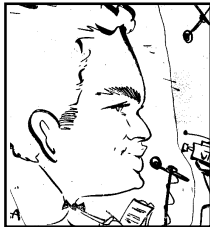


CUTS IN ACTION

January-March 1999



FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

This is the first "CUTS-in-Action", a newsletter reporting on what's happened at CUTS during the quarter of reporting i.e. January-March 1999. We are apologetic for bringing this out late due to sheer over load, and that reflects the kind of progress that we are undergoing. This is also being sent out with the 2nd issue of "CUTS-in-Action" (April-June 1999), and I hope that the 3rd for the period: July-September will reach you soon. That will certainly be our endeavour. Please do write to me on what you feel about this new venture.

Pradip S. Mishra

COMMUNICATIONS

This will be a 4-page quarterly report on the *people* who work at CUTS, or those who have visited us during this period. The second section will be on the *programmes/projects* which we are executing, and lastly the *publications* that we have brought out during the period under each of our five programme areas. With this, we have stopped publication of "The CUTS newsletter for consumers" for two reasons. One is we do not have a specific budgetline for it, and secondly there are now many sources of getting such news.

On the other hand, we are now bringing out many specialised newsletters/reviews, which we will announce on the back page of this report.

TRADE

"I am extremely impressed that CUTS has been on the cutting edge of the international debate on a number of crucial issues. For an NGO from a developing country, it is really amazing." James Zhan

James was here at Jaipur to participate in two back-to-back seminars in mid-January that we organised for the UNCTAD, Ministry of Commerce and Ministry of Environment & Forests on "Policy Integration between Trade and Environment" and on "Investment and Environment". Both the seminars were indeed the first of its type, which we organised.

The Commerce Ministry has also set up a high powered National Advisory Committee on International Trade, to be chaired by the Minister where I was invited to join. Others include business chambers, research institutions, retired civil servants and prominent businessmen.

During this period we bagged a prestigious research project from the UK's Department for International Development titled "Field Study Research in South Asia: Conditions Necessary for

Trade and Investment Liberalisation to Reduce Poverty". The study will be done at the field level in India, with literature inputs from Pakistan and Bangladesh. The objective of this study is to also feed into the World Bank's World Development Report 2000/2001 whose theme is Effects of Trade and Technology on the Poor.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

On our project on information dissemination on Ecofrig and sustainable consumption, we carried out three regional seminars, when we discovered a very high level of awareness on these issues.

The draft National Consumer Policy Statement was also discussed, and a campaign was launched to impress upon the Prime Minister and the Food & Consumer Affairs Minister about the need to adopt a holistic consumer policy.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

In the meanwhile, my term as a board member in the Life Insurance Corporation of India came to an end in November 1998, but we were not given a farewell as it was expected that the same would be renewed.

I was appointed as a consumer representative on the board in 1996 by P. Chidambaram, then Finance Minister and his aide, Jairam Ramesh, in their push for making such public sector bodies autonomous by giving them a professional board.

I was able to bring in a level of consumer sensitivity into the corporation of a very high level, though much more still needs to be done. That will happen once the insurance sector opens up to competition. The consumer sensitivity was brought in by my successful advocacy on a) creating a citizens' charter (the best of its type) and b) setting up a board-level Consumer Affairs Committee with at least four outside members who are acknowledged consumer activists.

In celebration of the World Consumer Rights and the National Consumers Day (15th March) this year, the Consumers International asked its members to carry out a perception survey on: "Consumer Protection, Where Do We Stand?". We carried out the survey in Rajasthan and following this did a state-level seminar on this issue, where we discussed the findings and suggest recommendations.

Opportunity was also seized to discuss the ongoing process of globalisation and liberalisation. The level of awareness was high, and it did not reflect the usual criticism while it showed the maturity of the grassroot networkers that *globalisation and liberalisation is indeed the way forward to reduce poverty, but with appropriate safety nets.*

The Union Consumer Affairs Secretary, Mr K Srinivasan visited us at Jaipur on Sunday 14th March to inaugurate the first Consumer Information Centre in Rajasthan. He was quite happy with the setup that we have been able to establish at Jaipur.

GRASSROOTS

We negotiated a new project with GTZ to survey the perceptions of affected people in the Sanganer town (Jaipur airport area), who are victims of water pollution due to textile dyeing and hand made paper industry. The project will likely lead to a project to mobilise people to demand and get a pollution-free life.

At the CUTS Centre for Human Development, Chittorgarh, we continue plodding on our rural women's empowerment project with the support of CHETNA, who carried out a strategy workshop in January. Both the Women's Day (8 March) and the Consumer Day (15 March) were celebrated with gusto at Chittorgarh.

So, do get back to us with your criticism, comments and compliments, for which we will be very grateful. ■

CONSUMER ACTION IN RAJASTHAN

The CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training conducted two major workshops involving its networkers in January and March, respectively.

The one-day meeting held in 10 January dealt *inter alia* with issues related to Citizens' Charter and Right to Information. It was found that despite various legislations for the protection of consumers' interest, they are still at the receiving end. The participants resolved that a Citizens' Charter for every government body, specially which deals with the developmental activities, can be a way out for proper delivery of goods and services at reasonable prices.

Furthermore, the non-availability of relevant information regarding goods or services or technology leads to many kinds of evils which are detrimental to consumers, e.g. bad quality or late delivery of goods and services, corruption and other irregularities.

To combat this situation, there should be transparency at every stage viz. manufacturing, price fixation, distribution and control of goods, and consumers should be supplied with all relevant information regarding goods and services.

The focus of the two-day workshop, held in 20-21 March, was to assess the understanding of networkers (and through them consumers at large) regarding various consumer rights. The

workshop was held as part of the celebration of the World Consumer Rights Day (15 March).

On the first day of the workshop a discussion on the topic "Consumer Protection: Where Do We Stand" was held. It included eight consumers rights viz. right to basic needs, right to safety, right to information, right to choose, right to representation, right to redress, right to consumer education, and right to healthy environment.



Earlier, a survey was conducted among the networkers to understand the grassroots awareness level and situation in Rajasthan vis-à-vis consumer protection.

The meeting was important in three aspects. First, it gave an idea about the level of their knowledge of the above-mentioned rights. Secondly, it helped in capacity building of the participants, which hopefully would trickle down to the lowest strata of consumers. Thirdly and most importantly, it came out with important recommendations, which will shape the future actions of the government as well as consumer organisations.

On the second day of the workshop two topics were dealt with. First was to assess the participants' knowledge on economic liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, while the second one dealt with various social development programmes of the Government of Rajasthan and its administrative accountability.

WORLD WOMEN'S DAY



The day (8 March) was celebrated at the CUTS Centre for Human Development (CUTS-CHD), Chittorgarh by organising a workshop. The theme of the event was "Women's Struggle Towards Basic Needs of Life and Alternatives".

More than 450 women associated with the Rural Women's Empowerment Programme of the CUTS-CHD participated in the workshop. It was chaired by Manorama Patavardhan, Chairperson, Social Welfare Board, Rajasthan. She urged that voluntary organisations should be more active in addressing gender issues.

Noted lawyer B L Sisodia spoke about the legal rights of women and urged them to fulfil their multipurpose role for the development of the society.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINARS

The CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment organised two seminars on 13-15 January at Jaipur on Strengthening Trade and Environmental Policy Integration in India, and on the linkages between Trade, Investment and the Environment. Bhagraj Chaudhuri, Minister of State and Environment and Forests, Government of Rajasthan inaugurated the event.

The seminars were organised for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry

of Commerce, Government of India. The participants were government officials, representative from inter-governmental agencies, research institutions, business chambers and non-governmental organisations.

There was a general appreciation that environmental requirements impact export performance of India and ways have to be found to overcome these impacts. Suggestions ranged from upgrading quality of Indian products to finding bilateral and multilateral solutions for possible disguised protectionism faced in the developed market.

The participants also discussed initiatives taken by the German and Danish agencies with the UNCTAD on the environmental implications of foreign direct investment. It was noted with appreciation that cross-border environmental management by transnational corporations in India, China and Malaysia is being studied at the unit



level and should help in assessing environmental spillovers of FDI.

Difficulties in finding overall environmental performance of TNCs were pointed out by many. It was nevertheless felt that special environmental safeguards in domestic and international investment policies could help sustainable development.

The concluding session was presided over by Arvind Mayaram, Secretary, Department of Industry, Government of

Rajasthan. Discussants opined that the two seminars were important inputs in the chain of events being organised by UNCTAD along with the Government of India.

SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

A series of regional workshops on Sustainable Consumption and Ecofrig (environment-friendly refrigerators) were organised in Calcutta, Mumbai and Chennai, respectively. These were part of the campaign titled "Information and Education on Ecofrig", and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, New Delhi.

The campaign aims at educating consumer organisations about the harmful effects of the use of CFCs (chloro-fluorocarbons) towards global environment like depletion of ozone layer, global warming. Under the Montreal



Protocol for the Protection of Ozone Layer, 1987, the CFCs will have to be stopped in a phased manner.

However, the alternative technologies available in the market also have harmful global warming potentialities. Furthermore, being one-time investment by most of the Indian consumers, the campaign calls for leapfrogging towards the use of HC (hydro-carbon) technology which is not ozone depleting and minor global warming potentiality.

PEOPLE

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

The Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED) in collaboration with the Alternative Konsumenten Bond and the Centre for Respect of Life and Environment organised a two-day conference, "From Consumer Society to Sustainable Society: Towards Sustainable Production and Consumption" held in Soesterberg, the Netherlands from 31 January to 1 February. Rajat Chaudhuri, Coordinator, CUTS Safety Watch participated in the conference.

TRADE POLICY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Raghav Narsalay, Policy Analyst, CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment attended a conference titled "Trade Policy and Sustainability: The Regional Approaches" held in Geneva on 1-2 February. The conference was organised by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, Geneva, Switzerland in collaboration with the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, UK.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY

Consumers International, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific organised a three-day conference on "Sustainable Food Security: The Agenda for the Millennium" held in Penang,



Malaysia in March. Pradeep S. Mehta participated in the conference as a key note speaker and presented a paper titled, "Reforms in European Agriculture and Its Impact on Southern Consumers".

Bipul Chatterjee, Assistant Director, CUTS was also invited to participate in the conference. However, to resolve certain pressing organisational matters he was unable to participate.

WTO SYMPOSIUMS



Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General represented the organisation in two high level symposiums organised by the World Trade Organisation in March. The first symposium was on issues of trade and environment, while the second one on trade and development. The CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment submitted two statements at the symposiums.

In these statements, the Centre put "Way Forwards" under different contexts. For example, in the statement circulated at the Trade and Environment symposium, under the context of containing poverty in the South, the suggested way forward was: "The international community must realise that unless the links between the chain of trade-market access-sustainable development are not strengthened and are not used in eradicating poverty in the South, the goals of the WTO get defeated."

Similarly, under the context of special and differential treatment to developing

and least developed countries (in the statement on the linkages between trade and development), the suggestions were, "The international community must commit themselves to honest implementation of special and differential treatment under various Agreements as promised to developing and least developed countries. The developed countries should also assist developing and least developed countries in terms of financial and technical assistance to help them make an effective transition from their special and differential status."

WOMEN AND HEALTH



In March, Rajasthan Voluntary Health Association, Jaipur organised a four-day training workshop in Ajmer, Rajasthan for grassroots workers of voluntary organisations of Rajasthan. The subject of the workshop was "Women and Health". Ghanshyam Singh Chauhan and Chandrakala Purohit, Field Organisers, CUTS Centre for Human Development participated in the workshop.

SELF HELP GROUPS

Payal Rao, Programme Officer and Hemlata Rathore, Field Organiser of CUTS Centre for Human Development participated in a one-day meeting on formation of self help groups among the rural women. The meeting, held on 26 March, was organised by SAHYOG, Chittorgarh.

Distinguished Visitors

Andreas Burger	Senior Scientific Officer	Federal Environmental Agency, Berlin, Germany
Rashid Hasan	Joint Director	Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India
S. Sathpathy	Additional Director	
James Zhan	Special Assistant to the Director	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, Switzerland
Audun Ruud	Research Fellow	Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo, Norway
Rene Vossenaar	Head	Trade, Environment and Sustainable Development Section, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Geneva, Switzerland
Valerie Normand	Economic Affairs Officer	
Shi Han	Director	Centre for Environmentally Sound Technology Transfer, Beijing, China
Paschen Von Flotow	Managing Director	Institut Für Ökologie Und Unternehmensführung, Germany
V.S. Vyas	Professor Emeritus	Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur, India
Mark Robinson	Programme Officer	The Ford Foundation, New Delhi, India
K. Srinivasan	Secretary	Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, Government of India
Erich Vogt	Asia Desk Officer	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin, Germany
Paul Olthof	Consultant	National Productivity Council, New Delhi, India

PERIODICALS



CUTS began out of this rural communication initiative, *Gram Gadar* (Village Revolution), in 1983. This monthly wall newspaper in Hindi reaches many remote villages in Rajasthan, where radio is the only medium. It has been instrumental in providing a forum for oppressed classes to get justice. It covers rural development, environment and gender-related issues.



A quarterly newsletter of the CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training, *Upbhokta Tarang* (Consumer Currents) published in Hindi, and aimed at members and networking organisations in Rajasthan. It seeks to sensitise the consumers about issues pertaining to their rights, environment and health among others.



This quarterly newsletter, *Aage Badhno Hosi* (Women Marching Ahead), in Hindi for Rural Women's Empowerment Programme of the CUTS Centre for Human Development generates awareness among women with respect to their constitutional rights, reproductive health and redressal avenues available to them.

A quarterly newsletter of the CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment. A flagship product of the Centre and reaches out to an international audience comprising of trade community, civil society organisations, media persons etc. Contents are provided under various sections, viz. Economic issues, trade, investment and finance, competition issues, development, trade disputes, environment and economics etc. It consists of 28 pages in A-4 size. The periodicity of this newsletter will be increased over time as per demand and resources.



This quarterly newsletter is published as part of the organisation's international campaign on sustainable consumption. It reports and discusses developments in relation to sustainable consumption world over. It covers issues such as global warming, environment-friendly technologies and products, eco-labelling and a host of other topics, including initiatives taken by various countries to meet the objectives of the Montreal Protocol for the Protection of Ozone Layer, 1987.



A quarterly newsletter reporting on policy and regulatory developments in India with the aim of informing people about them as well as building a constituency for independent regulatory reforms. Its objective is to inform government officials, government officials, developmental and consumer organisations on governance, business and industry, trade and development issues, infrastructure, consumer issues et al.

