial Services and Financial Inclusion*’ held on April 19,

2017, as a panellist, organized by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in partnership with the World Bank and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

- Seminar on Information Disclosure for Broadband Services: Empowering Informed Choices in the 4G Era on December 15, 2017 at Bangalore.

http://cuts-ccier.org/broadbandlabel/pdf/Seminar_on_Information_Disclosure_for_Broadband_Services.pdf

6. Representation by CUTS at Open Houses/TRAI Outreach Programmes and Other Workshops During the Reporting Period:

- Pankaj Sharma attended an Open House on November 16, 2017 at Ajmer organised by Idea Cellular.
- Munna Lal Rao attended an Open House organised by Reliance Communications on December 3, 2016 at Tonk, Rajasthan.
- Rajdeep Pareek attended Customer Outreach Programme and Open House organised by TRAI, Jaipur on December 9, 2016 at village Phootolao Teh. Jamuramgarh Distt- Jaipur (Rajasthan).
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended Customer Outreach Programme organised by MTS Mobile company at Jaipur on December 19, 2016.
- Dr. Harish Kumar attended Consumer Education Workshop organised by Airtel on 24th January 25, 2017 at Bharatpur.
- Hari Prasad Yogi attended consumer workshop organised by IDEA Cellular on February 10, 2017 at Sawai Madhopur.
- Ganpat Lal Choudhary attended consumer workshop organised by MTS Mobile Company on February 10, 2017.
- Kamlesh Kumar Bohra attended workshop for consumer advocacy group meet on March 7, 2017 organised by Reliance Communications.
- George Cheriyan, Dharmendra Chaturvedi and Rohit Singh met Mr R S Sharma, Chairman, TRAI at Trai Jaipur office on March 29, 2017, which was a courtesy meeting with all the CAGs of Rajasthan during Mr Sharma's visit to Jaipur.
- Dr. Harish Kumar attended consumer workshop organised by IDEA Cellular in Bharatpur on May 11, 2017.
- Kishan Snehi attended consumer workshop organised by IDEA Cellular in Alwar on 12-May 12, 2017.
- Dharmendra and Jeetali Agnani attended the outreach programme organised by TRAI Regional Office, Jaipur on May 17, 2017 at Tonk.
- Dr. Jitendra Chaturvedi attended consumer Education Workshop organised by Airtel in Ajmer on May 26, 2017
- Aakansha Choudhary along with Jeetali Agnani attended the APP and portal launch event at the TRAI office, Jhalana Dungri, Jaipur on June 5, 2017.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended two back to back Consumer Workshops on July 13 at Sikar and on July 14, 2017 at Jhunjhunu respectively organised by Idea Cellular.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended a Customer Outreach Programme and Open House organised by TRAI, Jaipur on July 21, 2017 at Bundi, Rajasthan.
- Pradeep Singh Pundheer attended Consumer Education Workshop on July 21, 2017 organised by Airtel in Alwar.
- Jeetali Agnani attended an open house discussion conducted by BSNL at the BSNL Jhotwara office on July 21, 2017.

- Deepak Saxena, Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Satyapal Singh and Aakansha Choudhary attended the “Train the Trainer” workshop conducted by Google in association with Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government on ‘Consumer Go Safely Digital’ on August 28, 2017 at Jaipur.
- Arun Porwal attended Consumer Education Workshop on September 20, 2017 at Baran, Rajasthan organised by Airtel.
- Deepak Saxena attended Regional Workshop on Capacity Building of CAGs and Consumer Education for Western Region at Jodhpur (Rajasthan) on September 22, 2017.
- Gauhar Mahmood attended a Customer Outreach Programmes, which was organised by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Regional Office, Jaipur at Kankroli, Rajsamand on November 23, 2017.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended a COP and Open House organised by TRAI, Jaipur on November 30, 2017 at Hanumangarh, Rajasthan.

7. **Role as a Member in Appellate Authorities**

CUTS has been serving as an active member in TSPs like BSNL, MTS and Tata Docomo and has actively participated in solving the queries of consumers across the table.

8. **Issues emerged from open houses/workshops:**

- Customer Care executives must be versed with the appeal process under the complaint handling process.
- Nuisance of call drop needs to be treated.
- Customer care should be made more friendly and accessible.
- Value added services, unsolicited calls/SMSs, tariffs, mobile number portability, DND, quality of service standards are few irretentive issues among consumers.
- Deduction/charges for VAS without consent or proper explanation.
- Proper billing of internet data charges with improved network services.
- Confusion regarding telecom dispute jurisdiction by consumer fora.
- More events like open houses should be conducted at grassroots to make consumer aware by service providers/regulator.

9. **GSK Alerts**

CUTS publishes and circulate e-newsletter by the name GSK Alert, which is a compilation of successful cases solved by Grahak Suvidha Kendra over the period of one year.

http://www.cuts-international.org/CART/Grahak_Suvidha_Kendra.htm

10. **Successful Cases** solved by GSK is mentioned below:

(December, 2016 to November 2017)

1. Surcharged Cash Returned

Deepak Saxena registered his complaint to Grahak Suvidha Kendra (GSK), Jaipur against Airtel. He recharged his mobile no. 7568087161 for M400 through Paytm on December 15, 2016. On getting recharged at the above number, he found that M300 was deducted without any intimation. GSK sent a notice to Airtel – Telecom Service Provider through a mail and immediately after receiving the same, Airtel returned the deducted amount to Saxena in his wallet.

2. Outgoing Finally Connected

Seeking advice from GSK, Jaipur **T P Shivkumar** registered his Complaint against Reliance Communications that he was unable to make outgoing calls through his mobile phone no. 7416389766 since December 23, 2016. Numerous requests have been made to Reliance Communications Appellate Authority in this regard but all in vain. Then, GSK sent a notice to concerned TSP through an email and the complaint was finally resolved.

3. Security Amount Refunded

Smt. Firoza Banoo, resident of Sojat City, district- Pali complained that BSNL office, Pali is not refunding security amount of land line telephone even after elapse of so much time of surrender of basic telephone connection. The aggrieved consumer is compelled to come to GSK, Jaipur. GSK counsellor talked over phone with BSNL official. After telephonic talk, the BSNL refunded the security amount to the complainant.

4. Telecom Operator Forced to Activate Sim

Deepak Sharma of Bhopal had a complaint against Idea Cellular for deactivating of sim without prior information. When he approached Customer Care of Idea, no valid reasons were stated for the deactivation. Sharma registered his complaint before the GSK. After rigorous follow ups by the GSK team, the complaint was resolved within a period of 15 days.

5. TSP Forced to Revert the Amount

Pratibha Singh, resident of Jaipur filed a complaint with GSK that she is getting continuous requests of sim upgradation to 4G for *free* from Airtel through messages and calls. As advertised, she had done the same believing it to be free upgrade, i.e. no charge for getting 4G services. To her utmost horror and shock, she had to pay Rs 20 for the sim to retailer and after sim activation; she got a message from Airtel that she received 1 GB of 4G data for 28 days. Believing the information of receipt of 4G data to be true, she used her mobile data, but to add to her agony, her prepaid main balance of Rs 40 was completely exhausted in mere 10 MB usage, which should rather have been free as advertised.

Further adding, the customer care executives invariably kept her calls on hold and after repeated calls her complaint was registered, but no assurance for the return of balance was given to her to which she was entitled. Finally, Singh approached GSK, Jaipur and filed a complaint through email. GSK sent a notice to Appellate Authority of Airtel. Airtel reverted the amount in her pre-paid account.

6. Airtel put into dock

Devyani Singh of Jaipur approached GSK regarding the portability of her Airtel number to Idea without her consent. Singh is a MBA student, who gave a sim registered in her name to her friend. Due to some reasons, she asked her brother to return the sim but on refusal by friend, she requested Airtel to deactivate that sim and re-issue a new one. As she got the new one she kept it on for two-three days, during this period she received calls from the contacts of her friend so she decided to keep it off for few more days. One day, Devyani turned her mobile on and found that the sim was not working. After approaching Airtel, she was informed that the number has been ported to Idea without her information and prior consent. With all the mental agony, she registered her complaint at GSK online. As soon as GSK received the complaint, an e-mail stating the details of the complaint was sent to appellate authority of Airtel. Considering the seriousness of the case, Airtel decided to appoint a special authority to look into the matter. After rigorous follow ups with Airtel, details regarding the portability was

provided to the complainant and it was stated that the complainant's friend has got it ported fraud.

7. Balance not Received after Recharge Message

Baldev Raj from Jaipur recharged his BSNL mobile through online recharge site. The amount was deducted from his account but he did not receive the balance. Hence, he filed a complaint with GSK, who took up the issue with BSNL's Public Grievance Cell. His problem was finally resolved after few attempts.

8. TSP Forced to do Portability

Sanjay Mishra approached GSK on December 24, 2016 through phone about the refusal by Airtel for portability of network to Idea without stating any valid reasons. The complaint was forwarded to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India as well as Airtel Appellate Authority. It was resolved within seven days and the number was transferred to Idea.

9. Providing Effective Internet Connectivity Plan

Kushagra Saxena, resident of Jaipur complained to GSK that his mobile has now been converted to an Airtel Family Infinity Plan but as promised, the company has failed to provide effective internet connectivity within the range and also the sim was not activated. The complaint still persisted even after lot of efforts. When the issue was brought before the GSK and within three days of registering the complaint, the sim got activated and thus consumer was satisfied.