

CUTS IN ACTION



October-December 2003

Mayhem on our Roads in an Expanding Road Network!



In this edition, I write about an issue which has affected each one of us – that of unnecessary deaths and injuries due to road accidents. Even if there is no one from our own family who has

suffered, surely there is someone we know who has. CUTS has been active on this issue, and like all its activities, developed policy advocacy based upon its own empirical work. For example, once I found how accident data gets under-reported at the district level. That then gets reflected in the national data. A rough estimate shows that one can easily add 15 percent to the national data to arrive at the real figure.

CUTS was also responsible for the drafting of the National Road Safety Policy in 1993, but that seems to be gathering dust, like all other good intentions. We continued to remind the Government to act on it. India has one of the highest per capita accidents in the

world (86,000 get killed and more than 400,000 get injured or crippled every year – on a road network of just 3.3 mn km. India, with one percent of the vehicle population of the globe, is causing six percent of the total accidents of the world.) There is an accident every two minutes and every 10 minutes a person dies.



CUTS has been quite active in this field for quite some time. In terms of grassroots activities, we have focused our work in Jaipur City. Every year, we observe the Road Safety Week from January 7-14. Earlier, in November-December 2002, an intense road safety campaign was also carried out in Jaipur, resulting in the government enforcing the use of helmets among two-wheeler riders. In a ripple effect, it was later implemented in all the cities of the State of Rajasthan. On this New Year, we have resolved to pursue this activity with greater energy and ensure that there are lesser number of tragedies on our roads.

The automobile sector is one which has grown phenomenally, but since we adopted liberalisation in the 1990s, the sector of public transport has not received the same fillip. It is not transportation alone; we need reforms in several other areas too. In this, the civil society movement needs to be a more active player than it is now.

In this quarter, we launched a new programme to empower Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to understand economic governance. We hope to take the project forward by taking up an intensive training programme and create activists who will be able to deal with complex issues with a dispassionate approach.

As in the previous issue of this Newsletter, we once again carry extracts of messages from two close friends in the consumer movement from our souvenir, “20 Years of CUTS”, which will motivate us to live up to their expectations.

Pradeep S. Mehta

Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General

Difficult to Advise CUTS, Which Has Built up Such a Formidable Position in Both Research and Advocacy



My observation has been one of an incredibly impressed friend. It is difficult to describe to those outside the consumer world, who have had no dealing with CUTS (remarkably few these days!), just how impressive it has become over such a short period of time. The activities that CUTS undertakes in the main areas I deal with – trade and competition policy – are nothing short of miraculous. The speed with which the organisation gets up on a topic and the quality of its work and conferences is always a measure by which I judge others. The networks that are established are quite remarkable.

The growth of CUTS has also been remarkable - it now has more specialist staff than most developed world consumer organisations, and indeed, research bodies. One of the many impressive things about CUTS is the quality of its staff and their enthusiasm and willingness to learn and engage in debate.

CUTS has built-up a formidable position in both research and advocacy and it is difficult to give advice to such a successful organisation. I think the key challenge in strengthening research and advocacy is thus much more an issue of recognising the emerging nature of CUTS as the centre of a network, rather than just another NGO working on trade/competition/environment, etc.

Phil Evans

Principal Policy Adviser, Consumers' Association, London, UK

When other Organisations Gave Me Knowledge, CUTS Gave Me the Wisdom



My major encounter with the CUTS team was in January 1994 when I attended the Training Workshop for Young Consumer Leaders (TWYCL) organised by CUTS jointly with the International Organisation for Consumer Unions (now Consumers International) at Calcutta. The TWYCL gave a 'big push' to the consumer activist in me.

I have attended various programmes on consumer protection organised by different consumer organisations. Whereas other organisations gave me education, CUTS gave me the training; where others gave me knowledge, CUTS gave me wisdom.

As an organisation, CUTS' growth has been phenomenal. It is a role model for other voluntary organisations. CUTS is one of those few organisations in the world, working at the local, national and global level with efficiency and effectiveness and thereby providing direct assistance to an individual citizen by guiding him/her and indirect assistance to the citizens at large by influencing the policymakers and producers to work for consumer welfare.

Surendra U. Kanstiya

Former Chairperson, Consumers Guidance Society of India, India

EVENTS

Road Safety Campaign

'Road Safety means Life Safety', 'Drive Carefully and Save Lives', etc, were some of the slogans raised at a rally of school children under the 'Road Safety Programme' organised by CUTS from November 10-December 25 at Jaipur, Rajasthan, with the support of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (Road Safety Cell). Formal inauguration of the programme by Malini Agarwal, SP (Traffic) really encouraged the volunteers and school children.

The inauguration was followed by a campaign by school children and volunteers wearing caps and T-shirts carrying messages on road safety and the performance of a *Nukkad Natak* (street play), with road safety as the theme. Leaflets, brochures, posters and other publicity materials were distributed to pedestrians, commuters and drivers at the busiest road junctions of the City. Various camps for educating school children, drivers, traffic wardens and the general public were also organised under the programme. (<http://cuts-international.org/road-safety04.htm>)

Food and its Quality

As part of a Project on 'Food Quality Literacy and Awareness', implemented by CUTS in partnership with the Consumer Co-ordination Council, New Delhi, on behalf of the Ministry of Food Processing, a unique campaign was organised from November 17-30 at Jaipur. The campaign aimed at finding out the extent of awareness among school and college students about food safety and quality.

A survey among school and college students, an essay competition for college students and an on-the-spot painting/poster competition for school students were conducted under the campaign. Students actively participated in the campaign and expressed their views on a wide range of issues like food adulteration, junk food, pesticides in soft drinks, worms

in chocolates, etc., through paintings and posters.

Prize-winning essays, paintings and posters were also exhibited at the National Convention of the Consumer Co-ordination Council held in Pondicherry on December 20-21.

Power Sector Reforms

Two consecutive training seminars were organised under the CUTS-Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Project on power sector reforms – the first one at Bhilwara, Rajasthan, on October 22, followed by another one on November 23 at Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan. Both the seminars attracted more than 45 participants, including experts on consumer issues and representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and grass-roots consumer organisations. The seminars aimed at promoting consumer participation in the ongoing reform process. (<http://cuts-international.org/psr-04.htm>)

National Consumer Day

It is necessary to analyse whether the benefits of Consumer Protection Act are reaching the poor, said Navrang Lal Tibrewal, former Chief Justice and the former acting Governor of Rajasthan, at the seminar organised by CUTS on National Consumer Day at Jaipur on December 24. Prem Krishan Sharma, Senior Advocate, and K B Agarwal, Professor and Director, Indian Institute of Comparative Law, were the other keynote speakers.

Securing Farmers' Rights

A dissemination workshop on Farmers' Rights and Livelihood was organised by CUTS at Nainbag, Tehri Garhwal in collaboration with the network organisation Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra, Dehradun, on December 20-21. The workshop highlighted the need for proper policy intervention in securing farmers' rights to

livelihood in the Himalayan region in the context of liberalisation, globalisation and the WTO agreements. The major issues discussed were Intellectual Property Rights and farmers' access to seed, scope of crop diversification in Garhwal Himalayan Region, commercialisation of agriculture and its impact on mountain farmers, etc. (<http://cuts-international.org/nainbagb-rep.doc>)

Role of NGOs in Economic Governance

"The process of liberalisation did not diminish the role of economic governance in the country, as unregulated corporations can harm people. The biggest challenge, therefore, is to set up independent regulatory institutions, which can withstand pressures from political and business lobbies. The Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can play an important role in the process. They can raise awareness and build pressure to enhance accountability of the regulators," observed D R Mehta, former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the capital market regulator of the country. He was speaking at a national seminar on "The Role of the Civil Society Organisations in Economic Governance", organised by CUTS at Jaipur from December 19-21.

The seminar was attended by representatives of several civil society groups from different parts of the country. A number of experts on regulatory issues spoke in the seminar. Speaking on the occasion, Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS, emphasised that, if India wanted to realise the goal of a developed country living standard by the year 2020, it needed to look beyond the eight percent growth target. This is difficult, but not impossible, and the third sector, *i.e.*, the NGOs can significantly contribute to the achievement of the goal, he said.

(<http://cuts-international.org/news-cuts1.htm#Bigger>)



Post-Cancun Agenda for SA

CUTS, together with South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (SAWTEE), organised a three-day regional conference-cum-training programme entitled 'Post-Cancun Agenda for South Asia', from November 30-December 2 in Kathmandu, Nepal. More than 60 participants from five South Asian countries, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the conference. Regional experts on WTO issues made presentations on the post-Cancun agenda to strengthen the capacity of participants, who were representing different stakeholder groups. (<http://cuts-international.org/cutsinmedia1.htm#post-cancun>)

REPRESENTATION

Farmers' Rights Meet

Mita Dutta represented CUTS in the third regional consultation of the Farmers' Rights Project held in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The meeting aimed at discussing issues in the context of post-Cancun global trading order. She presented CUTS activities and views in India, with the aim of securing farmers' rights to livelihood.



Dutta also participated in the 10-year celebration of the Gene Campaign at Delhi. The meet was organised to catch up the current debate on the relevance of GM technology to Indian agriculture and food security.

Sustained Elimination of IDD

Dharmendra Chaturvedi of CUTS attended a workshop on "Sustained Elimination of Iodine Deficiency and Disorder (IDD) through Iodised Salt" organised by UNICEF and the Salt Commission, at Kota, Rajasthan on December 7. The

workshop was held to review the status of the availability, quality and price of iodised salt in Rajasthan; draft a Plan of Action for 2003-04 for increasing production and consumption of iodised salt in Rajasthan.

CI World Congress

Consumers International 17th World Congress was held in Lisbon, Portugal, from October 13-17. About 500 delegates from 100 countries attended the event. CUTS was represented by Rajan R Gandhi, K S Sajeev and Nitya Nanda.



The theme of the Congress was "The Future of Consumer Protection in the Era of Globalisation." A series of workshops, plenaries, training sessions and informal meetings were held as part of the Congress. Some of the issues raised in the meeting include: Consumer Protection and Democratic Governance; Sustainability and Consumer Behaviour; Public Utilities and Consumer Empowerment, etc.

CUTS organised a fringe meeting titled, "Civil Society's Role in Promoting Competition and Fair Trading." CUTS also put up a stall for its various publications, which were received well by the delegates. A special issue of this newsletter was published on the occasion.

Energy Conservation

Vinayak R Pandey of CUTS presented a paper on 'Energy Conservation through Efficient Irrigation' at the inaugural of the Energy Conservation Week observed by the Department of Energy, Government of Rajasthan on December 9.

Pandey also visited Shree Cement, Beawar, Rajasthan, as a member of the fact-finding committee scrutinising the 'Rajiv Gandhi National Award for Total Quality Management, 2003' on November 24-25.

He also participated in the 'National Conference on Infrastructure Sector Regulation' organised by the Regulatory Studies and Governance Division of Tata Energy & Resources Institute (TERI) at Delhi on November 18-19.

Biodiversity and its Impact

Dalia Dey of CUTS attended the Third Biennial Conference of the Indian Society for Ecological Economics on "Biodiversity and Quality of Life" held at Calcutta on December 18-20. The



meet was hosted by the Centre for Development and Environment Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. About 60 papers were presented in the parallel technical sessions, which addressed conservation, local level use of biodiversity and future options.

SNIPPETS

- Dharmendra Chaturvedi participated in a seminar on 'Dalit Human Rights' at Jaipur on December 27, organised by the National Centre for Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), marking the culmination of the awareness rallies organised in different parts of Rajasthan. He also attended the Gumanthu Caste Community Mela organised by the NGO, Mukthidhara, working for the rights of nomadic tribes, at Alwar Road, Rajasthan, on November 28.
- Dalia Dey and Soumi Home Roy attended the National Consumers' Congress 2003 from November 8-9 at Visakhapatnam, organised by the Visakha Consumers' Council to celebrate their 30th Anniversary. Dalia presented a paper on "Restrictive Trade Practices" and Soumi talked on "Consumer Safety". A safety article, "Be Cautious about Irrational Prescriptions", written by Soumi, was published in the souvenir released on the occasion.
- George Cheriyan, along with Tamar Lordkipanidze from the London Resource Centre, K C Sharma and Dharmendra Chaturvedi attended the function for the release of the 'State of the World's Children Report 2004' by Ghanshyam Tiwari, Minister for Primary and Middle Education, Government of Rajasthan (GoR), organised by UNICEF at Jaipur, on December 12.
- Bipul Chatterjee and K S Sajeev participated in the evaluation workshop on trade of the World Bank, which was held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania on December 13-14. Chatterjee made a presentation on trade and poverty linkages, drawing on CUTS' work.

INTERVENTIONS

Moving in the Right Direction

In response to the petition filed by CUTS for banning jeeps as public transport vehicles on highways, a hearing of the Rajasthan Human Rights Commission (RHRC), Jaipur, was held on December 17. B L Joshi, a former IG of Police and a member of the RHRC, who presided over the sitting of the Commission, appreciated the efforts of CUTS and directed the traffic officials to take action against the violating jeep drivers.

Vigilance Week

During the Vigilance Week, observed from November 3-8, K C Sharma of CUTS visited the *Lokayukta* office in Jaipur to gather information about its functioning. On the basis of the information gathered, a letter was sent to the Chief Minister, requesting him to initiate strong action against the corrupt officials, along with suggestions for a corruption-free administration.

In the context of the forthcoming elections, another letter was sent to the mainstream political parties, asking them to incorporate measures to tackle corruption in their manifesto itself.

Survey on Elections

To assess the response/impression of the people about the political parties, the politicians and the future government, a survey was conducted among a cross section of the society. The findings were consolidated on November 28. About 300 people participated in the survey.

— VISITORS —

Name	Comments
Peter Draper, South African Institute of International Affairs	Thanks for a most interesting discussion. I am looking forward to taking it further in the next few months.
Dr N. C. Pahariya, Professor of Economics, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur	Great opportunity to meet people in this place. CUTS is doing a wonderful job in various areas, especially on WTO issues, which are also of interest to me. Hope to do some good work with this organisation.
Samar Verma, Policy Advisor, Oxfam GB in India	My visit was a long desire fulfilled. It was striking to note the professionalism that is evident in all dimensions of CUTS' activity, which shows clearly in the office.
Dilip Shivpuri, Commissioner of Income Tax, Calcutta	I would be frank enough to admit that I was not aware of the importance of the work CUTS was doing, till I visited the premises. The area of research, especially on world trade, is at the forefront of India's attempt to globalise its economy; its importance cannot be under-estimated. I wish CUTS continues to work with ever-increasing dedication and sincerity so that India gains by the contribution of his organisation to world trade.

— FORUM —

Thank you so much for sending the book entitled "Bridging the Differences: Analyses of Five Issues of the WTO Agenda". The book will be useful to our faculty and students. It will be a valuable addition to our library. Congratulations to you for bringing out a book on topical issues.

*B. K. Tiwari
Head of Centre for Environmental Studies
North-Eastern Hill University
Meghalaya, India*

Thank you again for sending me your recent publication 'Bridging the Differences' (and also other CUTS-Newsletters received in the past). The book is an interesting collection of research work on significant issues. I shall look forward to being a part of other similar knowledge-building and dissemination exercises that you associate yourself with.

*Anirudh Shingal
Consultant
Poverty Reduction & Economic Management
World Bank
New Delhi, India*

A Threat Can Work!



Very often, we are disappointed with services, but are reluctant to go to a consumer forum because the sum involved is too small to be worth the trouble. But should we forgo our rights as a consumer so easily?

Sometimes even a threat to go to a consumer forum works well!

Nitya Nanda of CUTS gave a shirt to a local dry cleaner for cleaning. But he found the shirt badly damaged on delivery. The cleaner argued that the shirt had actually been received thus. Nitya pointed out the shirt may have been quite dirty, but was certainly undamaged.

"How was it possible that if the shirt was damaged to such a great extent at the time of receiving it, the damage went undetected through all the process of labelling and cleaning?" he argued. Obviously, it had been damaged while ironing, Nitya said.

At which the cleaner pleaded that he could not do anything if a garment was damaged accidentally and that the terms, as printed on the reverse of the receipt, absolved him from any liability.

Nitya introduced himself as a consumer activist working with CUTS. The dry cleaner could not avoid the liability, irrespective of what was written on the receipt, he said and threatened to drag him to the consumer forum.

Now, the dry cleaner was a changed man. "Please advise me what I should do!" he pleaded. Nitya suggested that as he had bought the shirt for Rs. 700 about a couple of months ago, a compensation of Rs. 500 should be reasonable. The dry cleaner agreed without any further ado and gave him the amount.

— PUBLICATIONS —

We've been here before Perspectives on the Cancún Ministerial

CUTS Centre for International Trade, Economics & Environment (CUTS-CITEE) has compiled articles on the Fifth WTO Ministerial. The aim of this publication is to present different points of view on the causes of the failure (if at all) of the Conference in Cancún. Whilst some hailed a new beginning, others were disappointed following the collapse of the talks.

With this volume, we sought to bring together some of the pre-Cancún and post-Cancún analyses by intellectuals, policy makers and trade negotiators that appeared in leading national and international newspapers. The first and second parts "Pre-Cancún" and "Cancún" set the scene. The third part "Post-Cancún" offers a myriad of responses to the Ministerial's outcome. The Annexes, in turn, provide the two drafts of the Cancún Ministerial Text as well as the final Ministerial Statement.

CUTS will not draw any profit from this publication, since it is solely for informative and educational purposes.

Comments:

Thank you for a copy of the latest CUTS publication "We've been here before Perspectives on the Cancun Ministerial" which I look forward to reading with interest. It is indeed important that we do not lose sight of the past as we seek to make progress.

Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi,
Director General, WTO

I've found your book on Cancun material really useful.

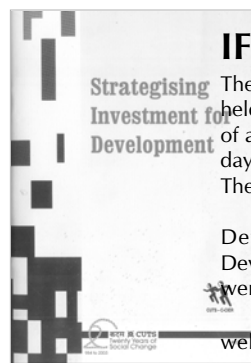
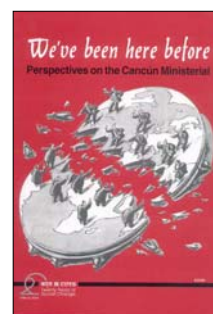
Dr. Sylvia Ostry, Distinguished Research Fellow
Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, Canada

It is an interesting collection of articles which are informative and useful.

Rajeev Mitter, Joint Secretary, Department of
Commerce, Trade Policy Division, India

The articles are very interesting, highly informative and educative. The book is truly useful for updating our knowledge on WTO.

K. N. Shivakumar, Executive,
KCTU-WTO Relay Cell, Bangalore, India



IFD Successfully Completed...

The Final Meeting of the "Investment for Development" (IFD) project was held in Geneva, Switzerland from January 28-30, 2004. The meeting consisted of a Panel Discussion on Civil Society Perceptions of FDI on Jan 28, and a day long International Seminar on FDI Policies and Regulation on Jan 30. The events were held at UNCTAD and were attended by about 80 participants.

The project advocacy document "Strategising Investment for Development" and synthesis report "Synergising Investment with Development" were released during the meeting. 15 other project reports were also displayed and distributed at the meeting.

There was all round appreciation of the meeting for its organisation as well as publications for their content and design.