

CUTS IN ACTION

25 YEARS
1983 2008
CUTS
International

April-June 2008

25 Years – Growing from Strength to Strength



CUTS has entered into its 25th year – a cause for celebration. When we began in 1983 out of a garage in Jaipur without any staff, we did not even dream that we will now have nine offices – five of them outside India – with a combined staff strength of nearly 150. CUTS is presently perhaps the only Indian NGO with an international presence. All this growth has occurred through a process of organic evolution due to responses to varied and increasing demands from the society. The growth of CUTS has been stimulated by significant international developments: increasing globalisation and liberalisation, the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the arrival of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the unprecedented economic growth in India.

While we work on a variety of issues – women's empowerment at the grassroots in Chittorgarh; road safety in Jaipur; better governance and accountability in Rajasthan; better competition and regulatory regimes not only in India, but also in 20 other countries in Afro-Asia; better understanding of the new international trade regime in the developing world, especially the grassroots in India – one common thread runs through all these programmes. These work programmes not only pursue the benefit of the common man/woman but also seek to make him/her an active partner in the course of future developments through research, advocacy and networking activities. Development is a fundamental right of every individual.

People and even experts despair about the recent developments in India's economic architecture. There are many whose assessments are tainted by their lack of information or ideological biases. The question that has often been asked is whether globalisation is good for India or not. Often intellectual *pundits* argue that

globalisation accompanied by the WTO has been bad. What do people at the grassroots think?

In one meeting, a farmer got up to say that he is getting battery cells at Rs 2 for which he had been paying Rs 6 for many years, and felt that he had been cheated in the past. At another meeting, one other farmer said: "WTO offers opportunities and is there to stay, so let's make the best out of it." Most of them do not make long boring speeches condemning everything possible, as is the wont of intellectuals, but are ready to capture the gains. They deserve and need more assistance from the state.

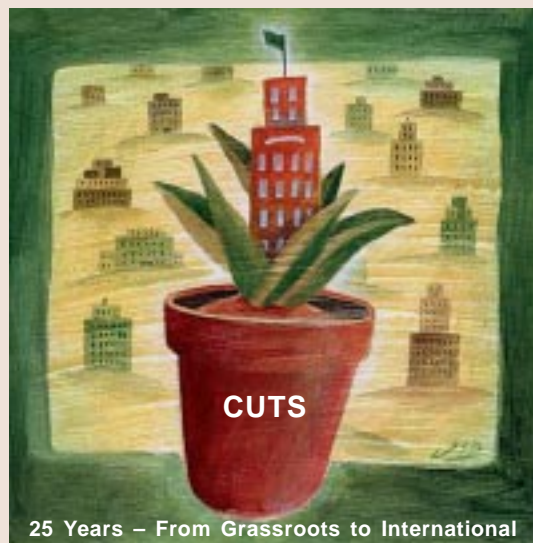
We have now started entering into free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries, such as Sri Lanka or Singapore which are beyond the liberalisation commitments in the WTO. When the Sri Lanka agreement was being negotiated, many cried foul, but results show that nothing drastic has happened to our spices or coconut sector. On the contrary, Indian investments in Sri Lanka have gone up significantly. But we have not given up on multilateralism either, i.e. pursuit of a better development friendly agreement at the WTO. Alas,

the way the things are that day might still be far off.

Agreed that the WTO is not a fair deal, but that does not mean that getting out of it would be a solution, as many in India would suggest. The way forward is to reform the WTO to make it more equitable. In the good old days, it was the rich countries who dictated proceedings, but now India and Brazil are also part of the inside club, calling the shots and not allowing the rich countries to continue to get away with inequities. Better days are ahead, our struggle continues, even with problems of inflation, bad governance and static poverty.

Pradeep S. Mehta

Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General



“Powering” Consumers

CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre (CUTS CRC), in association with CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS C-CIER) organised a one-day Local Inception Workshop under the project ‘Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA)’ in Kolkata, on April 17, 2008.

The main objectives of workshop were to train local civil society organisations (CSOs) on the consumer survey methodology; build capacity of civil society on electricity reforms; and make CSOs aware of the project objectives and activities to be conducted at the state level.

Training in Ethiopia

CUTS C-CIER, in collaboration with CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) organised a five-day training workshop on ‘Competition Law Enforcement in

Ethiopia’ in Addis Ababa, during May 12-16, 2008.

The event was attended by over 25 participants representing the Trade Practices Investigation Commission (TPIC), Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ethiopian National Parliament, Addis Ababa University, Consumer Association and the Media.

Sessions were conducted on various aspects of competition policy and law issues, in order to educate the participants on specific aspects of competition enforcement through a blend of theoretical lectures and hands-on casework.

How well the NREGS?

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) with the support of the World Bank organised a one-day District Level Dissemination meeting under the project ‘Assessing the Qualitative and Quantitative Output of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

(NREGS)’ in Sirohi, Rajasthan on May 21, 2008.

The meeting disseminated the findings of the assessment done under the project across the relevant stakeholders and suggested measures to rectify the gaps for further smooth implementation.

Soho to Soweto

CUTS London Resource Centre (CUTS LRC) with the support of DFID, UK organised the fifth and the final debate in the series, entitled, ‘Democracy & Development: Friends or foes?’ under the Soho to Soweto project in London, on June 04, 2008.

The UK Government’s inconsistency in responses to non-democratic states, the recent tensions in Kenya and responses to Hamas’s victory in the Palestinian elections were issues raised for discussion.

www.cuts-london.org/events/DemocracyandDevelopment_000.htm

Partnering with UNCTAD

On the occasion of quadrennial meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XII) in Accra, Ghana, CUTS International organised three events entitled, ‘Trade-Development-Poverty Linkages’, ‘Aid for Trade-Questions and Challenges’, and ‘Beyond Rhetoric-Ensuring that EPA’s Delivers’, on April 18-19, 2008 respectively.

The main objective of the events were to place a set of key messages on trade-development-poverty linkages to the trade community at large; help identify the critical challenges facing developing countries and the trade and development community as a whole in effectively implementing the ‘Aid for Trade’ (Aft) agenda and to develop recommendations for the way forward; and discuss the development perspective of the Economic Partnership Agreement negotiations between the African, Caribbean and the Pacific countries and the European Union (EU).

The book entitled, *Trade-Development-Poverty Linkages – Reflections from Selected Asian and Sub Saharan African Countries’ Volume I – Country Case Studies*, was also launched on the occasion.

www.cuts-citee.org/events-archive-apr08.htm

Stepping in West Africa

CUTS C-CIER organised a two-day international conference marking the launch of a two-year regional project entitled, ‘Strengthening Constituencies towards Effective Competition Regimes in Select Countries of West Africa (also referred to as 7Up4 Project), in Ghana, on June 19, 2008.



The project supported by the Department for International Development (DFID), UK; the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden would be implemented over a period of two years in seven countries in the region, viz. Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

The project aims to raise the profile of competition at the national (project countries) and the regional levels in West Africa. The project would highlight the relevance and need for an effective competition regime for economic development and poverty reduction in select West African countries/region, and therefore set in motion the process of evolution and implementation of competition regimes, and enable them to respond appropriately.

www.cuts-ccier.org/7up4/En/index.htm

Educating the Public on Competition and Regulation is Exemplary

The Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Shyamala Gopinath presented the M R Pai Memorial Award to Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International, Jaipur, at a function organised by All-India Bank Depositors' Association, in Mumbai, on April 09, 2008. The award carries a citation and a cheque of Rs 51,000.



Speaking on the occasion, Shyamala Gopinath, the Chief Guest, lauded the life-long efforts of Mehta. The citation read: "The splendid work done by you and your organisation in educating the public on competition and regulation over the years is exemplary. You are one of the foremost crusaders for consumers and we take this opportunity to wish you strength in your endeavours".

After the presentation of the Award, Mehta spoke in response to the honour conferred on him and thanked the organisers.

Making Markets Work for Farmers

Alice Pham of CUTS Hanoi Resource Centre (CUTS HRC) attended the Regional Training and Forum on 'Making Markets Work for Small Farmers: Understanding Marketing and Market Intermediation', organised by the Asia Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (DHRRA), in collaboration with Viet DHRRA, Vietnam Farmers Union, Foro Rural Mundial and ASEAN Foundation, in Hanoi, Vietnam during June 07-11, 2008.

The workshop aimed to enhance the knowledge and skills of participants in marketing and market intermediation which would link small farmers to markets.

PPP in Indian Railways

Ramrao Mundhe of CUTS C-CIER participated in the interactive session on 'Public-Private Partnership in India Railways' organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), in New Delhi, on April 21, 2008.

The session provided a unique opportunity for the customer of Indian railways as to how their expectations are being taken into account by various policy initiatives while drawing the future course of action.

Improving Governance

George Cheriyan of CUTS CART attended the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) Summit organised by the World Bank in Washington DC on June 02-03, 2008.

He made a presentation on 'Improving Public Expenditure Outcomes through Social Accountability Approaches: Field Experiences from Rajasthan, India' in the BBL event organised by the World Bank, on June 04, 2008.



SHORT CUTS

- Pradeep S Mehta of CUTS spoke on 'Challenges facing the World Trading System' at the high profile ICC World Business Summit, in Stockholm, on June 12, 2008 before an audience of 500 businessmen from around the world.
- Alice Pham and Thanh Mai of CUTS, Hanoi attended the conference on 'Reviewing the Law Enforcement Practices on Consumer Protection and Building a Bill on Consumer Protection in Vietnam', organised by the Vietnam Competition Administration Department (VCAD) in Hanoi, on June 11, 2008.
- Victor Ogalo of CUTS Africa Resource Centre, Nairobi attended an 'Aid for Trade' workshop in the UK, on June 05, 2008.
- Angela Mulenga of CUTS ARC, Lusaka attended 'Southern Africa Development Forum on Progress and Prospects in the Implementation of Protocols in Southern Africa' in Lusaka, on May 29-31, 2008.
- Amit Chowdhury of CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS CHD) presented a paper on 'Strengthening the institutional base for reaching extreme poverty' at the national consultation workshop on 'Microfinance in India: Evolving Strategies to Deepen and Broaden the Outreach' organised by Mahatma Gandhi Labour Institute (MGLI), in Ahmedabad, on May 14, 2008.
- Siddharth Mitra, research head of CUTS International participated in United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Expert Meeting on Sustainable Innovation held in Paris, on April 22, 2008 and OECD UNEP Conference on Resource Efficiency held in Paris, on April 23-25, 2008. He made a presentation on 'Bio-fuels and the course of world economic development'.
- Vibhor Bansal of CUTS, Delhi attended a seminar on 'Pharmaceutical Pricing & Regulatory Framework for Affordable Medicines' organised by National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority, Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals and DFID in New Delhi, on April 12, 2008.
- Gideon Rabinowitz of CUTS, London attended and presented a paper on 'EPAs and services in 2008 and beyond: What challenges lie ahead for the ACP?' at a Commonwealth Secretariat conference on 'Way Forward for EPAs' in Cape Town, on April 07-08, 2008.
- Pranav Kumar of CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE) participated in the Barcelona Dialogue, jointly organised by the International Chair WTO/Regional Integration (University of Barcelona) and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) in Barcelona, on May 28-31, 2008.

VISITORS

Name	Comments
Gautam Patel Officer on Special Duty Office of Chief Minister, Rajasthan	It was very good making contact with the senior team at CUTS to have a greater understanding of their activities in research, advocacy and provision of support at grassroots level to improve development. I look forward to work together on our mutual aims.
Yaduendra Mathur Secretary to Government Planning Department Government of Rajasthan	It was one of the more stimulating afternoons in a while – spent interacting with professionals at CUTS; Pradeep Mehtaji, Udai are leading the way in Economic Regulation and Competition Policy and doing Jaipur proud! My best regards and look forward to working closer with CIRC.
Rakesh Bhartiya, Director Department of Science & Technology Government of India	Impressed by CUTS' specialisation in spreading its message to every nook and corner of the society. It would have been better if 'Gram Gadar' would have been published in regional languages from every region.

A Rich Learning Experience



Pubali Sinha
Chowdhury

My stint with CUTS was an extraordinary experience. I have experienced good cooperation from all the staff members. The most remarkable feature that has more than satisfied me is that I have found all the good features of an 'office' in CUTS CRC, about which I had once learnt in the subject

of Business Organisation while studying Commerce.

I love to read the publications of CUTS. I am really thankful to CUTS for allowing me to work with them as an intern. It was more than a learning process. The whole session of working here has been a phenomenal achievement.

In my opinion, every project can be accomplished incomparably well, if a bit more time is allotted. The senior staff should appreciate the kind of hard work done by the juniors and allow them a flexible time limit, thereby giving them an opportunity to present their meticulous work in a better manner. I can only wish CUTS best of luck, for it is actually working resolutely for the cause of consumers.

FORUM

Mehta's Ceaseless Efforts

My heartiest congratulations to you on receiving the M R Pai award. It is a befitting honour to you for your pioneering efforts in creating awareness on consumer interest issues and protection of public interest. It also recognises your ceaseless efforts through advocacy and consensus building on creating a transparent and independent regulatory framework in the country. I wish you more such honours to come.

V. S. Ailawadi

Former Chairman

Haryana Electricity Regulatory Commission

Researching Anti-competitive Practices

This refers to your letter dated April 11, 2008 regarding the research conducted by CUTS International on the need for a Competition Policy for India. There is no gainsaying that there are many policies and practices prevalent in the mammoth organisational machinery like the state government, which favours anticompetitive regimes at different levels of working.

Research studies conducted by professional institutes and voluntary organisations like CUTS bring such anomalies to the fore and help in suitable rectification, beneficial both to the state in general and the consumer in particular.

I hope that CUTS would take up more such issues resulting in the betterment of governance and establishment of a civil society.

Sunil Arora

Principal Secretary to Chief Minister

Government of Rajasthan

CUTS also at Geneva

CUTS Geneva Resource Centre (CUTS GRC) will be launched on July 16, 2008. It will work closely with Geneva-based developing country negotiators and their policy makers and civil society representatives. It will ensure the presence of a pro-trade, pro-consumer developmental NGO closer to trade policy debates. Its research and analysis and other activities will



be demand-driven, objective and will strive to provide a credible and pro-trade-for-development voice in Geneva.

The first initiative of the Centre would be the project entitled, 'Fostering Equity and Accountability in the Trading System (FEATS)'. It focuses on three countries in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and two in Southern Africa (Malawi and Zambia). This three-year project will have three inter-linked streams of activities, namely: policy research, advocacy, and networking.