

CUTS IN ACTION

 कट्स CUTS
1984 to 2003 Twenty Years of Social Change

January-March 2003

CUTS Celebrates 20th Anniversary



This quarter was extremely hectic. We had so many events, and among these there were two major ones. The first one was the final meeting of the 7-Up Project, which was organised in Geneva on 19th February. The Project involved a comparative study of the competition regimes of seven developing countries: India, Kenya, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia. The meeting was very successful, as was the Project. Following this Project, one of the outcomes involved setting up of an international advocacy group, International Network of Civil

Society Organisations on Competition (INCSOC), whose first general body meeting was held on 20th February, also at Geneva.

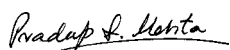
There was an overwhelming response from the civil society on INCSOC, only showing how a long-felt need was being addressed. The membership comprises of consumer groups, advocacy groups and research institutions. Three working groups were set up, which included one on producing a World Competition Report by 2005. This venture will be the first of its type. The report will focus on retail level abuses, about which consumers are so aware.

The second major event was the organising of the Partnership Conclave on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of CUTS. In this event, we looked at various macro issues such as trade, sustainable development, millennium development goals, consumer rights, etc. As micro intertwines, we looked at case studies of rights-based approaches of peoples, governments and international institutions. The idea was to look at globalisation and how it can be managed to provide succour to people.

Nearly 250 people from all over the world, particularly from Asia and Africa, had attended the 3-day event and contributed to its success. The results were fantastic and provided significant inputs to develop our future work programme over the next twenty years. We will take stock of the progress at our 25th anniversary in 2008. A brief report appears as an insert in this edition.

Among the stars that attended it, Pascal Lamy, the European Union's Trade Commissioner, was the most prominent one. The Commerce and Industry Minister, Arun Jaitley, opened the meeting and released the souvenir, "20 Years of CUTS", while the former Prime Minister of India, I. K. Gujral, delivered the inaugural address.

In the last edition of this newsletter, we had carried a message from the Vice-President of India, Hon'ble B. S. Shekhawat. In this edition, I would like to carry the message of Professor Jagdish Bhagwati, the noted trade theorist and our mentor. It is very encouraging and enlightening.


Pradeep S. Mehta, Editor

For more on the successful 20th Anniversary Celebration of CUTS held at New Delhi, India, on 12-14 March, 2003, at a Partnership Conclave with the Theme: "Governance and its Relationship with Poverty Reduction", please see: www.cuts.org/cuts-anniversary.htm



My first interaction with CUTS and Pradeep Mehta dates back to 1996, at the time of the UNCTAD IX, which was being held at Midrand, South Africa. I was invited to deliver the Raul Prebisch lecture. Pradeep asked me an interesting question from the audience.

He later persuaded me to Chair the Advisory Board of the CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS-CITEE) that CUTS was launching in 1996.

Since then CUTS has developed from a modest NGO, addressing mainly domestic consumer issues, to a pre-eminent position as an international NGO, dealing with issues relating to the world trading system and related issues. Under Pradeep's remarkable leadership, and with the assistance of his brilliant and dedicated young associates, CUTS is now on the frontline of research and advocacy on global trade issues.

The strength of CUTS lies in its outreach. In order to conduct effective outreach among the trade community around the world, the organisation has, over the years, strengthened its research and advocacy capability. Without a minimum research capability, it is hard to do outreach: you would not be able to decide wisely what to reach out with!

CUTS has done a commendable job with research on a variety of issues such as child labour and competition policy. Its outreach publications, like *Economiquity*, a newsletter of CUTS-CITEE, also offers an excellent overview of ongoing WTO and NGO developments in the area of trading system issues. These publications play an important role in informing the public and in shaping the debate on trade policy in all its dimensions today.

In this context, CUTS' decision to open an office in London is also welcome. There are several instances when NGOs from the rich world are opening centres in the poor countries, but this is the only example of a reverse initiative that I know of. And, it should help in providing a better dissemination of developing-country perspectives that are often missing solely from the Western media and Western policy-makers' perceptions.

This anniversary is, thus, a time to celebrate the great success of CUTS and to congratulate Pradeep on his remarkable energy and talent in making this success possible against the many odds that he faced. One can only wish him another equally glorious 20 years!

Jagdish Bhagwati
Professor, Columbia University, USA

Road Safety Campaign



CUTS celebrated 'Road Safety Week' during 6-13 January. Pamphlets on the 'do's and 'don'ts' while driving were distributed to the general public at the busiest crossings in Jaipur. Under the programme, 300 reflectors were placed on various bullock carts, camel carts, horse carts and tractors.

In association with civil society organisations, various competitions and rallies were also organised. Students of various schools, the state administration, the traffic police department, public representatives, street play (*nukkad natak*) artists and others actively participated in the activities.

Building Capacities

A series of Investor Education and Protection workshops and open houses were organised at Chittorgarh, Jhunjhunu, Jalore, Sawai Madhopur, Alwar and Dausa districts of Rajasthan during March 2003, with the support of the Department of Company Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

The purpose was to identify and build capacities of investor protection organisations in dealing with investor-related issues and grievances. In the open houses, various aspects of investors' complaints were discussed and their solutions sought.

World Consumers' Rights Day



To commemorate the World Consumers' Rights Day (WCRD) and the 20th anniversary of CUTS, a seminar on Genetic Modification (GM), Food Security and Globalisation was organised on 9th March at Jaipur. Experts talked about the various techniques of genetic modification and shared their viewpoints on the pros and cons of GM food.

A workshop on 'Consumer Rights and Protection' was organised on 15th March at Chittorgarh, with the objective of increasing the understanding amongst grass roots as well as urban consumers about consumer rights and protection.

A seminar and book exhibition was also organised on the same day by the Department of Food and Civil Supplies of the Rajasthan Government. Various publications, posters and leaflets on consumer issues published by CUTS and other organisations were displayed in the exhibition. The Minister of Food and Civil Supplies, Janardan Singh Gehlot, attended the programme. (www.cuts.org/CART.htm)

World Water Day

"People should actively participate in social change and economic development processes initiated by CSOs," said Srichand Kriplani, Member of Parliament, in the launch meeting of the United Nations Development Programme - Small Grants Programme (UNDP-SGP) supported 'Land and Water Management Leading towards Biodiversity Conservation Project'. The event was organised on 22nd March, the World Water Day, at Pemadiya Khara village of the Chittorgarh district.



WTO and Economic Issues



CUTS with Consumer Guidance Society of India (CGSI) organised a capacity building workshop under "Reaching Out in India on WTO & Economic Issues" on 27th January at Mumbai, India. The objective was to reach out to the civil society, media, academia, researchers, etc.

On 28th January, CUTS and CGSI also organised a training seminar on "Competitiveness of Indian Textiles Industries in the WTO Era" in Mumbai. Its objective was to enhance the analytical capacities of the people from textile sector to comprehend the WTO issues.

Enforcing Competition Law

The 7-Up Zambia country report entitled "Enforcing Competition Law in Zambia", prepared by CUTS, was officially released by the Zambian Deputy Minister for Commerce, Trade and Industry, Eugene Appel, MP, at a national meeting held in Lusaka on 13th February. The Minister underlined the importance of such research studies on competition policy and law when Zambia is facing various hurdles in achieving competitive edge at national, regional and global levels.

On the same day, the second national reference group meeting of the Investment for Development (IFD) project of CUTS was organised. Discussions were held on the report entitled "Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Zambia, Policy Perceptions and Civil Society Perceptions" prepared by CUTS Africa Resource Centre (ARC) under the IFD project.

20th Anniversary Celebrations
CUTS-ARC held a meeting on the theme "Governance and its Relationship with Poverty Reduction" to commemorate the 20th anniversary of CUTS on 10th March at Lusaka, Zambia.

The meeting discussed the link between Zambia's governance issues, including the way its economic liberalisation process was being pursued, intertwined with the extent to which poverty would be reduced to the target level of half by 2015.

TALKATHON AT GENEVA

Mainstreaming Poverty Reduction

"Poverty reduction has normally been seen as a specific measure and always remained at the sidelines of economic policy-making, but competition policy is an element that can mainstream development and poverty reduction and put them at the centre of economic policy regimes," observed Rubens Ricuperro, Secretary General of UNCTAD. He was speaking in an international symposium on "Competition Policy and Pro-Poor Development" held at Geneva on 19th February.



The purpose of the debate was to disseminate the findings of the 7-Up project, which is a study of competition regimes in seven developing countries of Asia and Africa.

Building Coalitions of CSOs

The idea of forming International Network of Civil Society Organisations (INCSOC) on Competition was recently mooted by several civil society organisations (CSOs), in the wake of the final meeting of 7-Up Project of CUTS to disseminate the project output. The first general body meeting of the INCSOC was held on 20th February at Geneva.

INCSOC has been conceived of as a network that seeks to build coalitions of CSOs interested in promoting a healthy competition culture. Pradeep Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS, said, "The network intends to put civil society on the map of competition policy discussions at the international and domestic arena and one of the major projects will be to prepare a World Competition Report by 2005".

Catch 22 Situation

A meeting of the International Working Group on the Doha Agenda (IWOGDA) Project, which aims to promote understanding on competition and investment policy at the WTO, was held on 17-18 February at Geneva. The general message that the Group wanted to convey to the negotiators and the policy-makers was that they need to tread with extreme caution. They also need to put development at the centre of discussions on these two extremely important and controversial issues. (www.cuts.org/citee.htm#EVENTS)

Monitoring Labour Standards

Pranav Kumar was nominated by CUTS to speak at a "Forum on Monitoring International Labour Standards: Asia", organised by the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Monitoring International Labour Standards, Washington, at Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 4-6 March.

He was also invited by the Washington Office of the Henrich Boell Foundation to speak on fair trade and market access at a parallel panel discussion organised during the third World Social Forum held at Porto Alegre, Brazil during 21-28 January.

Think Tank Meeting

On an invitation from the Trade Law Centre for South Africa (TRALAC), Rajiv Dayal Mathur, attended a Think Tank Meeting on Developments in International Trade Negotiations and their Relevance for Southern Africa, organised at Stellenbosch on 17-18 March. He made a presentation on the issues of the Doha Development Round and the interests of developing countries and spoke on CUTS' stand on investment and competition issues.

Demystifying the Budget

Archana Saxena attended a training programme entitled 'Demystifying the Government Budget', organised by Patheya, Ahmedabad, on 16-17 January at New Delhi.

Srinivas Krishnaswamy participated in the 'The International Budget Project (IBP) Conference' organised by the Centre on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), at Mexico during 9-13 of March.

EU Commonwealth Dialogue

Olivia Jensen attended the 'EU-Commonwealth Dialogue' organised by the Commonwealth Business Council and LSE Global Dimensions Programme, London, on 20th January. The roundtable looked at a range of EU-Commonwealth issues to do with market access, policy co-operation with developing countries, possible approaches to overcoming impediments for the successful outcome of the round.

She joined Pradeep Mehta at a seminar on Competition policy organised by the Consumers International in London on 24th January. She also represented CUTS in the workshop on 'Market Access', organised by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, on 7th February.

Speeding up Development

In a pre-Budget memorandum presented to the Finance Minister, Pradyuman Singh, CUTS representatives expressed concern that funds meant for several development projects either remain unutilised or are diverted to other uses.

They said that the Government alone would not be able to implement all the development programmes and schemes. It ought to involve NGOs in speeding up development projects.

Dues Settlement

The widow of a teacher in a Government service, who was denied the payment of State Insurance and Provident Fund for about three years after her husband's death, was able to get her rightful dues due to CUTS' efforts.

Ramti Devi Gujjar, widow of Panchulal Gujjar, had claimed the payment while complying with all legal formalities, but it was delayed on the pretext of shortcomings in papers. The matter was then taken up on her behalf by CUTS with State Human Rights Commission (SHRC), seeking its intervention. The State Insurance Department acted promptly on the Commission's direction and paid two lakh rupees to Mrs. Gujjar as insurance and PF dues.

Averting Maternal Mortality

The members of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), New York, visited Chittorgarh on 11th February, to observe the grassroots interventions of the organisation for empowerment of community to properly avail basic emergency obstetric care services.



Vincent Fauveau pointing at Gram Cadar

Vincent Fauveau of UNFPA remarked that, considering the high maternal mortality rate in Rajasthan, the prime concern should be the prevention of death of women during pregnancy, delivery and post-delivery period. He added that UNFPA would support all such endeavour directed for the same.

Working for Consumer Rights

Vidyanand Acharya and other activists from the Swadeshi Jaagran Manch (SJM) visited CUTS Delhi Resource Centre (DRC) on 24th January. Rajan R. Gandhi, Director of CUTS-DRC told them that the main purpose of the Centre is to let a greater cross section of people access the information, research and analyses that CUTS had done on issues ranging from the rights of consumers to broader issues of international economic policy.

They expressed interest in several CUTS publications, such as the book on "WTO and India: An Agenda for Action in Post Doha Scenario", Policy Watch, etc.

Pulse Polio Campaign

Under the 'Girl Child Empowerment Project', the members of the 'Bal Panchayat' in the Chittorgarh district were sent letters by CUTS, requesting them to co-operate at the booths during the National Campaign on Pulse Polio on 5th January and 9th February. About 3,500 children in the age group of 0-5 years were given polio drops. The volunteers were also given prizes and certificates by the local administration for their achievement.

SNIPPETS

- Mita Dutta represented CUTS in the workshop "Farmers' Rights: Issues and Options" organised by the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association on 1-2 February at Dhaka.
- Sunita Roy participated at the National Codex Committee meeting held at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on 3rd January at New Delhi.
- Arjun Dutta represented CUTS at the 3rd Delhi Sustainable Development Summit held from 6-9 February. The objective of the summit was to identify measures to translate resolve into action for a sustainable future of mankind.
- Nitya Nanda participated at the Asian Conference on Consumer Protection, Competition Policy and Law, organised by the UNCTAD and Consumers International Regional Office for Asia

and the Pacific on 28 February-1 March at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He spoke on the "Changing Competition Regime in India".

- Sanchita Chatterjee participated in the Third Bangladesh National Reference Group Meeting under the Investment for Development Project on 5th January at Dhaka, Bangladesh, in which the National Advocacy Document of Bangladesh was discussed.
- Vinayak Ratan Pandey attended a training workshop on 'Creative Report Writing' at Murray Culshaw Advisory Services (MCAS), Bangalore, during 23-24 January.
- Bipul Chatterjee attended a conference on the "Challenges Facing the Global Food Economy" organised by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on 6-7 February in The Hague, The Netherlands.

VISITORS

My time with CUTS



Since June 2002, I have been working with CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment, mostly on a project entitled 'Investment for Development'. Working with a great team of colleagues, I have learned a lot, both professionally and personally. In addition, I have had the great opportunity to work with project partners from all over the world, to organise and attend conferences in India and abroad and to meet many interesting and committed people.

But, more than this, I have learned a lot from living and working in an Indian set-up. Coming from a Swedish working and office culture, working in Jaipur could not have been more different. This has been both good and bad, and I hope that my stay here will leave some "Swedishness" behind and that I can bring some of the "Indianess" that I have picked up here home. I will, for sure, miss Jaipur a lot, the city, its forts, its food, its rickshaw-wallahs and its mellow cows, as well as all the great friends and colleagues that I have met here.

Hilda Fridh

A Wonderful Opportunity!



Sanjay Kumar of Gene Campaign, New Delhi, attended a two-week training programme at CUTS Jaipur. While sharing his views, he said that the staff was very friendly and helpful and he learnt various aspects of filing, documentation, maintenance of various records, office discipline, store management, accounts, publications, layout system, etc.

According to Sanjay, "It was really a wonderful learning process here. I will definitely try and put into practice the things I have learnt here. I thank CUTS for giving me an opportunity to learn so much here".

Name	Comments
 Dr. Sanjay Paswan, Union Minister of State, Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, New Delhi.	An excellent unit for consumer awareness and well-versed in social policies.
T. P. Bhat, Professor, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), New Delhi, India	I am deeply impressed by the activities of CUTS over the years. Documents and books brought out by the institute are of immense value to the policy-makers and scholars. New areas selected by CUTS to study will be of great use to the public and policy formulators. I wish CUTS will grow from strength to strength and become a focal point in making and providing new ideas to the researchers.
Michael Detar, Regional Environment Office, US Embassy, Kathmandu, Nepal	Very impressed with the multifaceted work you are doing on complex cross-cutting issues. I hope that we will maintain contact and, perhaps, develop some common activities in the future.
Yasuda Nobuyuki, GSID, Nagoya University, Japan	Impressed by well-organised and staffed institution. CUTS must play an important role to solve three important problems: development, competition and poverty reduction.

We Practice What We Preach

During 1998-2001, we did a campaign on Ecofrig – the environment-friendly refrigerator – with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development Co-operation. One of the objectives was to generate public awareness of the double standards followed by many multinational companies. For example, in Europe, Electrolux manufactures and sells refrigerators based on hydrocarbon (HC) technology, which is environment-friendly as it does not use ozone-depleting CFC (chloro-fluro-carbon) gas or HFC (hydro-fluro-carbon) gas, which has high global warming potential.

However, the same company was (and still is) not manufacturing and selling HC refrigerators in India. We generated awareness among consumers, lobbied with the industry and the government and campaigned in the media. Incidentally, Electrolux is marketing HFC refrigerators in India, arguing they are environment-friendly, which is not true. While India is committed to phasing out CFC use in



refrigeration, etc., as per the Montreal Protocol for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, it is not for HFC, as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change (global warming) is yet to come in force. Incidentally, both CFC and HFC technologies were patented, while the HC one is not.

We advocated that since, for a majority of Indian population, buying a refrigerator is a lifetime investment, manufacturers should leapfrog from CFC to HC technology. Following our persistent efforts, Indian consumers got the HC refrigerator, manufactured and marketed by Godrej-GE.

This is available in not only metro cities, but in cities like Jaipur and the price is not too high. Bipul Chatterjee, a CUTS employee, recently bought one such refrigerator for household use. He also found out from the dealer that many consumers are, in fact, preferring this HC-technology variety to the HFC-technology one.

*Arjun Dutta
CUTS-CSPAC, Calcutta*