

Consumer Dialogue

Volume XII, Issue 2, May-August, 2021

E-newsletter

Sustainable Consumption and Production: A Consumer Perspective

In partnership with the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), CUTS conducted this study mainly looking at Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-12 from a consumer perspective based on the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection (UNGCP). In this context, two State Level Stakeholder Consultations were organised at Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, respectively.

Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh's step to achieve SDGs means a lot to India, as the State has the largest population in India. Therefore, Uttar Pradesh must develop effective methods for implementing, monitoring and measuring the progress of SDGs.

Learning, sharing and networking should be promoted among like-minded stakeholders across the State and beyond. These were some of the main highlights from State Level Stakeholder Consultation organised by CUTS in collaboration with Consumer Guild, Lucknow, UP at Lucknow on July 29, 2021.

Anand Mishra, Senior Officer from Department of Planning, Uttar Pradesh, said that there is an absence of an effective monitoring and data collection framework for SDG 12. Hence, efforts are being initiated by the Government of Uttar Pradesh. A K Gupta, Additional Director, Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies, discussed the best practices on sustainable consumption in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

Manjul Mishra, Assistant Director, Directorate of Environment, Uttar Pradesh, highlighted the progress of SDG 12 in the State. The consultation saw participation from various government departments, organisations working on sustainable consumption and consumer protection from Uttar Pradesh.



Himachal Pradesh

Himachal Pradesh can improve its performance on SDG-12 by documenting the best practices of different sectors and departments. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has constituted a task force on SDGs by including 15 government departments to document its best practices to improve its ranking further.

Himachal Pradesh must develop effective methods for implementing, monitoring, and measuring SDGs' progress. These were the important highlights from State Level Stakeholder Consultation organised by CUTS in partnership with the Planning Department, Government of Himachal Pradesh and Plan Foundation at Shimla on August 18, 2021.

Akshay Sood, Secretary, Department of Finance, Himachal Pradesh, stressed on the need for effective monitoring and data collection framework for SDG 12. He highlighted government's milestones and strategy to achieving SDG12.

Basu Sood, Advisor, Department of Planning, Himachal Pradesh, highlighted that consumers and corporates are important drivers of sustainable consumption and production and play a critical role in long-term growth.

Around 15 departments, including Environment, Urban Development, Tourism, Forest, Education, Medical and others, shared their department-specific progress and programmes related to the SDG12.



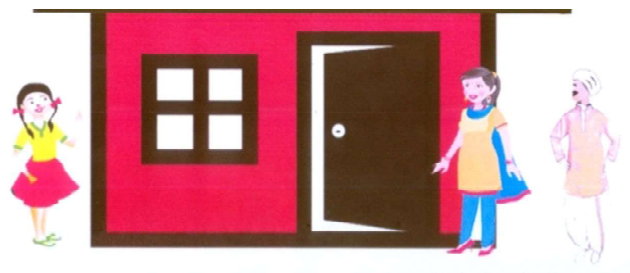
INSIDE

- ACTIVITIES
- IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS/ DECISIONS
- REPRESENTATION/ VISITS
- UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

CUTS[®]
International



CUTS CART



Grahak Sahayta Kendra, Jaipur

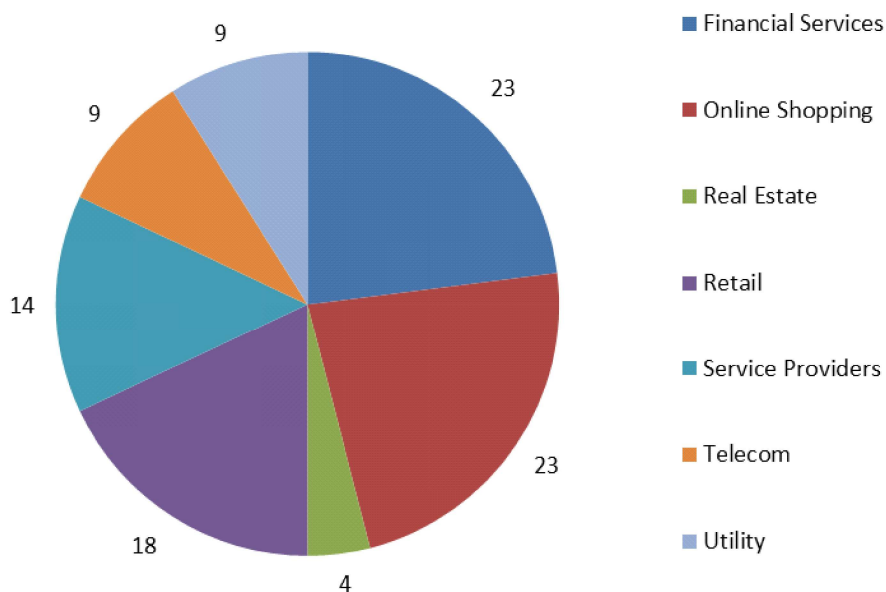
Grahak Sahayta Kendra (GSK) provides services, such as advice on consumer protection-related issues, addresses complaints, and publishes books, pamphlets, magazines, and other relevant materials in consumer-related matters. Besides, the GSK centre also handles consumer complaints through counselling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

GSK details can be accessed at:

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

During May-August, 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.

Green Steps to Heal Earth Amid the Virus

By George Cheriyan and Simi T.B.



Earth Day, celebrated every year on April 22, saw more than one billion people participate in various activities worldwide to draw attention to environmental degradation and the need for immediate action to tackle issues including loss of biodiversity, increasing pollution, etc. The theme this year is 'Restore Our Earth', and its focus is on natural processes, emerging green technologies and innovative thinking that can restore the world's ecosystems.

(Deccan Herald, May 06, 2021) <https://snip.ly/q1y9u9>

IMPORTANT
JUDGEMENTS/
DECISIONS



E-pharmacy is What the Doctor Ordered

By Pradeep S. Mehta and Ujjwal Kumar

The deadly second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has broken India's healthcare system and rampant black marketing of medicines and equipment that are in demand. It is hoped the ongoing pharmaceutical market study being conducted by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) would come out with some recommendations that could rectify unfair market practices harming consumers.

(The Hindu Business Line, May 11, 2021) <https://tinyurl.com/prxv4j7c>

Streets For Life: Global Call To Reduce Speed

By George Cheriyan and Simi T.B.

UN Global Road Safety Week (UNGRSW) is a biennial global road safety campaign hosted by WHO. It brings together individuals, governments, NGOs, corporations, and other organisations from around the world to raise awareness of road safety and make changes that will reduce the number of road deaths.

(Matters India, May 19, 2021) <https://snip.ly/4ha7e9>



Vehicular Speed Control to Prevent Road Accidents

Reducing vehicle speed can prevent road crash incidents as an average 1 km increase in vehicular speed can lead to three percent rise in such incidents, experts said.

Speaking during a webinar organised by CUTS International, a Jaipur-based NGO, as part of the 6th United Nations Global Road Safety Week, the experts underlined the importance of speed control mechanisms to prevent road accidents.

(Press Trust of India, Rajasthan, May 21, 2021) <https://snip.ly/q5biy0>

Concerted Effort Crucial for Restoring Ecosystem in South Asia

By George Cheriyan and Simi T.B.

June 05 marks World Environment Day, a day to encourage awareness and action for environmental protection. This year's theme 'Ecosystem Restoration' focuses on resetting our relation with nature and reflects the importance of protecting and restoring the planet's ecosystems and the species that inhabit them.

(South Asia Monitor, June 05, 2021) <https://snip.ly/8dviyo>





Front-of-Pack Labelling: Time for Action

By George Cheriyan and Simi T.B.

One of the leading universities in Australia recently published a study on ultra-processed foods and beverages sales in 80 countries. Findings of the study showed that from 2009-2019, the rate of sales growth of ultra-processed food and beverages was highest in lower-middle-income regions of Asia compared to the rest of the world.

(Nuffoods Spectrum, June 23, 2021) <https://snip.ly/iipb3n>



Concerns on Proposed Amendments in Consumer Protection E-Commerce Rules

The Proposed Changes Could Lead to Policy Uncertainty, Impact Investment Climate. CUTS International said the Centre should withdraw the proposed amendments in the Consumer Protection E-Commerce Rules 2020. These could lead to policy uncertainty, adversely impacting the ecosystem and the investment climate.

(The Hindu Business Line, June 23, 2021) <https://snip.ly/lprykm>



Why India Should Opt for Warning Labels

By George Cheriyan and Simi T.B.

High blood pressure, high sugar levels and obesity are the top risk factors for mortality in India. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is growing faster. It is projected to reach 30.5 and 9.5 percent among men and 27.4 and 13.9 percent among women by 2040. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are now responsible for more than 65 percent of all deaths in India (approximately six million deaths).

(Policy Circle, June 29, 2021) <https://snip.ly/jofutn>



Rajasthan is Emerging As a Leader in Renewable Energy

CUTS International and Climate Trends jointly hosted a webinar to discuss the emerging trends and energy transition of Rajasthan on June 25, 2021. "Rajasthan is emerging as a leader in the renewable energy sector. The need of the hour is to think constructively to move forward and capitalise on the huge potential of renewable energy in the State" said Rohit Gupta, Managing Director, Rajasthan Urja Vikas Nigam Limited.

(APN News, June 26, 2021) <https://bit.ly/3Ah6rFq>



Increasing Practice of Organic Production and Consumption in Rajasthan

A survey by CUTS reveals that 97.4 percent of consumers were aware that chemical input-based food products are harmful to health compared to 86 percent of the same set of consumers in 2017. Similarly, the percentage of organic farming farmers has risen to 23 from 19 percent from the same set of farmers in 2017, which is a pleasant outcome.

(Voice of Jaipur, July 02, 2021) <https://snip.ly/linmyv>

SETTING THE STANDARD



Bureau of Indian Standards Must for Public Procurement

By Shreya Nandi

The Indian Commerce and Industry Ministry is working on a proposal to mandate various government departments, ministries, and public sector undertakings to procure products certified by the national standards body, the Bureau of Indian Standards

(Business Standard, July 06, 2021) <https://snip.ly/nme6te>

IMPORTANT JUDGEMENTS/ DECISIONS



Adopt Health Star Rating

An Interview by Vivek Dhar With George Cheriyan

George Cheriyan was interviewed by Skand Vivek Dhar, Executive Editor, Dainik Bhaskar, on July 09, 2021, on the status of front-of-package labels in India. This interview was published on July 10, 2021, in Dainik Bhaskar titled 'Preparation to adopt health star rating instead of warning on packaged food. the exercise of relaxa-

<https://snip.ly/4qlk4a>



Need to Understand the Importance of Haldea's Contribution

By Sucheta Dalal, Moneylife



It is only in India that a whistle-blower and a crusader, whose honesty, integrity and brilliance have saved the country billions of dollars, would be demonised when alive and recognised as the 'father of Infrastructure' when he is no more. The people of India, who are the biggest beneficiaries of his work, remain clueless about his contribution.

As an IAS officer, he worked within the system and fought his battles for the nation mainly from the inside. In the process, he had to give up the opportunity for plum postings and post-retirement sinecures that are the primary focus of most senior bureaucrats. It is important to put Gajendra Haldea's (1949-2021) contribution to the nation in perspective and his brother Prithvi Haldea has done an excellent job of collating all his work and more at <http://www.gajendrahalea.in/>.

His enormous body of work included drafting several key national and state legislation, such as Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, The Electricity Act, 2003, and three draft legislations covering regulatory reforms, public procurement and the Public Contracts (Settlement of Disputes) Bill, 2014, as well as the innumerable model agreements for various infrastructure projects are the most important.

<https://tinyurl.com/3s8exfr4>



Inculcating a Culture of Safe Food Practices in Rajasthan

CUTS launched a project on 'Safe Food Practices in Rajasthan' to increase awareness among rural masses on hygienic and clean food. It also aims to promote food safety awareness building, protection from contamination, COVID 19 and healthy food practices among the community.

This CUTS initiative will be instrumental in creating a model of 'Behaviour Change Communication' regarding good food hygiene, preventing food-borne illness, diarrhea and promoting a healthy lifestyle among communities in selected 12-gram *panchayats* in the targeted two districts of Chittorgarh and Bhilwara.



CUTS organised a Launch-cum-Training of Trainers (ToT) programme organised to kick start a three-month campaign at Chittorgarh on July 06, 2021. In a run-up to it, the second ToT was conducted on July 07, 2021 at Bhilwara. During the period, 12-gram *panchayat* level awareness meetings with women and adolescent girls; and four block level awareness meetings with children were organised.

The campaign focuses on the entire chain of food business operators, viz. retail food establishments, food service/delivery/takeaways, and food handlers like women who cook food at home and small street food vendors in selected districts.

<https://tinyurl.com/5b4kwftt>

<https://tinyurl.com/36c48utw>

Bridge Year of ProOrganic Kick Starts (Consultant's Orientation Meeting)

The Consultants Orientation was organised on July 02, 2021, to discuss the bridge year project's work plan and implementation. Cheriyan welcomed all the project consultants and briefly provided an overview of the outcomes and achievements from the last four years under ProOrganic II.

Cheriyan thanked all the consultants for accomplishing an enormous number of almost 400 activities on the ground level during last year. He provided a brief overview of three main components on the principles of which activities were implemented.

Cheriyan also urged the need to document success stories of farmers at a constant level. It motivates other farmers and boosts the morale of a farmer whose story has been documented.

<https://tinyurl.com/49hzhss>



Ensuring Compliance of Good Samaritan Guidelines

Three workshops on awareness on 'Good Samaritan Guidelines' under the Motor Vehicle Act, 2019 under the MoRTH project of 2021 were organised in Ajmer on July 22, 2021; in Kota on July 28, 2021 and in Udaipur on August 26, 2021.

In Ajmer, Indrajeet Singh, Joint Director, Medical and Health Department of Rajasthan was the chief guest. Besides, Arjun Singh Rathore, RTO, Ajmer; Virendra Singh, DTO, Bhilwara; Parth Sharma, S P Traffic, Ajmer and Shaitan Singh Rathore, a resident doctor in Trauma Care, JLN Hospital were the key speakers on the subject before an attendance of around 33 participants. George Cheriyan, Director CUTS along with Deepak Saxena, Assistant Director, CUTS and Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Programme Officer attended the event on behalf of CUTS. Similarly in Kota, Rajendra Singh Kavia, DSP, Traffic; Dr Kulwant Gaur, Coordinator 108 Ambulance Service and Bhuvnesh Kumar, a lawyer were present as speakers. In the third workshop in Udaipur, Dr Amanendra Sharma HoD of Trauma ward of Maharana Bhopal Hospital; Bhaiya Lal, Deputy S P, Traffic; Prakash Singh Rathore, RTO and Narayan Choudhary, CEO of Aadhar Foundation were the key speakers. Ranveer Mehta, Coordinator, Red Cross Society, Udaipur also spoke during the event. All the three workshops had good participation and fruitful discussions.



ACTIVITIES





Ensuring Road Safety on the Streets through Speed Management

A webinar was organised on the occasion of the UN Global Road Safety on May 20, 2021. UN Global Road Safety Week is celebrated every two years. The theme of this year's week is Streets for Life and based on the Stockholm Declaration of 2020, advocating for 30 km/h speed, where people and vehicles mix.

Nalin Sinha, Country Representative, *Global Health Advocacy Incubator* (GHA), India, said that evidence and policy reform from several countries suggest that road crash injury and death can be prevented or reduced significantly. Hence, there is a need for appropriate legislation backed by effective enforcement.

Bhargab Maitra, Professor, Civil Engineering, IIT Kharagpur, spoke about the Speed Facility Development in India and underlined the importance of traffic accessibility functions to ensure road safety.

Gaurav Hariom Gupta, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Road, Transport & Highways (MoRTH), Government of India, acknowledged that data collection of road accidents had become an issue and MoRTH is working on this area. An integrated Road Accident Database is being developed, which will enable the collection of accident data on the spot. This will help in analysing the causes of road accidents and help reduce fatalities. This real-time data collection is already implemented in six states.

T Elangovan, Executive Director, Kerala Road Safety Authority, Government of Kerala, spoke about speed control and management-related measures taken by Kerala.

Virendra Rathore, District Transport Officer Bhilwara, Rajasthan, spoke about the key provisions of Government of India's speed notification of 2018, Indian Road Congress-00 provisions, Speed Alarming system, Crash Data Retrieval systems, Speed Limit Display System, Section 112, and 183 related provisions of MVA Act, 2019.

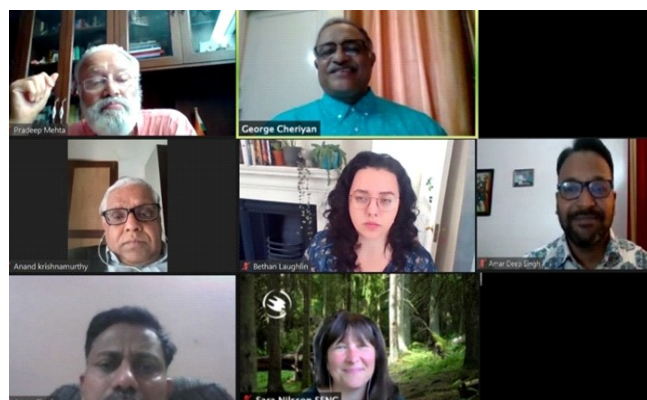


<https://tinyurl.com/23u88uya>

The Ecosystem-Challenges amid Pandemic & the Way Forward (World Environment Day)

On World Environment Day, a national-level webinar was organised on June 05, 2021. As a speaker, Sara Nilson, Programme Manager, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) spoke on the global perspective of sustainable consumption. Bethan Laughlin, Sustainable Consumption Lead, CI spoke about the ecosystem restoration and role of consumers.

K. Anand, the co-founder of Junglescapes Charitable Trust, presented a national perspective of ecosystem restoration. Aman Singh, Founder, Krapavis, highlighted grassroots-level intervention to address ecosystem degradation.



Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International, delivered opening remarks on the importance of ecosystem restoration in the context of the pandemic. Cheriyan highlighted the relevance of the webinar topic and the gravity of the situation in our country.

The virtual webinar was attended by more than 170 participants representing 23 states and 11 different countries, working on environment and sustainable development issues, agriculture sector, etc.

<https://tinyurl.com/364zhm3s>

Safe Food Now for a Healthy Tomorrow (World Food Safety Day 2021)

The World Food Safety Day (WFSD) aims to draw attention and inspire action to help prevent, detect and manage food-borne risks, contributing to food security, human health, economic prosperity, agriculture, market access and tourism.

This year's theme, '*Safe food today for a healthy tomorrow*', stresses that the production and consumption of safe food have immediate and long-term benefits for people, the planet and the economy. Recognising the systemic connections between the health of people, animals, plants, the environment and the economy will help us meet future needs.

Food safety is a shared responsibility between governments, producers and consumers. Everyone has a role to play from farm to table to ensure the food we consume is safe and healthy. Through World Food Safety Day, WHO works to mainstream food safety in the public agenda and reduce the burden of food-borne diseases globally. Food safety is everyone's business.

Earmarking on the importance of the day, CUTS observed World Food Safety Day on June 07, 2021, in a virtual mode by displaying posters with slogans relevant to the issue on social media. The team also participated in the Twitter Chat hosted by UN Statistics on June 01, 2021.



Rules Should Stick to Consumer-Facing Concerns

George Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and Simi TB attended a CUTS Roundtable on Proposed Amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 on July 02, 2021, and other CUTS staff. Moderating the session, Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS, set the tone by flagging how adding Platform-to-Business regulatory elements could disturb the simplicity of the consumer protection regime.

Saroja S, Director of Chennai-based Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG), instead wanted to emphasise "factors like sustainable consumption, packaging and carbon footprints, while building awareness about such green initiatives through consumer labelling."

Surendra Kanstiya, former Chairman of Mumbai-based Consumer Guidance Society of India, highlighted that "the proposed amendments are poorly drafted hence affecting user-readability and implementation."

Ujjwal Kumar, Policy Analyst at CUTS International, was not satisfied with the rationale provided by the government for the proposed amendment within a year of the notification of the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020.

Gowree Gokhale, Partner, Nishith Desai Associates, explained how bringing elements to 'encourage free and fair competition in the market' into the proposed amendments goes beyond the mandate of its empowering provision in the parent Act (i.e. Section 94 of Consumer Protection Act, 2019).

While echoing Gokhale's sentiments, Vivan Sharan, Partner, Koan Advisory Group, identified these proposed amendments as a "disguised industrial policy". He stated that "if we need to create a space where local retailers can flourish, then the policy decision should leverage what the large enterprises have to offer, rather than to chew them away."

Cheriyan, highlighted that the regulatory overlaps must be mitigated, and the focus should remain on 'consumers' in consumer protection legislation.



Glimpses of
some more
ACTIVITIES





- Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu attended a webinar on ‘Stakeholder engagement and partnerships during and beyond COVID-19’ organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Council 2030 Agenda Partnership Accelerator on May 03, 2021.
- Simi T B attended 15th Asia Pacific Roundtable on Sustainable Consumption and Production on ‘Facilitating Transition to Sustainable Lifestyles’ on May 11, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu attended a webinar on ‘Road Safety Challenges in India and Preparation of an Action Plan’ organised by the International Road Federation – India Chapter on May 18, 2021.
- George Cheriyan, Amar Deep Singh and Simi T. B. attended CI Global Connect Webinar on Sustainable Consumption on May 19, 2021.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma, Simi TB, Satyapal Singh and Amit Babu attended a webinar on ‘Discussion on Prescribing and Implementing of 30 kmph Speed Limit on the Indian Streets’ organised by the All India Federation of Motor Vehicle Department on May 22, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena and Simi TB attended the Consumers International webinar on ‘E-commerce’ on May 27, 2021.
- Amar Deep Singh participated as a speaker at World No Tobacco Day webinar organised by Gayatri Parivar & Credent TV on May 31, 2021. He also attended a webinar on ‘WNTD’ organised by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, New Delhi, on May 31, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena attended a webinar on ‘Financial Services’ organised by Consumers International on June 10, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena attended a webinar on ‘Consumer Protection Act, 2019’ jointly organised by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi and Consumers’ Protection Association (CPA), Agartala on June 12, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena and Amit Babu attended an online meeting on ‘Hallmarking’ organised by BIS, New Delhi, on June 22, 2021.
- Rajdeep Pareek attended a webinar on ‘Inspiring Experiences from Innovative Farmers of India’ organised by SKN Agricultural University, Jobner, on June 15, 2021.
- George Cheriyan, Deepak Saxena and Simi TB attended a webinar on the ‘Future of Strong Nutrition Profile Modelling’ for Healthy Food System in India to prevent NCD Burden, organised by Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India, Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest Pediatric and Adolescent Nutrition Society-IAP Nutrition Chapter, and Epidemiology Foundation of India (EFI) on June 04, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena attended an online training course on ‘Traffic Impact Assessment’ organised by the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, from August 01-14, 2021.
- Simi TB attended the Consumer VOICE panel discussion on the Star Rating of FoPL - Its limitations and disadvantages on August 10, 2021.
- George Cheriyan attended a Consultative Meeting organised by ReAct titled ‘Building Back Better’ and made a presentation on ‘*Changing consumer perspectives after COVID-19 and how it can affect the AMR domain*’ on August 25, 2021.
- Satyapal Singh and Simi TB participated in the webinar on ‘Role of Strong Warning Labels on Unhealthy Food Products in Protecting People’s Health’ organised by *Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India* on August 26, 2021.
- Madhu Sudan Sharma participated in the Speed Survey Dissemination webinar organised by United Way of Mumbai on August 27, 2021.
- Deepak Saxena , Dharmendra Chaturvedi, Amit Babu and Pratibha Jain attended Consumer Outreach Programmes organised by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Jaipur and Bhopal offices.



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)
- 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).

