

About 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 programmes 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.

INSIDE

- Projects and Programmes
- Representations
- Visits
- CART in Media



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Establishing a Municipal Regulatory Authority in Rajasthan

“The need for establishing the office of a regulatory authority with statutory power for all local self-government institutions is vital to keep an eye on the functioning of all municipal bodies. Such a body with independent powers to probe and penalise could be used to check misuse of office and unsatisfactory working. It should also shed light on needed change at the local level”, said Vasudevan Suresh, Former Chairman and Managing Director, Housing and Urban Development Corporation & President, Good Governance India Foundation.

He was speaking at the inception of a project entitled ‘Improving City Governance Through Enhancing Knowledge of Urban Local Bodies in Rajasthan’ implemented by CUTS in partnership with the Australian High Commission under its Direct Aid Programme.

George Cherian, Director, CUTS, mentioned that Rajasthan’s urban population is around 1.70 crore, 24.9 percent of the total population. In contrast, the rural population stands at 5.15 crore, 75.1 per cent of the total population. Such a rise in urban population implies increased demand for goods and services and the requirement of efficient systems for urban planning, management and governance. Therefore, addressing urban development and transformation, urban inequalities and bringing suitable reformation within the urban governance system to address these changes is India’s most important political and intellectual challenge.

Barry O’Farrell AO, Australian High Commissioner to India, congratulated CUTS for the urban governance project and highlighted that urban governance is one of the critical areas where India and Australia have a formal strategic partnership.



Abhijeet Kumar, Mayor, Bharatpur Municipal Corporation, reiterated that there is a need to set up municipal regulatory authority in Rajasthan. Responsibilities are entrusted to local self-governments (LSGs), but there is neither power to fulfil those responsibilities nor any administrative setup. There are a lot of administrative and financial problems within LSGs. Local government bodies should be made autonomous to manage and address their issues.

Mahendra Soni, IAS, Commissioner, Jaipur Municipal Corporation (Greater) highlighted India’s problem could be solved in 180 days if we humans correct ourselves. We as a society expect a lot of entitlements and keep blaming the system. There is an urgent need to take responsibility by each stakeholder for effective urban governance.

S N Singh, Chairman, Swachh Nagar Sanstha, said government functionaries should be more accessible to the common citizen. There is a need for separation of power at the LSG level and strengthening municipal ward level committees. Himani Tiwari, City Managers’ Association Rajasthan, Department of Local Self Government, Government of Rajasthan, highlighted the government’s initiative and programme related to urban governance.

Amar Deep Singh, Senior Programme Officer CUTS, presented the organisation’s previous work on urban governance and explained the objectives and activities of the project. Amit Babu, Programme Associate, CUTS, proposed the vote of thanks. The meeting saw the participation of more than 40 participants.

Transition from Organic to Chemical-Free Farming in Rajasthan

“Sustained growth is key to India’s future, for which reducing chemical farming and moving from chemical to organic farming are challenging. To this end, we all need to become champions of reform and reduce the amount of chemical farming by moving towards organic farming”, Padma Shri, award-winning Farmer Jagdish Pareek stated. He added that Rajasthan, a state suffering from water shortages, needs technology and a traditional strategy to achieve its target without any financial loss.

He was speaking as Chief Guest at the launch of a project named “Developing a Culture of Sustainable Consumption and Lifestyle Through Promoting Organic Consumption and Production and Adopting Sustainable Consumption Practices by Engaging Consumers in the State of Rajasthan, India” (ProScop). This project will be implemented in 12 targeted districts and all seven divisions of Rajasthan for five years (2022-2026).

Cherian stated that shifting from conventional to organic farming should be a slow and gradual process. He said this project phase (2022-2026), envisages converting selected *gram panchayats* to 100 percent organic farming. He highlighted that state-wise, Madhya Pradesh has covered the most significant area under organic certification, and Rajasthan ranks 2nd, with 12 percent of the total organic certified land in the country.

Hanuman Mal Dhaka, Additional Commissioner, Department of Agriculture, highlighted the adverse effects of chemicals that farmers use in farming. Dhaka said that there is a need to raise public awareness about the hazardous effects of chemical products so that people recognise the value of organic items.



AS Baloda, Director, Rajasthan Agriculture Research Institute, said that organic farming could be a way to protect the climate, environment, and water. Similarly, he emphasised the need for farmers to perform honestly in organic farming.

Surendra Awana, a progressive farmer, spoke about innovative farming and divergent practical methods helping farmers take new initiatives to move toward organic farming.

Deepak Saxena welcomed all the guests and participants. Rajdeep Pareek provided an overview of the project objectives and activities to be covered in the coming years. Amit Babu gave an abridged outline of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), which is about minimising the use of natural resources and the emission of waste and pollutants, helping to improve resource efficiency and promoting a sustainable lifestyle. Kuldeep Panwar gave an overview of the work on Farmer Producer Organisations.

Nimisha Sharma moderated the event, and Dharmendra Chaturvedi proposed the vote of thanks. More than 60 participants, including government officials, civil society representatives, media and consultants from targeted districts in Rajasthan participated.

National Consumer Convention

Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) of India organised a National Consumer Convention at Jaipur on April 30, 2022. Pratap Singh Khachariawas, Minister of Consumer Affairs, was the chief guest. Other dignitaries in the inaugural session were Justice G K Vyas, Chairman, Rajasthan Human Rights Commission; Justice B L Sharma, President, Rajasthan State Consumer Redressal Commission and Kanika Kalia, State Head of BIS, Jaipur.

In the technical session, Kanika Kalia made a presentation on standards chaired by Anil Johri, Patron, CCC. In the next session, cybercrime expert lawyer Nishit Dixit made a presentation, and Cherian spoke on the topic as a panellist. Eight CCC leaders from various states visited CUTS on April 29, 2022 and interacted with CUTS team.



Generating Demand for Effective Implementation of MVA Act 2019

A State-level Consultation on "Generating Demand for Effective Implementation of MVA Act 2019" was organised at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, in partnership with the Centre for Environment and Development on April 26, 2022.

Antony Raju, Minister for Transport, Government of Kerala, was the chief guest and Anup Kuruvila John, IPS, IG of Police (Social Policing & Traffic) was the special guest. Cherian moderated the panel discussion on key risk factors. T Elangoan, Executive Director, Kerala Road Safety Authority; Najeeb AK, Motor Vehicles Department; Samson Mathew, Director, Kerala State Council for Science Technology and Environment-National Transportation Planning & Research Centre (KSCSTE-NATPAC) and B G Sreedevi, Former Director, KSCSTE-NATPAC were panellists.



More than 80 participants including various officials from government departments, such as medical, transport and police etc., attended the meeting.

A District-level Consultation on "Generating Demand for Effective Implementation of MVA Act 2019" was organised at Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, on April 25, 2022. C P Joshi, MP, Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, was the chief guest. Rajeev Joshi, Additional SP; Jagdish Prasad, Regional Transport Office and Manish, District Transport Office were the other guests. More than 85 participants attended the consultation.

Raising Awareness of Ecomarks on Earth Day

CUTS observed Earth Day at the Mother Earth sculpture site at Jaipur on April 22 morning to demand an effective Ecomark in India. The CUTS team gathered at the site in the morning and showcased the banner with a specific demand. Several local people visited the site and interacted. The team created awareness of Ecomarks, essential for promoting sustainable consumption and production. It aims at reducing the negative impact of consumption and production on the environment, health, climate and natural resources.



Health Star Rating Labels not Suitable for India

CUTS organised a Webinar on 'FoPL: Why Health Star Rating is not suitable for India' on May 11, 2022. Lindsey Smith Taillie, Assistant Professor at the University of North Carolina, was the main speaker. The other discussants were Saroja Sundaram from Citizen consumer and civic Action Group; Ashim Sanyal, Consumer Voice; Amit Khurana, Centre for Science and Environment; and Antonio Picasso, Director General of Competere, Italy.

Around 55 delegates from across the country and abroad attended the meeting.

GRSP India Partner's Meet



Global Road Safety Partnership (GRSP), in association with the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, West Bengal, organised its India partner's meet from May 25-27, 2022.

Taifur Rehman, GRSP; Mena and Nalin Sinha, GHAI India Representatives, participated and facilitated discussions with Bhargab Maitra, Professor from IIT Kharagpur. GRSP, GHAI staff and others termed the excellent work done by CUTS as the 'CUTS Model in Rajasthan' and suggested other partners adopt the same to replicate.

The CUTS team participated in the panel discussion on the MVA implementation framework and the two-wheeler safety and helmet session. Cherian, Madhu Sudan Sharma, Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu participated and gave valuable comments and suggestions in strategic planning sessions.

CUTS International on UNESCAP-SANS Panel

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) office has included CUTS as a member of the South Asia Network on the Sustainable Development Goals (SANS) as a civil society member.



SANS is a network of government agencies, think tanks, and other organisations from South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

SANS has been developed to foster subregional cooperation by sharing good practices towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) amongst the government agencies, think tanks, CSOs and other stakeholders in South Asia to build back better. This network is expected to accelerate action on SDGs implementation in the region.

WEBINARS

- Simi TB attended a webinar on 'The Circular Economy & Sustainable Infrastructure' organised by The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) jointly with the Asian Institute of Technology on May 05, 2022.
- Satyapal Singh and Simi TB attended a webinar on 'Overweight and Obesity: Prevalence and Policy Alternatives for India' organised by the Institute of Economic Growth India on May 19, 2022.
- Simi TB and Pratibha Jain attended a webinar on 'Advancing Fiscal Policies for Public Health' organised by Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI) on May 24, 2022.
- Amar Deep Singh and Amit Babu attended the online meeting 'Rajasthan Digital Dialogue' organised by Social Accountability Form for Action and Research on June 20, 2022.
- Deepak Saxena and Simi TB attended UNEP webinar on 'Lifecycle Initiative' on June 23, 2022.
- Deepak Saxena and Pratibha Jain attended a webinar on 'Power-Up to the Gamers: Empowering Consumers in the Online Gaming World' organised by CUTS and Nishith Desai Associates on June 29, 2022.
- Simi TB attended a Roundtable Discussion on 'Safer Food, Better Health: Coping with Food-borne Risks to Human Health' organised by Centre for New Economic Diplomacy on June 07, 2022.
- Simi TB attended the Global Symposium on Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions organised by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, ITAIPU and Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions Partnership and Network on June 13-15, 2022.

MEETINGS/DISCUSSIONS

- Amit Babu attended a network meeting on the Rajasthan Urban Employment Scheme organised by *Soochna Evum Rozgar Adhikar Abhiyan* with the support of The Centre for Advocacy and Research, *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan* and Social Accountability Form for Action and Research at Vinobha Gyan Mandir, Jaipur on June 16, 2022.
- Deepak Saxena and Dharmendra Chaturvedi participated in the first programme under the 'Manak Manthan' series organised by the Bureau of Indian Standards on June 29, 2022.

Ecolabelling, public procurement support key to achieving SDG 12

Policy Circle, April 04, 2022
By George Cherian and Simi TB

The world took note of India's call to ditch consumerism and shift to a circular economy at the WEF Davos Agenda Summit. This was in line with the country's climate action initiatives, such as energy transition, green bonds, and sustainable urban planning, which would provide equitable economic growth and sustainable use of the planet's resources. Such initiatives by the government could accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP), especially when pressure is mounting on the country to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, mainly responsible consumption and production (SDG 12).

<https://cuts-cart.org/ecolabelling-public-procurement-support-key-to-achieving-sdg-12/>

India must invest in effective enforcement of environmental laws

Policy Circle, April 22, 2022
By Pradeep S Mehta

The 12th edition of the biennial Environment Performance Index (EPI Index 2020) released by Yale University ranked India at 168th position among 180 countries in terms of environmental performance. In 2018, the country's rank was 177, scoring 30.57 out of 100, and India scored 27.6 out of 100 in the 2020 index. Such poor ranking is despite the country making many advancements in environmental law, which have flowed from the provisions of the Constitution that require the state and the citizens to protect the environment.

<https://cuts-cart.org/india-must-invest-in-effective-enforcement-of-environment-laws/>

FSSAI sides with industry, puts consumers at risk

Policy Circle, May 09, 2022
By George Cherian

The role of a food regulator is to encourage the consumption of safe, sanitised, nutritious and wholesome food and to inform consumers about the steps it takes to minimise the risks, set standards and ensure safety. The Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA) passage in 2006 ushered in an era of food safety in India. The FSSA is a landmark law because it consolidated all laws related to food and aligned India's food regulations with international standards.

<https://cuts-cart.org/fssai-sides-with-industry-puts-consumers-at-risk/>

Defining moment for earth concerns

South Asia Monitor, June 04, 2022
By George Cherian and Simi TB

Earth continues to grapple with various challenges apart from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Enduring crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, depletion of natural resources, and ever-increasing population, pollution and waste have already become the biggest threat to the earth's existence. Last year, the Earth Overshoot Day 2021, representing the date humanity has used up all the biological resources the planet regenerates each year happened on July 29, almost a month earlier than the year before.

<https://cuts-cart.org/defining-moment-for-earth-south-asia-faces-grave-environmental-concerns/>

