

CUTS Annual Report Specifically on Telecom Related Issues

Period: January, 2020- December, 2020

Registration no TRAI/CO/NGO/17/2014-CA dated 3rd March 2014. Later renewed for two more years vide letter no. 321-1/2015-CA/172 dated Renewal of Registration on 21st July, 2020 with effect from 31st March, 2020. (Up to 31 March, 2022).

1. 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, Tata Docomo. Airtel and Vodafone Idea Limited.

1.1 Past Studies by CUTS

- 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](http://cuts-international.org/cart/Campaign%20for%20Holding%20Broadband%20Service%20Providers%20to%20Account.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](http://cuts-international.org/cart/pdf/Study%20on%20the%20Status%20of%20Law%20Enforcement%20for%20Misleading%20Advertisements%20in%20India.pdf))
- Coding and Enforcing Mobile Internet: Quality of Standards in India
<https://cuts-ccier.org/coding-and-enforcing-mobile-internet-quality-of-standards-in-india/>
- 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](http://www.cuts-ccier.org/QOSII/pdf/Mobile%20Internet%20Services%20in%20India-Quality%20of%20Service.pdf)
- Provided comments on New Broadcasting and Cable Services Framework on December 26, 2018.
- The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha on December 11, 2019. Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) Prepared a Bill Blow-Up of the same. It is accessible at <https://bit.ly/3aPaps8>

1.2 Recent Studies by CUTS

- Status of e-Commerce in India (SECI)
More details at: <https://cuts-ccier.org/seci/>
- Understanding Consumers' Perspective on Encryption
<https://cuts-ccier.org/understanding-consumers-perspective-on-encryption/>
- Data Privacy and User Welfare in India: User Perception Analysis
<https://cuts-ccier.org/cdpp/>
- Project Launch Meeting "Consumer Broadband Labels: For Greater Transparency & Informed Consumers
<https://cuts-ccier.org/project-launch-meeting-consumer-broadband-labels-for-greater-transparency-informed-consumers/>

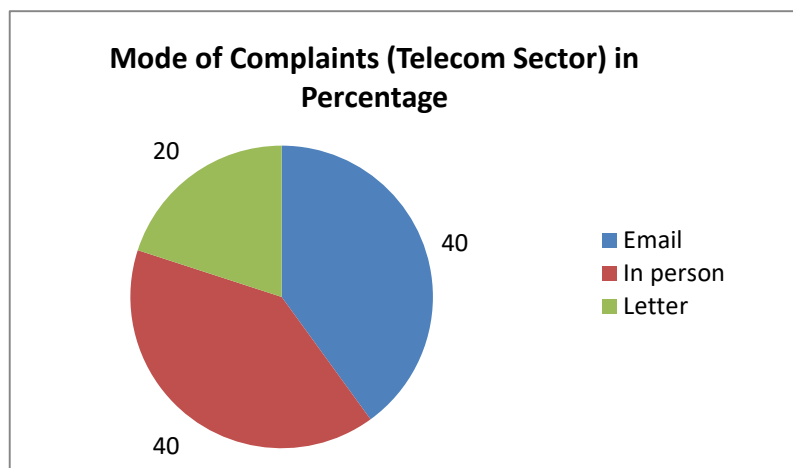
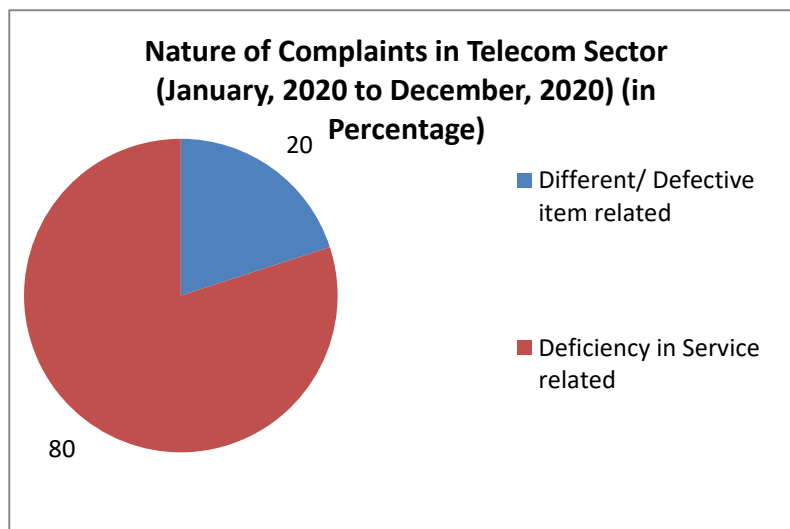
2. CUTS Advocacy for Fixing Phone Rights of Telecom Consumers is Based on:

- 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.

3. 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. January, 2020- November, 2020, 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:



4. 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 January, 2020 to November, 2020, CUTS has participated in several online 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).

5. Representation by CUTS at Open Houses/TRAI Outreach Programmes and Other Workshops during the Reporting Period

- Malchand Sharma attended Consumer Outreach Program organised by Reliance Jio Infocom Ltd. on January 15, 2020 at Tonk, Rajasthan.
- Varsha Soni attended Customer Advocacy Group meet organised by Vodafone Idea Limited on January 16, 2020 at Baran, Rajasthan.
- Harish Arya attended Consumer Education Workshop organised by BSNL, on January 22, 2020 at Bharatpur, Rajasthan.
- Ms. Aaradhna Gupta (Programme Associate, CUTS) attended the Consumer Outreach Program organized by TRAI Regional Office Jaipur on January 23, 2020 at Smt. Rama Devi Mahila Mahavidyalaya Village & Post - Kolsiya, Tehsil – Nawalgarh, Dist: Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan).
- Tejsingh attended Consumer Outreach Program organised by Reliance Jio Infocom Ltd. on February 12, 2020 at Rajsamand, Rajasthan.
- Bharat Bhati attended Customer Advocacy Group Meet organised by Vodafone Idea Limited on February 19, 2020 at Jodhpur, Rajasthan.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer, CUTS attended the Regional Workshop on Capacity Building of CAGs” on March 6, 2020 at Bikaner (Rajasthan) organised by TRAI, New Delhi Office.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer, CUTS attended online Airmeet Mock Consumer Outreach Program of TRAI, RO Jaipur on June 19, 2020.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer and Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director, CUTS attended online TRAI Consumer Outreach Program for Rajasthan Service Area on June 26, 2020 by TRAI, Jaipur.
- Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director attended online Webinar on July 24, 2020 on the theme of “5G in India-Specification, Use Cases, Challenges and Action Plan” organised by TRAI, Jaipur.
- Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director attended online Open House Discussion on 'Regulation of International Mobile Roaming service' on July 27, 2020 organised by TRAI Regional Office Jaipur.
- Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director attended online webinar on “IoT (Internet of Things) Trends, Security challenges and solutions” on August 28, 2020 organised by TRAI, Bhopal.
- Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director attended online conference on “Improving Connectivity Inside Buildings” on September 4, 2020. Conference jointly hosted by TRAI and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of Govt. of India.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer, CUTS attended the online event on release of Monograph on “Improving Connectivity inside the Buildings” and a whitepaper on 'Smart Cities in India: Framework for ICT Infrastructure' on September 22, 2020.

- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer, CUTS attended the Online COP to create awareness among Telecom Consumers and Stakeholders for Punjab Service Area on November 06, 2020.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer, CUTS attended the online webinar on "Cyber Security" on November 26, 2020 organised by TRAI Regional office Jaipur.
- Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer, CUTS attended the online Consumer Outreach Program (COP) by TRAI to create awareness among Telecom Consumers and Stakeholders on December 18, 2020 organised by TRAI Regional office Jaipur.

6. Role as a Member in Appellate Authorities

- CUTS has been receiving appeals from Vodafone-Idea and Airtel on monthly and quarterly basis from the two operators, which after getting it verified from the customers directly by our team are approved, otherwise, are sent back to operators for further action on these. Hit badly by pandemic, in year 2020, CUTS has received only four appeals, all from Airtel, which have been approved.

7. 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.

8. GSK Alerts

CUTS publishes and circulate e-newsletter by the name GSK Alert, which is a compilation of successful cases solved by **Grahak Sahayta Kendra (GSK)** over the period of one year. In the year 2020, four issues of GSK Alert were released and circulated. The relevant link is:

<https://cuts-cart.org/consumer-care-centre-grahak-sahayta-kendra/>

9. Successful Cases solved by GSK during the period is mentioned below:

Network issues in Jio fiber resolved

Vinod Kumar Sharma registered his complaint through email against Jio fiber regarding network issues. Sharma purchased prepaid fibre connection by Reliance Jio for three months in February 2020 but after a few days, the network speed did not work properly. He contacted Jio people to either rectify or refund the entire amount. But, instead of solving his problem, the service provider terminated the services despite having a valid prepaid plan. Sharma took the matter with senior officials in Jio but to no respite and then he came to GSK, which took the matter with Jio. After several follow-ups, the service provider refunded the whole amount to the complainant and issued another new connection, as informed by the complainant.

Telecom Consumers Harassed Unnecessary

Vinod Kapoor, resident of Mansarovar, Jaipur submitted his complaint against Jio Reliance that six unknown numbers were being shown in his 'Aadhaar' card, whereas those numbers were not used by him. He tried to contact Jio on 198 but did not get a response. After bringing the matter to GSK's notice, it was pursued by GSK counsellors. The service provider advised him that he can get the request registered for disconnection by sending an email on "care@jio.com" from his registered email id. Finally, the issue was resolved.