

# CUTS in 2034

## – A Vision Document



# CUTS IN 2034

## – A VISION DOCUMENT

*From humble beginnings in 1983 as a rural development communication initiative launched through a wall newspaper Gram Gadar (village revolution), CUTS has come a long way in 25 years. Today its work spans a multi-pronged agenda targeted to the realisation of its vision of “consumer sovereignty” and mission of “consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and economic equality, within and across borders.” This Vision document tries to envision the organisation 25 years from now. It builds on the vision statement of the organisation and the various mission statements of its centres to specify a direction for the organisation’s progress over time as well as the status that is targeted for achievement in 2034.*

# CUTS IN 2034

## – A VISION DOCUMENT

Published by



**Consumer Unity & Trust Society**

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India

Ph: +91.141.2282821, Fax: +91.141.2282485

Email: [cuts@cuts.org](mailto:cuts@cuts.org), Website: [www.cuts-international.org](http://www.cuts-international.org)

Printed by

**Jaipur Printers P. Ltd.**

Jaipur

**ISBN: 978-81-8257-144-0**

© CUTS, 2010

First published in August 2010

Second and revised edition in February 2011

#1103

## CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| PREFACE .....  | 5         |
| <b>I. Introduction: Linking Future and Present</b>   |           |
| <b>Agenda to CUTS Vision .....</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>1.1 CUTS Vision: Meaning and Implications .....</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>1.2 CUTS Programme Agenda: Pathways to its Vision .....</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| 1.2.1 <i>Aspirations Originating from Vision .....</i>   | 10        |
| 1.2.2 <i>Evolutionary History: Pointer to the Future .....</i>   | 11        |
| 1.2.3 <i>Three Core Areas of Operation: Governance,<br/>Trade &amp; Development, and Regulation .....</i>                                    | 12        |
| 1.2.4 <i>Sustainability: An Emerging Concern .....</i>   | 15        |
| <b>II. Characteristics of CUTS Mission: Values,<br/>Negative List, Geographical Spread, and<br/>Consolidation of Overseas Presence .....</b> | <b>18</b> |
| 2.1 Values .....   | 18        |
| 2.2 Negative List .....  | 18        |
| 2.3 Geographical Expansion .....   | 18        |
| 2.4 Consolidation of Overseas Presence .....   | 19        |
| <b>III. Methodology to Implement RAN –<br/>Research, Advocacy and Networking .....</b>   | <b>20</b> |
| 3.1. Planning .....  | 20        |
| 3.2. Leadership and Decision Making .....  | 22        |
| 3.3. Raising Financial Resources .....   | 22        |
| <b>IV. Conclusions .....</b>   | <b>23</b> |



## PREFACE



**Pradeep S Mehta**  
Secretary General

August, 2010

From modest beginnings in 1983, CUTS has undergone immense growth both geographically and in terms of functional areas. This growth has been organic and evolutionary – marked by a refreshing spontaneity in responding to the need of the hour. What started as a consumer organisation in the traditional mould has attained uniqueness through the realisation that the consumer needs to be economically and socially empowered *via* diverse channels such as international trade, competition law and policy, independent sector regulation, economic and political governance etc.

CUTS has also distinguished itself through its stress on consumer-producer synergies for sustainable increase in consumer welfare, given that the ordinary consumer is not just a functional unit but an actual human being whose welfare and its growth depends significantly on his/her association with economic production and the income generating opportunities arising from such association.

The spawning inside CUTS of geographical and functional branches has thrown up new challenges for the leadership. While in a single office, management and staff might automatically develop understanding to work in a coordinated manner towards a common vision it is not so in an organisation such as CUTS because of its steady geographical and functional diversification over a period of time.

A decision was therefore taken by the senior management under my leadership to articulate and elaborate on the rationale underlying the CUTS Vision based upon the experiences and skills developed over time, to consolidate our energies upon them and provide guidance for their pursuit in a manner which could be followed by its diverse and geographically spread out centres.

The Vision Document, it was also envisaged, would serve the additional purpose of acquainting interested stakeholders with the organisation's thinking, goals and operational modalities.

The Vision Document is, however, far from a manual of processes. The perspectives and guidance provided through this document would be translated into concrete centre specific strategic plans over the next year. While the Vision Document charts the horizons of the organisation for the next 25 years, the strategic plans would be more short term in nature, covering a period of five years or so, with formulation not only incorporating the guidance provided in the Vision Document but also responding to contemporary challenges and the state of the environment.

The Vision Document has been developed through intensive brainstorming within the senior management aided by a well designed mechanism for almost all staff inside CUTS to communicate their feedback. At a more advanced stage, drafts have been commented on by a wide gamut of non staff CUTS associates through live interactions and correspondence.

While the Vision Document, as presented to you, is now in its finalised form we would welcome comments on it as these would be crucial in helping our programme centres develop their strategies.

Comments  
welcome at:  
[sg-cuts@cuts.org](mailto:sg-cuts@cuts.org)



## I. Introduction: Linking Future and Present Agenda to CUTS Vision

This Vision Document tries to envision the organisation 25 years from now. It builds on the vision statement of the organisation and the various mission statements of its centres to specify a direction for the organisation's progress over time as well as the status that is targeted for achievement in 2034.

The document takes into account the various developments taking place and being envisaged across the globe. Significant parts of the developing world, especially India, China and regions in Southeast Asia and Africa, are growing at a rapid and unprecedented pace. However, such growth has been accompanied by increasing inequality. Such increases, if extreme, can produce social tensions which can disrupt economic growth itself. Moreover, these are objectionable from a social justice point of view. Thus, efforts to make economic growth inclusive have to be mainstreamed into the development strategy of all developing countries.

In other words, it is imperative to ensure that such growth results in an increase in availability and quality of essential goods and services to all sections of the population, rich or poor and at affordable prices and is associated with the increase in capabilities and endowments of the lower deciles of the population. An effort to address consumer welfare from a holistic point of view, considering the consumer not only as one who consumes but who produces and owns endowments to support his consumption, helps to address the lowest denominators of economic activity. This approach ensures that growth in economic activity results in benefits for one and all. This is an approach already being promoted by CUTS through its activities and will become even more relevant in the years to come.

While promotion of such universal increases in welfare is a worthy agenda, it is essential to realise that such promotion is constrained. The last couple of decades have been witness to increased shortages of non renewable resources such as coal, oil and gas; renewable but exhaustible ones such as water; and deterioration of the environment which cradles the interaction between these and human and other life. While promotion of the universal satisfaction of basic human needs and attainment of capabilities is a laudable and imperative programme it has to be done intelligently and sustainably — overuse of non-renewable resources and renewable exhaustible ones has to be eschewed; and checks on the



**An effort to address consumer welfare from a holistic point of view, considering the consumer not only as one who consumes but who produces and owns endowments to support his consumption, helps to address the lowest denominators of economic activity ...promoted by CUTS through its activities and will become even more relevant in the years to come**

pollution of air and water through economic activity have to be institutionalised.

The aspects of inclusive growth, environmental sustainability and conservation of exhaustible energy sources are the three pillars on which sustainable economic development of a nation rests. As developing nations reach new highs in prosperity, there are certain challenges to sustainable development, as mentioned. In articulating its vision for the future, CUTS would lay great stress on promotion of sustainable development outcomes. It thus envisages a marked increase in the emphasis placed by its work agenda on environmental sustainability and energy conservation combined with a continuation and strengthening of its work programmes on holistic pursuit of consumer welfare, as described above



**...inclusive growth, environmental sustainability and conservation of exhaustible energy sources are the three pillars ...reach new highs in prosperity, there are certain challenges to sustainable development...**

It should be borne in mind that this Vision Document is not a manual for processes/methodologies to be adopted by the organisation. It specifies the objectives of the organisation and how the attainment of these objectives is being influenced by the social, economic and physical milieu of our times. Implications are drawn for the focus functional and geographical areas of the organisation. The Vision Document provides a direction for the organisation’s progress over time but is not a comprehensive plan of action. Moreover, these should not be based on dogmatic approaches. Such plans of action should involve shorter time horizons (for example, five years) and take into account contemporary circumstances and needs.



**...realisation of its vision of “consumer sovereignty” and mission of “consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and equality, within and across borders”**

### 1.1 CUTS Vision: Meaning and Implications

From humble beginnings in 1983 as a rural development communication initiative launched through a wall newspaper *Gram Gadar* (village revolution), CUTS has come a long way in 25 years. Today its work spans a multi-pronged agenda targeted to the realisation of its vision of “consumer sovereignty” and mission of “consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and equality, within and across borders.”

In simple language, the vision relates to the creation of ‘value for people’ in their diverse roles as consumers, producers and suppliers of human capital. As every citizen in an economy performs more than one and sometimes all three roles at the same time, such creation of value can and should be looked upon as a single unified mission. A more detailed explanation follows.

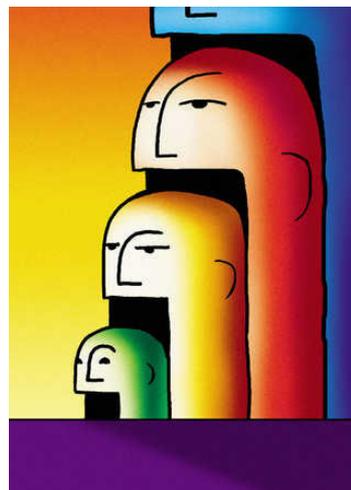
‘Consumer sovereignty’ refers to a situation in which consumers decide what gets produced and therefore consumed. While businesses steer the economy through their actions they ultimately respond to demands from consumers. Thus, consumer preferences dictate producer activities provided consumers enjoy access to accurate information on goods and services, freedom to choose among alternatives, and the right to redress and consequent compensation in case of fraud or poor quality.

The mentioned preconditions for consumer sovereignty have been formalised through adoption by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly of ‘UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection’ (UNGCP) in April, 1985, and their further amendment in July 1999. Such formalisation was sparked by the realisation that consumers often face imbalances and deficiencies in economic terms, educational levels, and bargaining power. Eight rights are incorporated in these guidelines: rights to basic needs, safety and information; right to choice; right to be heard; and right to redress, education and a healthy environment. Out of these the ‘right to basic needs’ has also been postulated through the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR).

The pursuit of true ‘consumer sovereignty’, as embodied in the simultaneous attainment of these rights, requires a holistic conception of the consumer as an earner of incomes who not only consumes certain essential services facilitated by the government but also buys priced goods and services in markets and is therefore affected by available choice, the availability of accurate information on alternatives and, as mentioned, the right to redress and compensation in the event of producer malpractice.

While organisations for the protection of consumer rights, viewed in the narrow sense as alleviation of the risk of the consumer being charged a price higher or provided quality of goods/service during delivery lower than what is justified under current economic conditions, are quite common, those which not only promote such access but also ways and means of changing economic conditions for the betterment of the consumer are rare. It is this void that CUTS seeks to fill. In doing so CUTS seeks to work out of the box and act not only as a facilitator of regulation of practices affecting consumer welfare but also as a think tank making differences to all aspects of economic policy affecting consumers.

There is thus also a convergence between the pursuit of ‘consumer sovereignty’ on behalf of all sections of society



**...CUTS seeks to work out of the box and act not only as a facilitator of regulation of practices affecting consumer welfare but also as a think tank making differences to all aspects of economic policy affecting consumers**

and that of ‘inclusive growth’ – benefits of growth should reach all sections of society and promote access by all to all essential goods and services.



**...a leading consumer organisation operating at national as well as international levels in ...felt by both consumers and organisations catering to them – a void which can be filled by CUTS**

## **1.2 CUTS Programme Agenda: Pathways to its Vision**

### **1.2.1 Aspirations Originating from Vision**

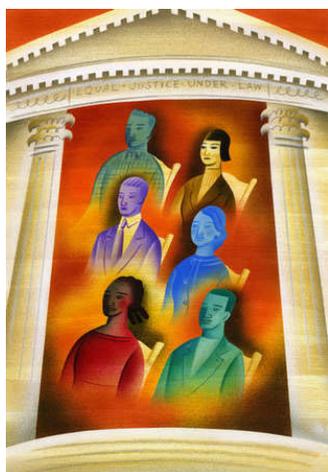
CUTS aspires to promote its ‘International NGO’ status and become a leading consumer organisation operating at national as well as international levels in the next two decades. For sometime now, the absence of an apex consumer body has been felt by both consumers and organisations catering to them – a void which can be filled by CUTS.

However, as mentioned, CUTS aims to enhance consumer welfare through a holistic conception of consumer well being. Consumer welfare is seen as determined by not only the facilities available for consumption (information, redress, quality etc.) but also the endowments/capabilities of households and productivity of firms which determines cost of production and, therefore, the prices that consumers pay.

Moreover, CUTS programmes extend to all groups of consumers/households, with emphasis on supporting disadvantaged groups through empowerment and facilitation of participation in economic processes. Thus, the objective is to enhance the sovereignty of all groups of consumers, i.e. pursuit of social justice and equality is embedded into the design of CUTS programmes.

The stress on social justice and equality coupled with its ‘International NGO’ status additionally leads to CUTS’ aspiration of being a civil society analogue of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which helps developing countries get a higher share in global benefits from international trade and consequent economic development. While UNCTAD works with governments as a global nodal facilitator CUTS has the potential to perform the same role in regard to CSOs. At the same time, the existence of operations at the national and sub-national levels helps it to target inequality and injustice within countries.

In the next sub-section, we look at CUTS’ evolutionary history which explains how CUTS’ sustained focus on consumer welfare with a holistic perspective has led to its current/future functional areas.



**While UNCTAD works with governments as a global nodal facilitator CUTS has the potential to perform the same role in regard to CSOs**

### 1.2.2 Evolutionary History: Pointer to the Future

CUTS began out of a rural development communication initiative in Rajasthan, India, in 1983. The initiative involved publication of a one-of-its-kind (even to date) wall newspaper – *Gram Gadar* (Village Revolution) through a network of over 75 activists situated in villages all over the state. Around this time, the Monopolies & Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, was amended to include unfair trade practices, which along with experiences from rural campaigns provoked a group of concerned citizens in Jaipur to form and launch CUTS on March 15, 1984, the World Consumer Rights Day.



The initiative involved publication of a one-of-its-kind (even to date) wall newspaper – *Gram Gadar* (Village Revolution) through a network of over 75 activists situated in villages all over the state

Consumer action is, therefore, the *raison dé être* for the birth and existence of CUTS, which is responsible for getting the new Consumer Protection Act in 1986 enacted in India. To give a more focused attention to consumer issues, *CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training* (CART) was set up in 1996 in Jaipur, India, to enable people, particularly the poor and the marginalised, to achieve their basic rights to basic needs and sustainable development through a strong consumer movement.

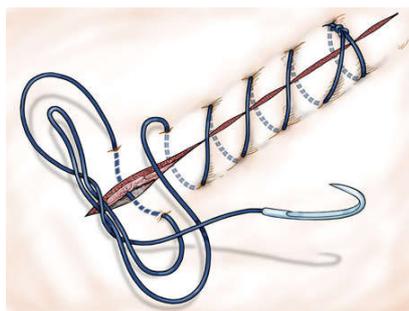
From humble beginnings from a garage in 1983, the organisation today has expanded with a head office housed in its own premises in Jaipur, India and employee strength of over 100. It has three programme-specific centres in Jaipur – CART referred to above, the Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CITEE) and the Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CCIER). Two other programme centres are functioning in Kolkata (CRC) and Chittorgarh (CHD) – the latter dedicated to the grassroots. CUTS also has presence in Africa at Lusaka (Zambia) and at Nairobi (Kenya). In Europe, it is present in Geneva. A centre in Hanoi, Vietnam expands its geographical coverage towards the east.



...the organisation has three programme-specific centres in Jaipur – CART, CITEE, CCIER ...two other programme centres ...CRC and CHD...presence in Africa at Lusaka (Zambia) and at Nairobi (Kenya). In Europe, it is present in Geneva. A centre in Hanoi, Vietnam completes its geographical coverage towards the east

CUTS' achievements in the first 25 years of its history have been considerable. It has emerged as a champion of the common and often disadvantaged stakeholder and this agenda has naturally led to a diversification of its programmes which now span rural empowerment, consumer protection, international trade, competition issues and regulation.

One important diversification has been the expanding work on policy research which is otherwise not a traditional area of the consumer movement, which has been mainly fighting for consumer rights against business and systemic malpractices. Our own beginnings were similar but as we moved along fighting many battles in policy fora and courts we realised



**...common thread running through each of its diversifications ...contributed to the strengthening of attainment of consumer rights as enumerated in the UNGCP 1985**

that it is equally important to influence policies so that consumer sovereignty prevails. Thus we are now recognised as a premier policy research and advocacy group working on a myriad economic policy issues. However, this work is strengthened by our close interaction at grassroots and evidence based advocacy supported by strong action-oriented research.

A common thread running through each of its diversifications is that each has contributed to the strengthening of attainment of consumer rights as enumerated in the United Nations Guidelines on Consumer Protection (UNGCP) 1985 (as amended in 1999). From "women's empowerment in Rajasthan" to "better governance and accountability of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in Rajasthan" to "strengthening competition regimes in African countries" to "fostering equity and accountability in the international trading system" each and every project activity of CUTS has individually and/or collectively strengthened the consumers' rights to basic needs, better choice and representation as well as sustainable consumption in some manner or the other.

### ***1.2.3 Three Core Areas of Operation: Governance, Trade & Development, and Regulation***

In order to ensure that consumers earn sufficient incomes for consumption as well as possess the ability to comprehend and use available information on consumer items, initiatives for consumer empowerment are essential. Similarly, there is a need for transparency and accountability in the supply of essential services which is almost always facilitated by the government. Consumer empowerment resulting in transparency and accountability in the provision of essential services falls under the rubric of 'governance'.

As elucidated by noted Indian economist, Dr C Rangarajan, currently the Chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, good governance is characterised by three components – rule of law, accountability for results and actions, and efforts to combat corruption.

CUTS approach to strengthening 'good governance', has primarily been two-pronged:

- increasing people's participation at various levels of governance and implementation of policies/laws/rules; and
- assessment of the effectiveness of policies/institutions/government departments, implementation of welfare schemes/programmes etc. in achieving developmental as well as institutional outcomes



**...governance is characterised by three components – rule of law, accountability for results and actions, and efforts to combat corruption**

Given the importance and relevance of ‘good governance’ in contemporary discourses on social and economic development, CUTS intends to venture into new areas of governance in addition to consolidating its existing approach. One such area is prevention of corruption, especially by analysing the factors that contribute to corruption in public services, impact of corruption on the poor/poverty and ways to combat corruption (by curbing opportunities for corruption, etc.).

In implementing projects in its various programme areas in developing and least developed countries (LDCs), CUTS has developed and institutionalised a “bottom up” methodology for civil society to work together with state and other non-state actors. Such an approach automatically induces transparency and accountability, especially by opening up the process of developing and implementing social and economic policies to involvement by ‘key stakeholders’.

At the same time, adequate choice in consumption, product availability at prices low enough to facilitate adequate levels of consumption (adequate access), adherence of producers to satisfactory standards of quality especially safety norms, and adequate information for consumers about product characteristics are also preconditioned on the existence of a sound regulatory regimes, and optimal regulation of individual sectors that takes into account technological specificities and the nature of demand characterising each sector. Moreover, an enabling investment regime is essential for optimisation of competition over time.

An effective competition law and policy regime, welfare maximising sector regulation and an enabling investment regime are therefore all necessary for the optimisation of consumer welfare. These subjects are dealt with under the rubric of ‘regulation’. A new subject of interest for CUTS under this area is ‘corporate governance’ or self regulation by business of its own activity to steer it in a direction that enhances benefits accruing to consumers and other non-business stakeholders.

However, regulation does not only pertain to domestic producers. International trade offers a chance for domestic producers to specialise in lines of production in which these are efficient relative to producers from other countries. Surpluses of domestic consumption over production in these lines can be exchanged for surpluses from other economies in other lines of production. Such exchange or international



**...civil society to work together with state and other non-state actors. ...an approach automatically induces transparency and accountability, especially by opening up the process of developing and implementing social and economic policies...**



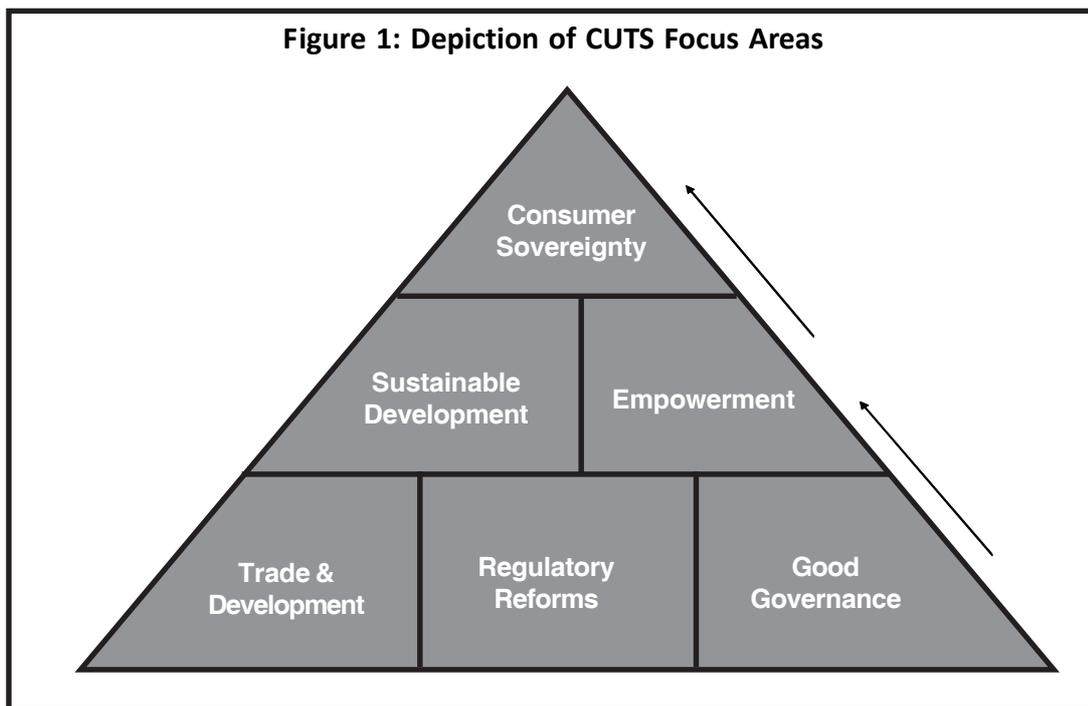
**...competition law and policy regime, welfare maximising sector regulation and an enabling investment regime are therefore all necessary for the optimisation of consumer welfare. ...under the rubric of ‘regulation’**



**...formulation of trade policies at the international, regional and national levels through multilateral and bilateral negotiations and national stakeholder consultations, and the impact of trade on poverty alleviation and economic development ...key areas of CUTS' interest**

trade facilitates higher levels of consumption marked by lower prices and higher quality, as well as an enhanced range of choices for consumers. Thus, international trade constitutes an important engine in the optimisation of consumer welfare marked by the attainment of postulated consumer rights. The formulation of trade policies at the international, regional and national levels through multilateral and bilateral negotiations (WTO issues and regional economic cooperation) and national stakeholder consultations, and the impact of trade on poverty alleviation and economic development are therefore key areas of CUTS' interest.

The three core areas of governance, regulation, and trade and development, as defined above, constitute the areas of specialisation of CUTS and are depicted in Figure 1 below. All three areas are geared to the promotion of sustainable development and the adoption of all three has been motivated by the intention of influencing the attainment of basic consumer rights and thus consumer sovereignty. A detailed dis-aggregation of these three core areas, as evident from the above discussion, is presented in Table 1 (overleaf). Figure 1 illustrates that the diversification of CUTS programme areas has been motivated by the need to address the issue of consumer sovereignty through the attainment of consumer rights in as many ways as possible, with each area adding a new dimension to the CUTS campaign.



| Table 1: Disaggregation of CUTS Focus Areas |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Programme Areas</i>                      | <i>Topics (Current and Future)</i>   |
| Trade and Development                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WTO Issues</li> <li>• Developmental Issues including Sustainability</li> <li>• Regional Economic Cooperation</li> </ul>   |
| Regulatory Reforms                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competition Policy and Law</li> <li>• Economic Regulation</li> <li>• Investment Climate and Private Sector Development</li> <li>• Corporate Governance</li> </ul> |
| Good Governance                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People’s Participation</li> <li>• Consumer Protection</li> <li>• Access to Information</li> <li>• Accountability</li> </ul>                                       |

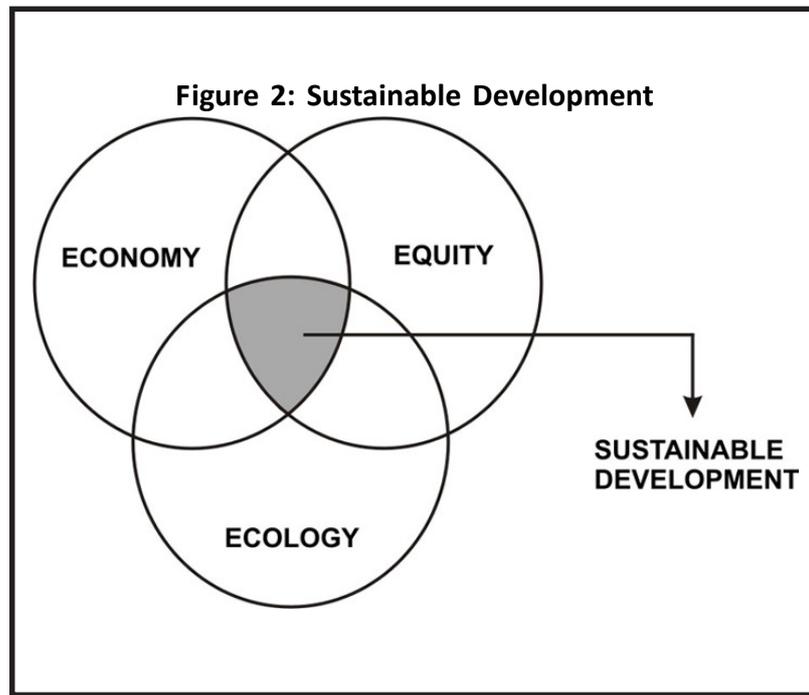
#### **1.2.4 Sustainability: An Emerging Concern**

In recent years, concerns relating to climate change and resource scarcity and degradation have acquired prominence. Sustainable development, as defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987) is “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Various organisations including CUTS are guided by the schematic representation of sustainable development, as shown in Figure 2, which flows from the Brundtland definition.

Sustainability concerns have also been addressed by modern multilateral developments. For example, a comprehensive plan of action, Agenda 21, has been devised for global, national and local implementation by organisations of the United Nations System, and Governments in every area in which human beings impact on the environment. Chapter 4 of Agenda 21 focuses on the close interrelationship between poverty – and therefore CUTS concerns of social equality and justice – and environmental sustainability.



**...focuses on the close interrelationship between poverty – and therefore CUTS concerns of social equality and justice – and environmental sustainability**



Clearly, sustainability concerns have to be addressed by any agenda that addresses the optimisation of consumer welfare. Sustainability in consumption refers to the availability of goods and services, through the government and market, in (characterised by) adequate amounts (quality) that do (does) not diminish with time. Lack of sustainability in aggregate consumption levels would impact the poor disproportionately – lower purchasing power relative to the rest of society would exacerbate their inability to meet food, health care, shelter and educational needs. Unsustainable consumption would therefore lead to a deepening of poverty and run contrary to the objective of attaining social justice and equality.



**...review of programmes implemented by CUTS suggests that while there has been a fairly strong emphasis on meeting the social and economic aspects of sustainable development, the stress on environmental issues has been rather limited...CUTS...laid stress on the benefits of and need for sustainable consumption**

Over the years, CUTS has been conscious of ensuring that the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are addressed to the extent possible, while implementing its programmes. However, a cursory review of programmes implemented by CUTS suggests that while there has been a fairly strong emphasis on meeting the social and economic aspects of sustainable development, the stress on environmental issues has been rather limited, only through CUTS’ consumer protection programmes which have laid stress on the benefits of and need for sustainable consumption. This could possibly be explained by the fact

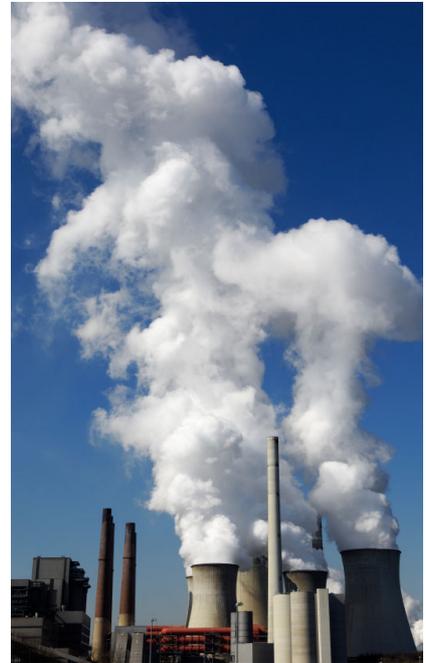
that CUTS interventions in the developing world of Asia and Africa, have often been ‘reactive’ (demand driven) – a response to challenges of ‘urgent and imminent’ nature faced by consumers/citizens on the basis of evidence from the ground. Nurturing weak economies/markets and meeting welfare goals constituted the most daunting challenges in developing and LDCs of Asia and Africa in the last decade or so – a period that coincides with the expansion of CUTS activities from India mostly to South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Africa, Southern Africa and Western Africa.

However, the relative emphasis on environmental sustainability issues in the CUTS agenda will most probably see considerable enhancement in the future, with climate change issues assuming progressively greater significance in the discourse on national development in many developing and least developed countries (including India) as well as the global developmental discourse. Under this sub-area the focus of CUTS' work could be the subject of sustainable consumption, given CUTS orientation to consumer protection issues and the relationship between trade and environment. This relationship requires nuanced treatment as trade can impact environment positively through enhanced efficiency of resource use and negatively through expansion of global output and the accompanying transport burden.

Note that there are other concerns as well which cut across CUTS programme areas, important ones being the need for bridging the gender divide; and that for evolving common understanding about intellectual property right issues among both developing and developed countries.

It could be argued that these issues are as important as the need for promoting environmental sustainability. CUTS indeed attaches great importance to these issues in its plans for the future. However, ‘environmental sustainability’ has been highlighted here because its significance has suddenly increased in recent times on account of the mentioned circumstances.

Having identified the broad contours of CUTS' future operations, we now try to specify the desirable characteristics of CUTS' mission over the next 25 years (Section 2) and then come up with detailed recommendations for organisational management (Section 3).



**...the relative emphasis on environmental sustainability issues in the CUTS agenda will most probably see considerable enhancement in the future, with climate change issues assuming progressively greater significance in ...global developmental discourse**

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF CUTS MISSION: VALUES, NEGATIVE LIST, GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD, AND CONSOLIDATION OF OVERSEAS PRESENCE

### 2.1 Values

CUTS vision and underlying ideology when combined with the experience of its leadership suggests that the following values should guide the implementation of its agenda in the pursuit of its aspirations:

- Adhering to high standards of accountability and transparency
- Adoption of a centrist approach in research, evidence based advocacy and capacity building and networking
- Ensuring outcomes rather than just outputs
- Focus on subject and geographical areas where a vacuum and need exists
- Responsibility to enhance the capacity of various stakeholders and partner CSOs across Asia and Africa



**...genesis of CUTS' expansion to countries/ regions outside India was based on the principle of South-South cooperation not only among civil society organisations, but also governments and business communities**

### 2.2 Negative List

It has been CUTS' experience that sometimes issues are taken up that are not worth our resources or related to our vision, such as:

- Work to further the interests of a single firm or conglomerate
- Work on inadequately funded assignments requiring investment of our own scarce funds that could be employed more productively elsewhere
- Work on assignments that require the explicit use of engineering skills — ascertaining the quality of roads, assessing the quality of agricultural technologies etc.
- Assignments that require banner waving, slogan shouting etc.
- Advocacy that requires projection of views that have not been verified through research — projection of the appropriate ideology (although appropriateness might be subjective it can be verified by checking for consistency with CUTS centrist viewpoints) is fine

### 2.3 Geographical Expansion

The genesis of CUTS' expansion (both programme implementation and physical expansion) to countries/regions outside India was based on the principle of South-South cooperation not only among civil society organisations, but also governments and business communities. South-South cooperation remains an extremely significant process in

contemporary international development and continues to motivate CUTS.

CUTS approach to South-South cooperation has been shaped further by the philosophy of trilateral development cooperation — cooperation between a southern provider of technical assistance and a southern recipient funded by a northern donor.

In the years to come, CUTS intends to expand as well as consolidate, wherever required in pursuance of its Vision. While the present setup in India is considered adequate, CUTS has the ambition of horizontal (geographical) expansion in addition to vertical consolidation (intensification) of its activities across the developing world. There are two aspects of geographical expansion – (i) project implementation and (ii) physical presence, which are elucidated here.

In terms of project implementation, in addition to operating in five regions: South Asia, Southeast Asia, Eastern, Southern and Western Africa, CUTS intends to undertake activities in the Middle-East & North Africa (MENA) and Central Asian regions in the near future. Several factors are considered while choosing the geographical location of a project including demand on the ground, availability of local partner(s), familiarity with the country/region, existence of CUTS contacts, interest among the donor community to support activities (in CUTS programmatic areas), etc.

Most of the mentioned factors were considered by CUTS in opening each of its overseas centres (in Lusaka, Nairobi, Hanoi and Geneva) and would continue to be considered in contemplating opening of new overseas offices in future.

## 2.4 Consolidation of Overseas Presence

CUTS present activities in the geographical regions indicated above, is in most cases implemented and/or managed in cooperation with CUTS overseas centres in these regions. In order for CUTS to roll out more effective intervention plans in these regions/countries, it is imperative that the capabilities of these centres are improved further.

Such improvement can be achieved in the following ways:

- i. 'Capacity building' of internal staff through exposure, short trainings, visits, internships, etc.

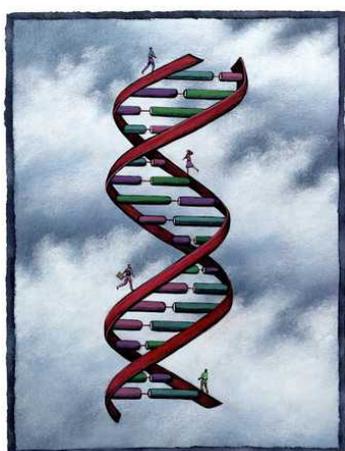


**In terms of project implementation, in addition to operating in five regions: ...factors are considered while choosing the geographical location of a project including demand on the ground, availability of local partner(s), familiarity with the country/region, existence of CUTS contacts, interest among the donor community to support activities...**



**...CUTS to roll out more effective intervention plans in these regions/countries, it is imperative that the capabilities of these centres are improved further**

- ii. Achievement of staff-staff linkages for experience sharing etc. (this can be achieved by ‘*short deputation*’ of specialised staff from CUTS programme Centres — CITEE, CART and CCIER – at overseas centres and *vice versa*). This would help evolve cross cultural understanding and sensitivities.
- iii. Close cooperation between overseas centres and respective programme centres in regard to programme development: A concerted process of having ‘*Desk Officers*’ at Headquarters (HQ) responsible for coordination of this process has been initiated and would be further strengthened in the future.
- iv. A mechanism for close interaction between the overseas centres and CUTS HQ (for administrative and financial functions) has been evolved and would be continually refined in the future.



**In CUTS context, research involves the evaluation and analysis of primary data ...arrive at recommendations for furthering progress towards its vision; advocacy refers to the generation of awareness about these recommendations ...for the implementation of these recommendations; and networking involves the creation of lattices through which such advocacy can be effectively conducted**

### **III. METHODOLOGY TO IMPLEMENT RAN – RESEARCH, ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING**

This section outlines CUTS's methodology for implementing the ‘instruments’ of RAN without going into details which are outside the scope of this document. In CUTS context, research involves the evaluation and analysis of primary data and secondary evidence to arrive at recommendations for furthering progress towards its Vision; advocacy refers to the generation of awareness about these recommendations and dissemination of other knowledge/information relevant for the mentioned progress, as well as capacity building needed for the implementation of these recommendations; and networking involves the creation of lattices through which such advocacy can be effectively conducted. The methodology outlined here incorporates three elements of organisational management, viz. planning, leadership, and raising financial resources. Each of these key elements has been conceptualised from CUTS perspective.

#### **3.1. Planning**

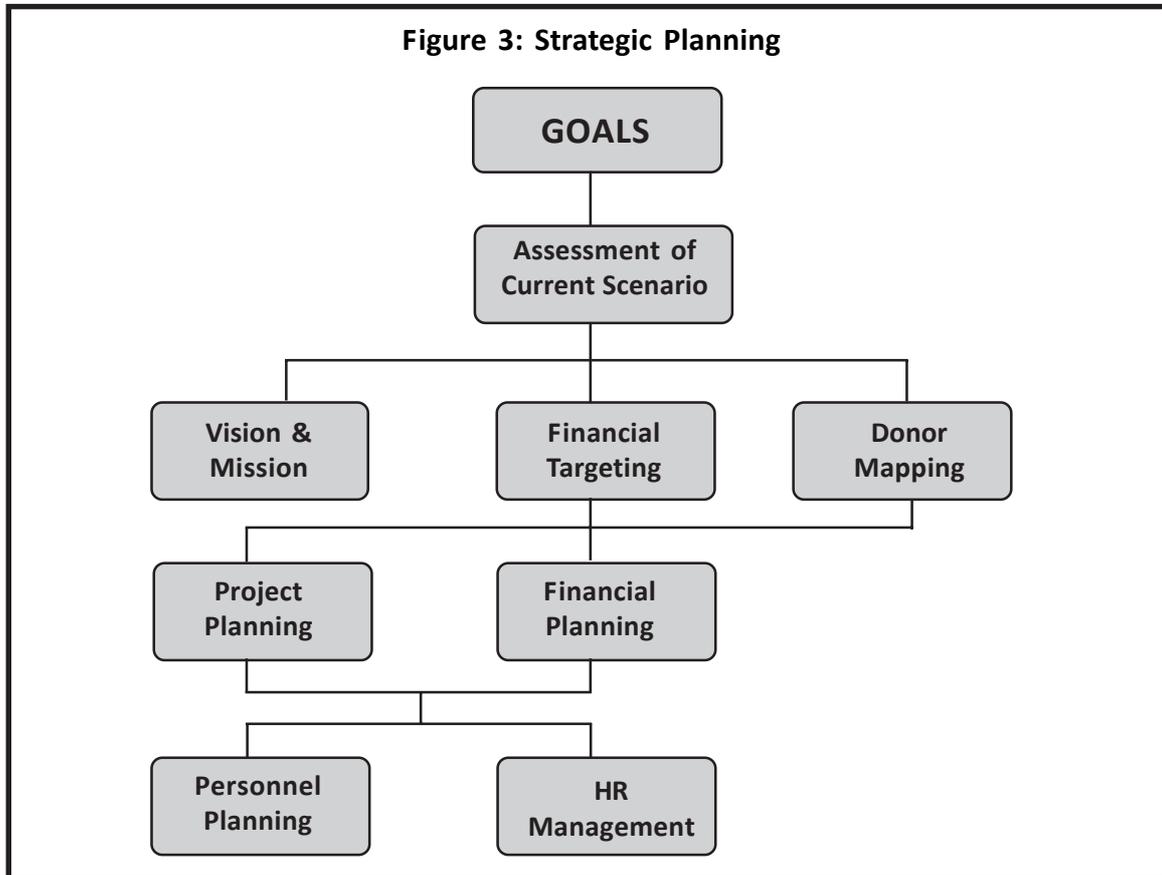
In order to develop the methodology for achieving progress towards its Vision, each of the programme centres of CUTS would be required to develop ‘Five Year Plans’ (*Strategic Business Plan*) with a detailed description (purpose, objectives, outputs/activities and outcomes) of each project targeted for implementation over the next five years and a corresponding strategy for implementation (funding, staff allocation, etc.).

Each centre through its plan is further expected to specify an annual target for funds to be raised for projects and thus arrive at an aggregate figure for the five year plan period. The planning process for developing each ‘Five Year Plan’ would be initiated in the year preceding its implementation through a consultative process involving staff of each Centre, members of its advisory board (national and international), staff of other CUTS centres and representatives of the senior management of CUTS.

Given the yearly financial target, each Centre would develop a ‘personnel plan’ for incorporation into the five year plan. The process of personnel planning would be led by the Centre Head/Coordinator and concluded with the assistance and guidance of the CUTS Human Resource Development (HRD) Department.

**...each Centre would develop a ‘personnel plan’ for incorporation into the five year plan. One of the components of the personnel plan would be a plan for development of the capacity of the personnel in each centre through trainings, exposure visits, exchanges, etc.**

One of the components of the personnel plan (as indicated above) would be a plan for development of the capacity of the personnel in each centre through trainings, exposure visits, exchanges, etc. In addition to training and capacity building in functional (programme) areas, emphasis would be laid on the development of soft skills (communication, team-building, personality, public speaking, etc.).





**...a 'communication strategy' is imperative. Such a strategy would clearly specify the various means/tools of communication to be used for different 'target groups'...**

CUTS has always been clear and unambiguous in communicating its messages to specific target groups. Given that the effectiveness of the organisation's advocacy depends on its outreach and dissemination capability, the development of a comprehensive 'advocacy plan' and within it a 'communication strategy' is imperative. Such a strategy would clearly specify the various means/tools of communication to be used for different 'target groups' – outreach meetings for project stakeholders and media, briefing and discussion papers, focus group discussions, large national and regional conferences etc.

### **3.2. Leadership and Decision Making**

CUTS has always followed a process of participatory decision making at every level and stage of implementing its functions. Each CUTS centre is provided a fair degree of independence in decision making – administrative and financial. Such independence would extend to the conceptualisation and implementation of the mentioned centre specific business plans, especially in terms of project development, staff planning and management, etc.

Strategic planning and plan implementation by each Centre would be handled by the Centre Head/Coordinator. More detailed implementation such as project development would be handled by a dedicated group of Centre staff including a designated Programme Officer who would be responsible for timely progress of the project. The project would be implemented under the guidance of the Centre Head/Coordinator, often with the involvement of the Centre's advisory board or project advisory groups which consists of a panel of reputed experts/practitioners with relevant knowledge/experience.



**CUTS has always followed a process of participatory decision making at every level and stage of implementing its functions. Each CUTS centre is provided a fair degree of independence in decision making – administrative and financial**

### **3.3. Raising Financial Resources**

One of the most critical steps in implementing a centre specific plan is the raising of financial support for the same. There are three aspects of funding – (a) project/programme funding, (b) core funding/long term funding support and (c) endowments.

Project/programme funding refers to financial support from various donors (national, bilateral, multilateral and private agencies) to implement specific projects/programmes often developed in consultation with donors, keeping in view their topical and geographical interests. The Department for International Development (DFID), UK; Norwegian Agency for

Development Cooperation (Norad), Norway; International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada; Oxfam NOVIB, The Netherlands; UNCTAD; United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Hewlett Foundation, Ford Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), etc. are examples of international agencies which have supported CUTS activities for a long time and remain committed to do so in the near future.

Opportunities for long term funding support from international donors also exist. Such funding support is either for a package of projects or necessary organisational expenditure that complements project activities. CUTS has been in discussions with the Royal Norwegian Embassy and DFID, UK and India for such long-term support. Other options for long term funding exist – for instance, from IDRC, Canada and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland and Department of Consumer Affairs, Government of India.

CUTS has not been able to mobilise significant funds through endowments, donations, etc. The organisation needs to develop a ‘strategy’ to improve its ability to attract such support from potential sources. However, CUTS would have to be extra careful in maintaining its independent character while seeking such endowments.



**CUTS...needs to develop a ‘strategy’ to improve its ability to attract such support from potential sources...have to be extra careful in maintaining its independent character while seeking such endowments.**

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

This Vision Document provides directions for the next 25 years of CUTS operations – recommendations for continuity with change emerge from the analysis in the previous sections. While CUTS core areas of operation would continue to be trade and development, regulation and governance there would be an increase in emphasis within these core areas on issues such as environmental sustainability, corporate social responsibility and alleviation of corruption.

In the next 25 years, considerable geographical expansion is anticipated, especially in Africa. Offices would be set up on the basis of project funding but continuation of operations would be based on sustainability, future opportunities etc. While CUTS would continue to rely on the three pillars of research, advocacy and networking in its operations, there would be a greater emphasis on raising financial resources through long term grants and endowments, planning in regard to advocacy and personnel development, as well as capacity building in partner organisations.



ISBN 978-81-8257-144-0

**Consumer Unity & Trust Society**

D-217, Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur 302016, India

Ph: +91.141.2282821, Fax: +91.141.2282485

Email: [cuts@cuts.org](mailto:cuts@cuts.org), Website: [www.cuts-international.org](http://www.cuts-international.org)