Consumer Dialogue

Volume XI, Issue 2, May-August, 2020

E-newsletter

CUTS Response to COVID 19-Awareness Campaign on Good Hygienic Practices

umerous people from rural areas of Rajasthan were benefitted from the awareness campaign launched by CUTS International, as part of its COVID 19 response activities organised in July

Under the campaign, in addition to educating the target population through various means, sanitising kits consisting of materials such as masks, sanitisers, soaps, etc. were also distributed. Hindustan Unilever Ltd. also contributed 5000 soaps free of cost, which was distributed to the

participants. Experts from health departments in respective districts interacted with villagers keeping social distancing into account.

"In the context of increasing cases of COVID-19, the purpose of the campaign was to educate people residing in villages, hamlets, mainly the rural population about good hygienic practices, physical distance maintaining habits, providing tips for safe food practices and other basic health tips. The public was apprised of the need to remain alert, follow all health protocols and save them from getting infected", said George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International.



He further stated that people are not taking this pandemic seriously, especially in rural areas. They are moving around without wearing masks, the crowd is gathering in marriages and other functions, providing a conducive environment for the virus to spread. Therefore, there is a need to make people aware of measures to prevent this virus spread, so that they can save themselves, their families, and the community from this pandemic.

The state-level launch of the activities was held in Chittorgarh and events were held in various districts. Various dignitaries such as Ankit Kumar Singh, District Collector, Banswara; Mukesh Kalal, Additional District Collector Chittorgarh; Sarita Singh, Additional Superintendent of Police Chittorgarh; Sanjeev Sharma, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Kota; Ratan Lal Regar, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Jodhpur; Sanket Modi, Deputy Labour Commissioner, Bhilwara; B L Jat, Scientist, KVK, Dausa released the IEC materials of the campaign during various functions and attended events along with sarpanches, representatives from gram panchayats, representatives from the Health Department, ANM (Auxiliary Nursing Midwives) and Asha Sahyogini workers, community leaders, representatives of partner organisations and CUTS staff.

Detail report can be viewed at:

https://cuts-cart.org/pdf/cuts-covid-19-response-awareness-campaign-report.pdf



INSIDE

ACTIVITIES

IMPORTANT

DECISIONS

UPCOMING

ACTIVITIES

VISITS

JUDGEMENTS/

REPRESENTATION/



CUTS CART



ACTIVITIES PARTIES

Corona Pandemic Era is an Opportunity for Organic Products/Farming



webinar was organised by 'CUTS', Jaipur, with the theme 'Role of Organic Products/ Organic Farming in the Corona Era'.

Deepak Saxena welcoming the speakers and participants cited some examples, which showed that there is a huge and substantial growth in many big and noted organic product stores of the country, especially in cities like Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai. Saxena said that the demand for organic farming products has increased phenomenally during the Corona period, which is a good opportunity for organic farming in the country.

S K Sharma, Zonal Director, Research, Agriculture Research Station (MPUAT), Udaipur provided information about the importance of organic farming products. He said that organic farming is the basis of lifestyle. Today, consumers are missing these organic products in the market very much during the pandemic period because they have started understanding the importance of these especially at the time when they felt the need of enhancing their immunity. But the sad part is that there is hardly organic products available. Sharma insisted on integrated farming.

Rohit Jain, Secretary, Organic Farming Association of India said that organic farming is providing a great opportunity to both consumers and farmers in moving towards self-sufficiency and making them self-reliant. Jain said that this opportunity can be beneficial from the tourism point of view as well.

A K Sharma, Principal Scientist, Kajri, Jodhpur said that today the organic product is not available in the market as per the demand. As the farmer himself is a consumer, so he should realise and start doing organic farming seriously and if he does it then it will help in increasing the immunity capacity of 60 percent people. Sharma quoted an interesting fact that when the farmer uses pesticides during cultivation, then almost 90 percent of pesticides are left as unused and their leftovers spread causing various health ailments. He insisted on using new techniques for organic farming, which should be at par with the international norms.

Virendra Parihar, Programme Producer, Doordarshan Kendra, Jaipur, said that today's success stories of farmers conducting farming are showcased through various means of communication. It is due to the medium of communication that the saga of organic farmers has reached different sections of society. It is this context, organic farmers of the state have been awarded Padma Shri. The media will continue to play a pivotal role in disseminating successful stories of farmers to society at large.

Rajdeep Pareek, Programme Officer, CUTS, gave a vote of thanks to all the speakers and participants.







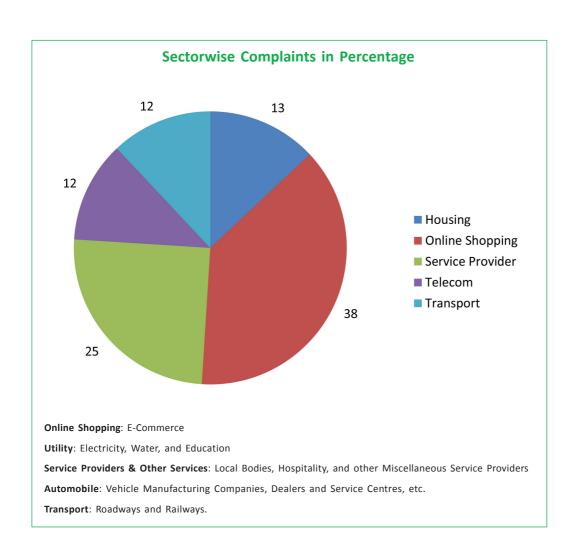
Grahak Sahayta Kendra, Jaipur

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 on consumer-related issues. Besides, 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 the period of May-August, 2020, the status of complaints and advisories received at GSK is as shown in the below graph:



IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS/ DECISIONS



COVID Pandemic is Made to Order for Gig Ecosystem

India has experimented with the gig ecosystem for social protection in the last decade and a half under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) by providing intermittent or short-duration work available on demand.

(Financial Express, May 04, 2020) https://snip.ly/fen6a3





Mitigate Road Crash Deaths during National Lockdown in Rajasthan

CUTS International along with its partners has been maintaining a 'Road Crash Tracker' to document road crash deaths and traffic violations during the lockdown from March 25 until now. Road crashes killed 1,51,417 people in 2018

https://bit.ly/2WLIC7M; https://bit.ly/3cPpdav; https://bit.ly/2LJQ1Nz; https://bit.ly/3dULmVc

CUTS' Support to Vulnerable Community Dealing with COVID-19

Ever since the lockdown was announced on March 25, 2020, CUTS Centre for Human Development (CHD) is contributing to the fight against COVID-19. The Centre and its networkers are disseminating information, awareness along with the distribution of relief materials mainly in Chittorgarh, Bhilwara, Banswara, and Pratapgarh districts of Rajasthan.



https://bit.ly/2LVCym2



Improve Immunity with Transfat-free Diet to Beat COVID 19

COVID-19 penetrates more into people with low immune power. While food or dietary supplements cannot prevent or cure COVID-19 infection, a good regular intake of healthy diet aids in building one's immune system, help stay healthy and fight the disease.

(The Edition, May 28, 2020) https://snip.ly/867ufd

Will Power Discoms Ever Become 'Aatmanirbhar'?

Distribution companies or Discoms often cited as the weakest link in the Indian power sector, have been the focal point of power sector reforms for decades now. Thus, self-reliance or 'Atmanirbharta' for the power distribution sector in India needs to be explored strategically if the financial sustainability of Discoms is to be achieved.

(ET EnergyWorld, May 29, 2020) https://snip.ly/ye9px9





Ban Tobacco Products to Fight COVID-19

'World No Tobacco Day' is celebrated around the world every year on May 31. This yearly celebration, informs the public on the dangers of using tobacco.

http://snip.ly/27vrhg





Food Safety: A Shared Responsibility

It is undeniable that food safety and nutrition are global challenges. Purchasing and eating habits have undergone drastic changes across the globe over the last two decades and new food production, processing, and distribution techniques have developed to reflect this change.

https://snip.ly/5srwi9





Needed a Bicycle Renaissance to Promote Environment-Friendly Road Culture

Due to restrictions of vehicle movements during the lockdown, the pollution level in cities across the world drastically reduced, which triggered discussions regarding lockdown to be an effective option for controlling air pollution.

(South Asia Monitor, July 20, 2020) https://bit.ly/32vK9Bq

How the new Consumer Protection Act Empowers Consumers?

The new amended Act introduces the concept of product liability as well as brings e-commerce within its ambit. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, that came into effect on 20 July, broadens the definition of a consumer and provides her with a wider range of powers by recognising online transactions as well as provides the ability to institute complaints from the place of residence or work.

(The Quint, July 21, 2020) https://snip.ly/x2eceh





Safeguarding Interests of Consumers During COVID

CUTS International hosts a webinar on Competition Enforcement for Business Collaborations during COVID19. While addressing the participants, Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS said that these are unprecedented times, in all ways, and we must always keep at the back of our mind that who is getting the benefit – is it the consumers or the businesses?

(The PageOne Asia, August 21, 2020) https://tinyurl.com/y44jd921 Glimpses of some more ACTIVITIES



Biodiversity-Time for Nature

UTS observed World Environment Day by organising a webinar by using the virtual platform of Zoom on June 05, 2020. It was attended by more than 60 participants mainly representatives of civil society organisations across the country. The webinar witnessed the presence of speakers like Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International; Anubha Prasad, National Coordinator, PAGE (Partnership for Action on Green Economy), UNEP, India; Maria Rydlund, Senior Policy Advisor (Tropical

Forest), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Stockholm; Naomi Scott-Mearns, Sustainable Consumption Manager, Consumers International, London and Balakrishna Pisupathi, Chairperson, FLEDGE & Regional Vice-Chair of IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (for South and Southeast Asia).

The welcome address was given by George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International. Explaining about the World Environment Day and the importance of this year's theme, he highlighted that the year 2020 is a critical year for nations' commitments to preserving and restoring biodiversity because it marks the end of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity (2011-2020).



Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International delivering the opening address on "Why biodiversity conservation is necessary for dealing with the Pandemic" opined that biodiversity imbalance happens due to consumption patterns and lifestyle and shared anecdotes about the 1992 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

Anubha Prasad, National Coordinator, PAGE (Partnership for Action on Green Economy), UNEP, India spoke about the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity. She said one million species are now threatened with extinction worldwide. One of the main reasons for species' loss is changes in land and sea use, unsustainable resource consumption, direct exploitation of organisms (like hunting or fishing), climate change, and pollution. Biodiversity is fundamental for ecosystems, for human beings.

Maria Rydlund, Senior Policy Advisor (Tropical Forest), Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), Stockholm explained land-use change and its implication on biodiversity and humans regarding the pandemic. She said the biodiversity crisis is as big as climate change and is also very important for the economy.

Naomi Scott-Mearns, Sustainable Consumption Manager, Consumers International, London explained about consumers and biodiversity. She pointed out that today people are looking for a little inspiration on how to make better environmental choices. According to Google Trends, over the past 90 days, people have searched more "How to live a sustainable lifestyle" and this has increased by more than 4,550 percent.

Balakrishna Pisupathi, Chairperson, FLEDGE & Regional Vice-Chair of IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (for South and Southeast Asia) explained nature-based solutions. In 2020, everything is centred around biodiversity and nature conservation. But despite so many works, biodiversity is losing at a great speed. Evidence on the ground suggests a very wide gap between the policy and programme intentions and reality. Land degradation and unsustainable consumption practices remain a challenge.

ProOrganic II Intervention Enters Fourth Year

After the successful completion of the third year of ProOrganic II, the fourth year activities started from July 16, 2020, though a bit late due to a pandemic situation, which resulted into a loss of three and half months delay. But, despite the challenging and trying times, there doesn't seem to be any loss of energy and dedication among the field force and the activities took off with full swing and with high energy in all the ten districts of the project.

So far, as many as 56 Village Level Awareness Meetings, four Knowledge Sharing Meetings on Community Seed Bank System and one Block Level Awareness Meeting got accomplished in a span of just one and half month i.e. upto August, 2020. These activities were organised with full covid 19 protocol and advisories.



Pandemic Offers Countries an Opportunity to Build Recovery Plans

The COVID19 pandemic will have severe negative impacts on achieving the targets of most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, while unlocking and reconnecting, pandemic offers countries an opportunity to build recovery plans that will reverse current trends and change the consumption and production patterns towards a more sustainable future, experts said in an International webinar organised by CUTS on 'SDG-12: Will the Pandemic Slowdown the Progress of Meeting the Target' on August 26, 2020.

India and its states are taking action towards Sustainable Consumption and Production



(SCP) which is a Goal 12 of SDGs. However, many of those achievements are not being reported, and this could be giving a wrong image of the nation's merits and efforts towards SCP, said Archana Datta, Project Coordinator for India for SWITCH-Asia (RPAC), UN Environment Programme India Office. Switch Asia is actively supporting India on SDG12 monitoring and reporting. She further said that the pandemic has *exposed our* system's *weaknesses*, *and* meeting targets of SDG is no more the responsibility of the *government*, *but it also* shifts to the private players and the citizens of the country.

In the opening address, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS said, the Asia-Pacific region is unlikely to meet any of the SDGs without concerted efforts by all stakeholders. Conditions in 2030 are predicted to be worse on 20 percent of SDG indicators than the status in 2015. The region is struggling to achieve progress in SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production) and SDG 13 (climate action) the region is not even moving in the right direction.

Eva Eiderström, Director, Department of Ecolabelling and Green Consumption, SSNC, Stockholm, stated that climate change is the indicator of consumption patterns of society as a whole. It was also highlighted that the circular economy still needs to be developed and institutionalised. Its focus also seems to be less on the reduction of total use of resources and more on recycling.

Usha Titus, Principal Secretary, Department of Environment, Government of Kerala acknowledged that Kerala is top in overall SDG ranking, but is certainly not on top with regards to SDG 12. Joy Elamon, Director General, Kerala Institute of Local Administration underlined the importance of empowering local government and integrating various departments for achieving the SDG 12 targets. More than 100 participants from 23 states of India and 12 countries, including representatives of UNCTAD, UNEP, UN-ESCAP, and ASEAN secretariat, civil society organisations, academics attended the webinar.



Glimpses of some more ACTIVITIES



India Should be Free from Transfatty Acids India by 2022

national webinar was organised on 'Eliminating TFAs from India by 2022: Challenges and Way Forward' on August 06, 2020. Sunil Bakshi, Head (Codex/Regulations/International Cooperation), FSSAI, New Delhi; Eram S. Rao, Associate Professor, Food Technology, Bhaskaracharya College of Applied Sciences, University of Delhi; Rachita Gupta, National Professional Officer, Nutrition at WHO Country Office for India and Lopa Ghosh, India Country Coordinator, Global Health Advocacy Incubator, New Delhi were the key speakers.



George Cheriyan moderated the webinar, which was attended by around 65 delegates from across the country, including health experts, representatives from national and international organisations, industry representatives, FSSAI, ICMR, Indian Medical Association, Academic and Research Institutions from more than 10 states actively participated in the webinar.

Sunil Bakshi, Head (regulations/Codex/International Cooperation), of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), stated that though the pandemic and the lockdown had slow down the process a little bit, he expressed the confidence that as committed, India will eliminate the transfat by January 01, 2022. He said the Food Safety and Standards (Food Product Standards and Additives) Regulation 2011 amended in 2019 is cleared by the scientific panel and will be notified soon.

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International said, people with comorbidity and pre-existing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are more vulnerable and at higher risk of getting infected by the COVID 19 virus. Referring to a WHO study he said, people with co-morbidity like Cardio Vascular Diseases (CVDs), are having 6 times more chances of getting infected by the Coronavirus and 12 times a high chance of losing their life. Even in normal situations, 61 percent of total deaths in India annually are attributed to NCDs.

Eram Rao, Associate Professor (Food Technology) at University Delhi provided a detailed overview of industrially-produced trans fat acids, their physical composition and properties, sources of transfatty acids, and different alternative approaches to eliminating trans-fatty acids from all foods.

Rachita Gupta, National Professional Officer, Nutrition, WHO, Delhi said the REPLACE action package of WHO provides a strategic approach to eliminating industrially-produced trans fat from national food supplies, with the goal of global elimination by 2023.

Lopa Ghose, India Country Coordinator, Global Health Advocacy Incubator also appreciated the regulatory reforms being done by FSSAI and she shared the global best practices of eliminating the industrially produced trans-fat from their food systems.

- Deepak Saxena and Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended a webinar on the Internet of Things (IoT): Trends, Security Challenges, and Solutions organised by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Bhopal on August 28, 2020.
- Madhu Sudan was one of the discussants in a city-level dialogue on 'Bus and Public Transportation Services' organised by Centre for Environment Education (CEE), Pune on August 28, 2020. He spoke about last-mile connectivity issues etc.
- Deepak Saxena and Satyapal Singh attended an online introduction meeting on 'Digital Payments and Financial Inclusion', organised by Carnegie India on August 27, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena attended an online Open House Discussions on 'Regulation of International Mobile Roaming Services' organised by TRAI, HO, New Delhi on August 27, 2020.
- Simi T B attended a webinar organised by UNEP's One Planet Network SPP Programme on 'Sustainable Public Procurement 2.0 for Accelerating Sustainable Growth in the Asia Pacific' on August 27, 2020.
- George Cheriyan and Madhu Sudan participated in a Virtual Stakeholder Validation Workshop of India: Country Procurement Assessment Report, on August 27, 2020. More than 250 people participated.
- George Cheriyan and Aradhana Gupta attended a National Webinar Series on Consumer Protection
 Act 2019, Rule & Regulations organised by the Chair on Consumer Law & Practice, National Law
 School of India University, Bangalore during August 21-26, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena, Rajdeep Pareek, Dharmendra Chaturvedi, and Nimisha Sharma attended an online discussion on 'Successful Organic Farming-Myths and Solutions' organised by Krishi Jagran and Agriculture World on August 16, 2020.
- George Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and Aradhana Gupta attended a dialogue on 'CPA, 2019', organised by Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), Chennai on August 10, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena and Aradhana Gupta attended a webinar on 'National Webinar on Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)', organised by MGP, Mumbai on August 08, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena and Aradhana Gupta attended a webinar on 'New CPA, 2019-Challenges and Issues', organised by the School of Legal Jurisprudence Studies of Central University of Karnataka, on August 07, 2020.
- Simi T B and Amit Babu attended a webinar on Plastic Pollution amidst COVID-19- Protector or Polluter organised by TERI, New Delhi on July 31, 2020.
- George Cheriyan had an interaction with the faculty and students of Regulatory Governance of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai on July 31, 2020, on the topic 'Food Sector Regulation in India: Role of CSOs in Functioning of FSSAI'.
- Rajdeep Pareek attended a Webinar on 'Scientific Approach to Pest Management: Shift from Molecules
 to Management Systems' organised by Green Academy and Alliance for Sustainable & Holistic
 Approach (ASHA) on July 30, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena and Rajdeep Pareek attended a Webinar on India's Organic Market: Future Trends & Opportunities' organised by Biofach India on July 23, 2020.
- George Cheriyan attended the 16th Meeting of the 'Food Hygiene, Safety Management and Other Systems Sectional Committee, FAD 15' of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), held during July 22-24, 2020. Deepak Saxena attended the meeting on July 23, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena and Aradhana Gupta attended a webinar on '5G in India Specification, Use Cases, Challenges and Action Plan', organised by TRAI, Jaipur on July 24, 2020. The webinar was chaired by U K Srivastava, Pr. Advisor, TRAI.
- George Cheriyan Deepak Saxena and Satyapal Singh attended a webinar on 'Strengthening the Collective Voice of Consumers in the Financial Sector' hosted by Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) in partnership with Consumers International on July 09, 2020.
- Deepak Saxena, Amar Deep Singh, Amit Babu and Simi T B attended a webinar on Consumer Trust in E-Commerce and the Platform Economy organised by Consumers International on July 08, 2020.
- Satyapal attended a webinar on 'There is no place like home: Cities making sustainable living a reality' organised by UNEP on July 07, 2020.
- Amar Deep and Amit Babu attended the webinar 'Secondary Resource Utilisation in Construction Sector: Towards Recourse Efficiency in Indian Cities' organised by Development Alternative on June 29, 2020.
- George Cheriyan and the team attended the commemoration webinar on World Food Safety Day, 2020 jointly organised by Zimbabwe/FAO/WHO/FIA/CZ on June 26, 2020.
- George Cheriyan, Madhu Sudan and Sharma and Satyapal Singh attended a webinar to commemorate World Food Safety Day, organised jointly by Food Stakeholders Network of Zimbabwe along with the World Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation on June 26, 2020.

REPRESENTATION



REPRESENTATION/ VISITS



- George Cheriyan attended 'Growing Social Justice, Coady Alumni Conversation' on June 25, 2020. He spoke about social justice in the context of a pandemic.
- George Cheriyan made a presentation on 'Engaging and Enhancing Consumer Protection in Financial Services', in a workshop on 'Effective Financial Consumer Protection Advocacy in Developing and Emerging Economies', organised by Consumers International/Consultative Group to Assist the Poor on June 22, 2020.
- Rajdeep Pareek attended a webinar on 'Climate Resilient Natural farming, Andhra Pradesh experience' organised by Rapid Rural Community Response on June 22, 2020.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma attended a Global Landmarks webinar organised by Consumers International on June 16, 2020.
- Aradhana attended a webinar on 'Domestic Violence: A Silent Evil Behind Closed Doors and the law to tackle it in COVID' organised by the Association of Indian Law Institute Alumni (AILIA) in Association with Indian Law Institute New Delhi on June 10, 2020.
- Amar Deep attended a webinar on 'Impact of COVID-19 on Urban Mobility' organised by The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI), on June 08, 2020. The study conducted by TERI was also presented in the webinar.
- Aradhana attended a webinar on Legal Practitioners' Colloquium on the theme 'The Legal Profession in the Age of COVID-19: The Future of Litigation & Law Firms' organised by Jindal Global Law School on June 06, 2020.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma and Satyapal Singh attended a webinar on 'World Food Safety Day' which was jointly organised by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Organisation for Animal Health, World Food Programme, and World Health Organization in Asia and the Pacific through zoom on 'Food Safety in the New Normal' on June 03, 2020.
- Deepak attended a virtual meeting organised by the Bureau of Indian Standards, Jaipur on June 02, 2020. Kanika Kalia, Regional Head chaired the meeting.
- Deepak Saxena attended a launch of a portal called 'Power Perspectives to Provide Brief Commentaries and Analyses of Important Developments in the Indian Power Sector' hosted by Prayas Energy Group, Pune on May 27, 2020.
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- Deepak Saxena, Amar Deep Singh, Simi TB, and Amit Babu attended a webinar 'Can I recycle this?' organised by The One Planet Network's Consumer Information Programme on May 13, 2020.
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- Deepak Saxena and Aradhana Gupta attended a colloquium, on 'Lawyering & Corporate Legal Profession in the Post Corona Period' organised by O P Jindal Global Law School and many prominent law firms of the country and abroad on May 09, 2020.
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Upcoming Events

- ProOrganic II activities as per the work plan
- PME (Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation project activities) as per the work plan
- SDG-12 project activities as per the work plan
- ROSA project activities as per the work plan
- RESOLVE project activities as per the work plan
- GAW, Rajasthan activities as per the schedule
- GAW, India activities as per the schedule

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

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