

Consumer Dialogue

Volume XII, Issue 1, January-April, 2021

E-newsletter

Tackling Plastic Pollution: World Consumer Rights Day 2021

15 March is World Consumer Rights Day, an annual occasion for celebration, impact and global solidarity within the international consumer movement. Welcoming the participants and the speakers, Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director, CUTS International, said that each year, consumer organisations mark the day by joining together to highlight and raise awareness of an important issue to consumers worldwide. Saxena also remarked that around 240 organisations are commemorating this day in 209 countries and each year, it is focussed on a dedicated theme.

In an organised way, the World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) first took place on 15 March in 1983 organised by the International Organisation of Consumer Unions (IOCU) and has now become an annual event for solidarity within the international consumer movement along with creating awareness about consumer rights. Since 1995, Consumers International is responsible for coordinating this event at the international level. This year, the theme is 'Tackling Plastic Pollution'.

In his opening remarks, George Cheriyan, Director, highlighting the theme, elaborated that plastic waste is India's and the world's most formidable (difficult to deal with) environmental challenge today. COVID-19 pandemic has made matters worse. According to World Economic Forum, the world produces more than 400 million tonnes of plastic every year. Enunciating with another study, Cheriyan



said, 79 percent of the plastic made (316 million tonnes) in the world enters our land, water and environment as waste; some of it also enters our bodies through the food chain.

In a run-up to the World Consumer Rights Day celebration, CUTS also earmarked this day as the State Level Stakeholder's consultation of its ongoing project ProOrganic in ten districts of Rajasthan. On this occasion, Rajdeep Pareek, Programme Officer, CUTS presented 2020-21 year's activities with key highlights and major outcomes and recommendations.

A S Baloda, Director, Rajasthan Agriculture Research Institute, reiterated the need for a constant campaign on organic farming. Farmers and consumers should also understand its importance in the longer run. Shailendra Chauhan, Assistant General Manager, National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), spoke on various schemes for organic farming.

Padma Shree Awardee Jagdish Pareek narrated some essential tips on organic farming in his simple style and language. Deepika Saini, Quality Manager, Rajasthan State Organic Certification Agency, provided tips to participating farmers on organic certification.

Those who had displayed their organic products through the exhibition and other farmers attending the event switched from chemical to organic farming. All the farmers were given mementos as a token of appreciation by CUTS for their organic farming efforts.

<https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/event-report-wcrd-and-stakeholders-consultation-march-15-2021.pdf>

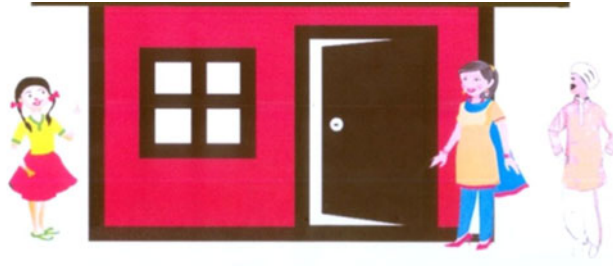
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Grahak Sahayta Kendra, Jaipur

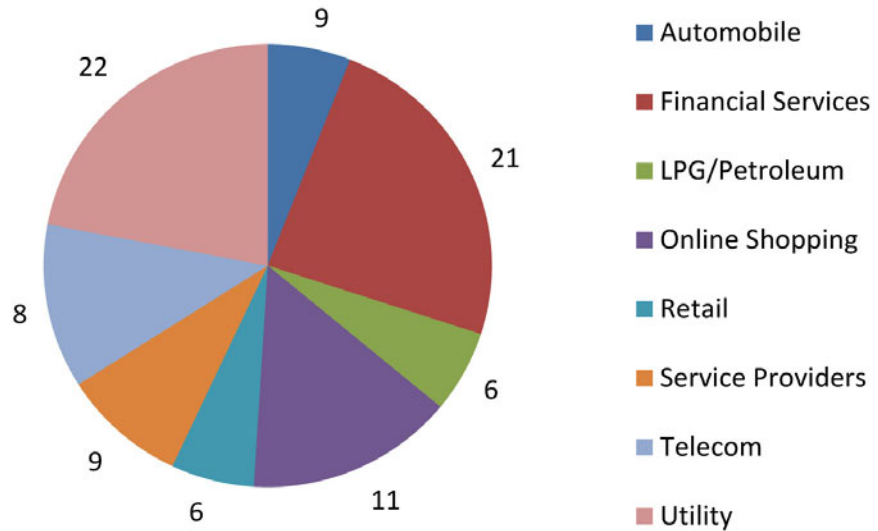
Grahak Sahayta Kendra (GSK) provides services, such as advice on consumer protection-related issues, addresses complaints, and publishes books, pamphlets, magazines, and other relevant materials in consumer-related matters. Besides, the GSK centre also handles consumer complaints through counselling and conciliation for quick and easy redress.

GSK details can be accessed at:

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

During January-April 2021, the status of complaints and advisories received at GSK are shown in the below graph:

Sectorwise Complaints in Percentage



Financial Services: Banking, Insurance Companies, Non-Banking Finance Companies, and Capital Market

Utility: Electricity, Water, and Education

Service Providers & Other Services: Local Bodies, Hospitality, and other Miscellaneous Service Providers

Automobile: Vehicle Manufacturing Companies, Dealers and Service Centres, etc.



Organic Consumption and Sale: A Growing Trend Amid the Pandemic



91 percent of organic sellers and 89 percent of consumers have confirmed that there has been substantial growth in both sales and the consumption of organic products during the pandemic. CUTS International surveyed the sellers and consumers of organic food products in ten districts of Rajasthan. 2000 samples of consumers (200 per district) and 200 sellers, including retailers and distributors but producers (farmers), were not included. Around 62 percent of sellers have confirmed selling organic products along with other non-organic products. 86 percent of consumers feel that the changing pattern of organic consumption must carry on in the future.

<https://bit.ly/2Rlj944>

Road Safety Award to RSRTC

Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation (RSRTC) has received the Road Safety Award for minimal accidents. The Union Road Transport and Highways Minister have honoured Rajasthan Roadways by giving Road Safety Award for the minimum accident. Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has given the Transport Ministers Road Safety Award to Rajasthan Roadways for all-India level minimum accidents for 2019-20 and 2020-21 in the presence of Union Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.



<https://bit.ly/3tQ9Bvd>

Universal Health Care Scheme in Rajasthan



The Congress-led Rajasthan Government presented in the state assembly the Budget for FY 2021-22, focussing on healthcare and agriculture sectors. State Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who also holds the finance portfolio, presented his first paperless budget, which saw him announcing various proposals in his speech that lasted for nearly three hours. Gehlot imposed no new tax and gave relief worth Rs 910 crore in the budget, which had health, agriculture and youths as the primary focus areas. He said his government would bring a Universal Health Care Scheme worth Rs 3,500 crore under which each family will get insurance benefit of up to Rs 5 lakh.

<https://bit.ly/3tRhq3R>

Strengthen Right to Hearing and Guarantee of Delivery of Public Service

A major initiative has been taken in Rajasthan for strengthening the right to a hearing and the guaranteed delivery of public services by converting the processes under their legislations into online operations. Chief Secretary Niranjana Arya said that the State Acts of 2011 and 2012, giving the two rights to the public at large, would make a significant intervention to empower them by ensuring online access. This would also make the public officials accountable to the people.

<https://bit.ly/3uYjWqw>





Difficult for India to Achieve Targets of SDG-12

Five years into the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the assessment of the progress in India shows, it is doubtful that India will achieve any of the targets of SDG-12, which is 'Responsible Consumption and Production.' In addition, the status of many of the indicators may further worsen by 2030, compared with 2015, due to the negative impact of the pandemic and various other reasons.



This was one of the major findings of a study done by CUTS International on SDFG-12 titled "Sustainable Consumption and Production—A Consumer Perspective". The study mainly looked at SDG-12 from a consumer perspective based on The United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP). The importance of studying and analysing the achievement of a country's progress under SDG-12 than any other goal was felt because of its interlinking nature with other goals. Almost all other goals are connected with SDG-12, thereby underlining that any progress in meeting Agenda 2030 by a country cannot be achieved without carefully approaching and addressing the concerns under SDG-12.

The key findings of this study by CUTS on SDG-12 were discussed and deliberated in the National Consultation organised by CUTS International in partnership with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) in New Delhi on March 18, 2021.

During the inaugural session, Rene Van Berkel, UNIDO Representative, Regional Office in India, said, "SDGs are very interconnected. SGDs are like a dice with 17 sides, we cannot move on any side without moving the other ones, so one cannot just pick out anyone's goal without any action on others." Cheriyan expressed concern about how neglected SDG-12 is when compared to all other goals. He claimed that SDG-12 is an orphan goal, as the goal itself is a mixed bag with many of its targets outside the control of the Ministry of Environment.

Archana Datta, SWITCH-Asia RPAC Coordinator for India, UNEP, spoke on efforts, which are being currently taken under SWITCH Asia Programme to address this concern.

The consultation underlined the need for the centre to take the lead in adopting a green public procurement policy to send a strong message to the business community and create a solid thrust to expedite the not-so-active national ecolabel 'Ecomark'. Apart from sharing best practices from the project states, this consultation deliberated on various other topics like food loss, sustainable tourism, natural resource efficiency and many more.

Meeting with Lt. Gen. Alok Kler

Lt. Gen. Alok Kler, PVSM, VSM, is General Officer-Commanding in Chief, South Western Command, Indian Army headquartered in Jaipur. George Cheriyan and Amar Deep Singh had a meeting with him on January 11, 2021, to discuss the possibilities of collaboration for promoting cycle-friendly cities and road safety. He appreciated the efforts of CUTS to promote cycling not only as fitness but also as a mode of sustainable commute. He agreed to participate in CUTS platform and also suggested involving other concerned government authorities as well.



Green Action Week Campaign

As part Green Action Week (GAW) campaign, CUTS International carried out a massive awareness in the State from September 28, 2020-January 08, 2021.

'Sharing Community' was the theme for the campaign in 2020. Since 2018, the campaign had focussed on encouraging cultures of sharing and collaboration. This year, the campaign discussed and implemented ways to bring equal and sustainable access to goods and services to benefit the people and the planet through sharing and collaboration. This campaign helped create a network of organisations working on sustainable consumption and strengthen the collective advocacy for rebuilding recovery plans that will reverse current trends and change the consumption patterns towards a more sustainable future.



Sukhpreet Bansal, Ward Councillor, Ward No. 51 of the JMC Greater, was the special guest. She said that preserving our traditional knowledge and culture can help achieve sustainable development and it is a need of the hour to preserve the traditional knowledge and practice. Ravi Tiwari, Engineer, Rajasthan State Pollution Control

Board, briefly explained the need to review the concept of development and promote ways to reduce, reuse & recycle waste materials.

Consumers were trained to imbibe the habit of sharing and 100 kitchen gardens were developed in four different communities of Jaipur. A 'Wall of Kindness' was set up in each community where people can put their used and unused household items like clothes, Crockery items, books etc. to share with other community members. On the occasion of Stakeholder' Consultation, the best woman kitchen gardeners were awarded with a token of appreciation and memento during the campaign.

(<https://bit.ly/3fC5fmz> & <https://bit.ly/3hAT0Jz>)

Ensuring Renewed Focus of Government on Road Safety in 2021

CUTS, in collaboration with the Centre for Environment and Development (CED), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, organised a webinar on 'Ensuring Renewed Focus of Government of Kerala on Road Safety in 2021: Opportunities and Challenges' on January 12, 2021.

CUTS in collaboration with CUTS Bhilwara team organised a district level road safety workshop in Bhilwara on January 18, 2021 on the occasion of the start of the National Road Safety Month from January 18, 2021 to February 17, 2021. The workshop was an official part of the road safety calendar of the district road safety events of the month. In the workshop, district transport officials & representatives, police officials, medical officials, NGO representatives, and around 60 participants took part in the workshop. The event was well covered by the local news-papers as well.



K R Jyotilal, Principal Secretary, Transport, Kerala, inaugurated the webinar. Sibbu K Itty, Joint Transport Commissioner, T Elangovan, Former Executive Director, Kerala Road Safety Authority and B.G. Sreedevi, Former Director, National Transportation Planning and Research Centre were speakers. More than 70 participants participated.

CUTS, in collaboration with the Institute of Public Health (IPH), Bengaluru, organised a half-day webinar on 'Ensuring Renewed Focus of Government of Karnataka on Road Safety in 2021: Opportunities and Challenges' on March 03, 2021, on zoom platform. Bhaskar Rao, IPS, ADGP- Police, Railways,



Government of Karnataka, J. Gyanendra Kumar, Director, Road Safety Authority, Government of Karnataka, M Narayana, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Traffic East Division, Government of Karnataka and G Gururaj, Director, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru were the speakers.

ACTIVITIES





Capacity Building Programme on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

A capacity-building workshop on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) was organised at Jaipur on February 01-02, 2021. Total 23 participants attended the training, including 13 CUTS and 10 other CSOs from various states. Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay, Director, Participatory Research in Asia, and his colleague Yashvi Sharma facilitated the training programme and delivered various sessions. The training schedule was finalised in consultation with PRIA. Cheriyan highlighted the need for such training programmes in the future.

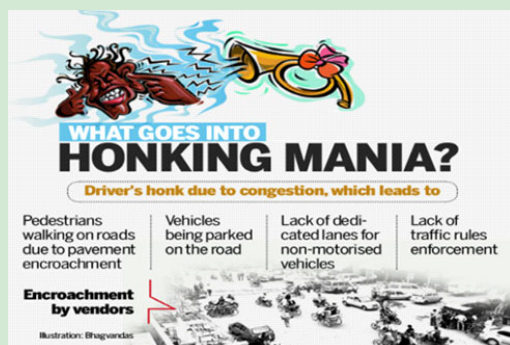
<https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/report-on-capacity-building-workshop-for-csos.pdf>



CUTS Campaign Against Honking

Jaipur holds a population of 3,653,927 and is a vehicular population of 2,249,000. At the moment, it is struggling with loud noises of horns. Such noises add to noise pollution and irritate road users, which often results in road rage.

When looking at other foreign cities, there is hardly a honking habit among drivers. While taking the example of buses, especially those operated by Rajasthan State Road Transport Corporation, it has been seen that buses are equipped with air horns, which use compressed air to create a loud noise. Big trucks and emergency services vehicles use air horns to alert other drivers to their presence, as do trains and ships. Air horns are used at sports events since their volume level is high enough to be heard over loud audiences of fans. But when the normal city buses or the roadways buses use such horns, it becomes problematic, not only to other road users but also for the residents of those roads, from where these buses ply.



There are regulations available in various laws under which these horns are strictly prohibited, but its compliance is almost negligible. The details of which are: Rule 5A (1) of the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000; Section 194 F of the New Motor Vehicles Act, 2019; Section 190 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988; Rule 23 of the Motor Vehicles (Driving) Regulations, 2017; Section 268 (18) of Noise Pollution Control under the Indian Penal Code, 1860; Section 133 and 134 of Noise Pollution Control Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. As part of its

campaign outline, CUTS has started advocacy with authorities through research to find out the existing/available regulations in different country laws. Besides, CUTS will also use social media and networking for mass mobilisation under the campaign.



- Amar Deep Singh attended a ‘Big Tobacco Tiny Targets,’ a study released by VHA and Consumer Voice at New Delhi on January 12, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh and Simi TB attended a 6th Technical Webinar on “Laboratory Assessment of Trans Fats in Oils, Fats and Foods-Gaps and Plan of Action” at New Delhi on January 13, 2021.
- Simi TB attended a technical webinar ‘7th Overview of Transfat, Replacement Options for Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils (PHVOs) and Reformulation of Packaged Foods’ organised by FSSAI and Eat Right India Movement on January 14, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh and Simi TB attended a webinar organised by Consumers International on ‘Sustainable Consumption on January 20, 2021.
- George Cheriyan participated in the Stakeholder Consultation on Front of Packed Labelling (FoPL) for HFSS at FSSAI, New Delhi on January 20, 2021.
- Simi TB attended a United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) webinar on topic ‘Data and Statistics for the Climate and SDG Agenda’ on January 21 2021.
- Simi T B and Amit Babu attended a webinar organised by Kerala Road Safety Authority as a part of 32nd National Road Safety Event on January 23, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh and Simi T B attended a Dialogue on Labelling Initiatives and the Issue of Product Lifetime Extension on January 26, 2021.
- Simi T B attended a webinar ‘Why Think Tanks Matter in Times of Crisis’ organised by Think Tanks & Civil Societies Program, The Lauder Institute, The University of Pennsylvania on January 28, 2021.
- Amit Babu attended a webinar on MoRTH Safer Roads/Black Spots Symposium on organised by Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways (MoRTH) on February 03, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh participated an online launch of Mile Access Report by Aapti Institute in partnership with Omidyar Network India on February 05, 2021.
- Simi T B and Amar Deep Singh attended World Sustainable Development Summit, the annual flagship event of The Energy and Resources Institute on February 10-13, 2021.
- George Cheriyan, Madhu Sudan Sharma, Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu attended a webinar on ‘Road Safety in Tamil Nadu’ organised by Citizen consumer and civic Action Group on February 18, 2021.
- Amit Babu attended a webinar on Road Safety in Maharashtra organised by Maharashtra Transport Department in collaboration with the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety on February 18, 2021.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on “Key Messages for Consumer Information on Plastic Packaging”, organised by Consumers International and the UN Environment Programme on February 19, 2021.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on Partnership Platforms-national mechanisms for advancing SDG implementation organised by UNDESA and The Partnering Initiative on February 23, 2021.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on E-Waste Management in India: Challenges and Agenda, organised by Centre for Science and Environment on February 26, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh attended National Consultative Roundtable Dialogue on Reporting and Monitoring of SDG 12 organised by The Energy and Resources Institute with United Nations Environment Programme through the European Union funded SWITCH-Asia RPAC on March 02, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh attended a Road Safety Coalition Media Working Group meeting organised by Global Road Safety Programme on March 03, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena and Amit Babu attended the online event ‘CSC Bridging the Digital Divide in Rural Areas’ conducted by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Jaipur on March 04, 2021.
- George Cheriyan, Satyapal Singh and Deepak Saxena attended a webinar on ‘Front-of-Pack Labeling on Packaged Foods High in Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS)’ hosted by Centre for Science and Environment on March 04, 2021, wherein Cheriyan was one of the key panellists.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on ‘Sustainable Urban Water Management – Challenges and Opportunities in Mainstreaming Climate Adaptation,’ Centre for Science and Environment India on March 05, 2021.
- George Cheriyan participated in the webinar on grants programme for India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Bangladesh, BIGRS 2020-2025 hosted by IFRC held on March 09, 2021 and spoke briefly about the CUTS interventions in India under RoSA III project supported by GRSP.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on Consumers International World Consumer Rights Day Webinar on plastic wastes, recycling etc. on March 09, 2021.
- George Cheriyan participated in the webinar on ‘Commemorating World Consumer Rights Day 2021: Antibiotic Resistance and Consumers’ organised by ReAct Asia-Pacific on March 15, 2021. Cheriyan made a presentation on ‘Efforts to Eliminate Trans fats in Packaged Foods in India’.
- Satyapal Singh attended a webinar on Launch of the Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2021 organised by UNESCAP on March 16, 2021.
- George Cheriyan attended and participated in the 3rd meeting of FSSAI on FoPL held at FSSAI, Delhi on March 17, 2021.



- Amar Deep Singh attended webinar 'Development sector: Adapting to the new ecosystem in the COVID-19 era' organised by UN Global Compact Network India on March 19, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh participated in a webinar 'Re-Form: Lessons for Urban Governance Futures from the Pandemic' organised jointly by The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Scaling City Institutions for India Initiative at the Centre for Policy Research on March 22, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh attended a webinar on 'Water And MGNREGA: Transforming India' organised by Centre for Science and Environment India on March 22, 2021.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on 'Eco-labels: How can they be scaled up, streamlined and used to drive sustainable consumption and production?' organised by the United Nations Environment Programme and the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership on March 23, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh attended online webinar of Indo Africa Summit 2021 organised by IMC Chamber of Commerce and CNBC News on March 24, 2021.
- Simi T B and Amit Babu attended a webinar on 'Executive Training Course for Policymakers on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs' by UNOSD on March 24, 2021.
- Simi T B attended a webinar on India Progress in combating Climate Change through Renewable Energy', organised by TERI ENVIS Resource Partner on March 26, 2021.
- George Cheriyan participated in the video chat "Discussion on Facebook Policy Initiative - HFSS Products" organised by Facebook's Content Policy team on March 26, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh attended a Global Webinar Series on Communications on best practices for hosting journalism workshops, hosted by Global Health Advocacy Incubator on March 30, 2021.
- Rajdeep Pareek attended a webinar organised by Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture & Technology on 'Climate Resilient Agriculture for Food and Health Security' on April 16, 2021.
- George along with the team attended and participated in the webinar on "Overview of technical issues related to FOPL" on April 19, 2021, hosted by GHAI and moderated by Vandana Shah.
- Satyapal Singh attended a Global Webinar Series on Communications on "Getting the most out of Road Safety Week Confirmation" hosted by Global Health Advocacy Incubator on April 28, 2021.
- George Cheriyan, Madhu Sudan Sharma, Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu attended a Road Safety Coalition partners meeting organised by GRSP to discuss the issues on road safety on April 29, 2021.

Upcoming Events/Project Activities

- CUTS-SSNC-ProOrganic Bridge Year Activities, 2021 as per the Work Plan
- CUTS-Govt of India-MoRTH, 2021 Project Activities as per the Work Plan
- CUTS-GRSP-ROSA Activities (Extended Phase III)
- UN Road Safety Week 2021 (May 17-23)
- CII/HUL-CUTS Campaign for Safe Food Practices in Rajasthan
- CUTS-GHAI on Consumer-Friendly FoPL in India
- CUTS-Department of Finance, Government of Rajasthan-Perception Survey on Public Procurement in Rajasthan
- CUTS-The Asia Foundation-Reviving Rajasthan City Mayors Learning Platform (RCMLP) by Organising a Mayors' Conference
- CUTS-I-CAP-Online Training on e-Procurement

CART at Social Network

- CART is managing four FB pages, one each for MyCity, Insight into the Indian States (I3S), ProOb & CoPSA (Community of Practice on Social Accountability), GSK and three dedicated web portals for (ProOb), COPSA and I3S.
- CART has a Twitter account with link: <https://twitter.com/CUTSCART> and Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cutsintcart>
- Besides, CART is also responsible for moderating two google groups:
CUTSConsumersUp: Consumer Empowerment in India to take the issues of consumer protection forward
CUTSGovForum: Discuss news and views on Governance issues and challenges in India



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

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, India, Ph: 91.141.5133259, 2282821, Fx: 91.141.4015395
Email: cart@cuts.org, Web: www.cuts-international.org/cart
Also at Delhi, Calcutta and Chittorgarh (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland) and Washington DC (USA).