

# CUTS@GRASSROOTS

**Empowering Communities  
Informing Policy  
Amplifying Change**

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) is a leading public policy think-tank and grassroots civil society organisation. Founded in 1983 in Jaipur, Rajasthan, it began as a rural communication initiative through the *Gram Gadar* wall newspaper and soon emerged as a strong voice for consumer rights.

Over time, the organisation has grown into a multi-thematic, multi-country organisation working across trade, regulation and governance.

Though well known in the area of public policy research and advocacy, it ventured into grassroot activities in Southern Rajasthan, India in 1993 to get a better feel of the ground. Thus it could gather ground level evidence to advocate better policies at the State, National and International levels. Simultaneously, it could also demystify policy issues and empower people at the grassroot with that knowledge.

One of the most challenging things was the arrival of better products, technologies and services which lead to improvement in living standards of the poor. For example, the arrival of Subscriber Trunk Dialling helped the poor in remote areas to communicate. Subsequently, the arrival of mobile phones changed lives hugely.

CUTS combines grassroots action and policy research to raise the voices of the underserved and promote evidence-based policymaking. The organisation works across India and several countries in the Global South, with an unwavering commitment to empowering communities and ensuring inclusive growth, and taking its results forward to international policy-making bodies in Geneva and Washington DC.

Our philosophy: *'From grassroots to policy corridors' - real change is built from below.*





## Young Leader, Powerful Voice

Durga Kumari, President of Ghagsa *Bal Panchayat* (village level forum for children) – a CUTS initiative in Rajasthan – was felicitated by Girija Vyas, MP and Chairperson, National Commission for Women (2005-2011) for protesting against her own child marriage.

## Focus in India, Zambia, Kenya & Ghana

CUTS promotes good governance, sustainable development, and people's empowerment by tackling social, economic, and environmental challenges through evidence-based interventions.

Our key programmatic areas include:

- Governance
- Sustainable Development
- Empowerment
- Social Accountability

## Approach

We address both symptoms and root causes of development challenges, bridging the gap between people and policies.

What makes us unique:

- **Multi-stakeholder dialogue** with government, academia, and civil society.
- **Local leadership building**, especially among women and youth.
- **Engage with communities** to understand real issues through participatory action.
- **Inform policy** through recommendations grounded in lived realities.
- **Create a questioning society** which questions the system constantly about various policies and practices which affect them.

## Child Protection and Development

- **24/7 Childline 1098 Service:** Operated a 24-hour helpline in Bhilwara, India with government support, handling 5,400+ child protection cases.
- **Education Reintegration and Support:** Re-enrolled 400+ out-of-school children through bridge education, supplementary learning, and parental engagement.
- **Vocational Training & Family Support:** Trained 200 adolescents (15-18 years) in vocational skills and connected vulnerable families to welfare schemes to prevent child labour.
- **Child Participation in Governance:** Formed 45 *Bal Panchayats* with 700 children to promote school governance, quality education and community-based child rights awareness.

Maneka Gandhi, Women and Child Development Minister of India (2014-2019) releasing a CUTS publication

*A Bal Panchayat to discuss rights and responsibilities*





## Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods

- **Self Help Groups (SHGs):** Formed 1,250 SHGs with 13,000 women, trained 235+ in enterprise skills and supported livelihoods, such as tailoring, animal husbandry, and beauty salons.
- **Financial Literacy:** Reached 3,400 rural women, improving access to credit, savings, and insurance.
- **Skill Development for Girls:** Equipped rural girls (14-18) with skills for livelihood and entrepreneurship.
- **Inclusive and Transformative Outcomes:** Promoted education for 1,500 girls and advanced gender equality and women's leadership in addressing issues like domestic violence.
- **Empowering People with Disabilities:** Supported 5,400+ persons with disabilities through Disabled People Organisations, accessibility audits, training, welfare linkages and rights-based advocacy.
- **Empowering market queens in Ghana:** Empowered 5000 market queens in the rural areas of Ghana who are engaged in procurement and marketing of agriculture produce from farms.

### Empowering Women, Earning Recognition

Women SHG acquired State Level Award for Excellent Work in Livelihood Promotion by NABARD. One Badam Bai was honoured by the District Collector for encouraging fellow women of her SHG.



CUTS promoted SHGs participating in World Women's Day Celebrations



## Consumer Rights and Awareness

- **Consumer Awareness Campaigns:** Conducted 1,000+ rural workshops on key rights and services; and offered legal advice through *Grahak Sahayata Kendra* in Rajasthan, India.
- **Consumer Friends:** Trained 3000 volunteers in Rajasthan, India to raise awareness, address complaints, and monitor public services like healthcare and ration delivery. This led to a strong consumer movement in India.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Empowered communities to use RTI for transparency and engaged legislators to resolve consumer issues.
- **Grassroots to Policy:** Conducted grassroots research on consumer experiences in Kenya, Zambia and Ghana in Africa and engaged stakeholders to advocate for change.

## Strengthening Cybersecurity and Digital Rights

- **Cybersecurity Empowerment for MSMEs:** Trained 16,000 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including women-led, in 10 states to enhance cybersecurity and digital resilience.
- **Digital Literacy and Safety:** Reached 750 people - 500 MSMEs, 250 women and housewives - across eight East and Northeast states in India through digital safety workshops.
- **Research on Online Safety and Privacy:** Engaged 2,400 consumers, 600 parents and 600 youth to assess data privacy and protect children online.

Cybersecurity Training for MSMEs in Viratnagar, Rajasthan, India





## Reproductive and Community Health

- **Community-Centred Health:** Empowered 400 rural and marginalised individuals on reproductive health and nutrition in Rajasthan, India using social accountability tools to improve services.
- **Reproductive and Child Health:** Promoted safe motherhood, reproductive choices, and male involvement through health initiatives and campaigns across *panchayats*, in Rajasthan, India reaching 3,000 participants.
- **Health Outreach and Eye Care:** Engaged 2,000+ VHSC members in 500 villages in Rajasthan, India to improve healthcare oversight and provide eye screenings and vision care.

## Grassroots Voices in International Trade

- **Capacity Building and Civil Society Engagement:** Strengthened civil society's role in trade and governance through initiatives like *Grassroots Reachout and Networking in India on Trade & Economics*, training grassroots actors on WTO rules and Regional Trade Agreements. Similar awareness projects were also conducted in Zambia, Kenya, Malawi, Botswana and Ghana.
- **Advocacy and Policy Impact:** Promoted bottom-up approaches and shaped trade policy through evidence-based advocacy, with key recommendations reflected in the India-Bangladesh Border Haats MoU.

## Climate Resilience and Sustainable Agriculture

- **Farmers' Empowerment through FPOs:** Promoted 36 FPOs benefiting 22,000+ farmers in India with better inputs, market access and climate-smart farming for sustainable incomes.
- **Sustainable Livelihoods through Climate Learning:** Strengthening grassroots climate resilience in Homa Bay, Kenya, Africa through inclusive initiatives - climate committees, awareness, training, climate-smart livelihoods, transparency and financing.
- **Youth-Led Urban Food Systems and Climate Resilience:** Empowering urban youth in Chongwe, Zambia, Africa through food systems innovation - supporting agripreneurs with a digital hub, cooperatives, training and climate-resilient farming.

### Let success make the noise

Ratni Bai Khatik, a CUTS worker, was awarded the international prize 'Creativity of Women in Rural Life' in the year 2002, by the Women World Summit Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland.



Communities adopt climate-smart farming for food and income



A campaign to promote sustainable consumption





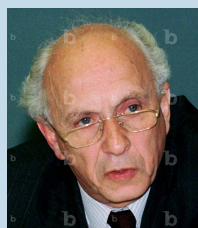
## Praises from the Top



CUTS Vision Document is in line with the Agenda 2030 and the organisation will continue to play an important role in advocating for and achieving it. UNDP deeply values CUTS efforts to promote global development.'

**Achim Steiner**

*Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (2017-present)*



The impact and success of 'Gram Gadar' in enriching and changing the lives of many villagers gives us new impetus to try to improve the lives of the neediest in our daily work - however remote it may seem at first sight.'

**Rubens Ricupero**

*Secretary General of UNCTAD (1995-2004)*



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.

**Jagdish Bhagwati**

*Professor, Columbia University, New York*

## Voices from the Ground

Before joining the FPO, I struggled with high input costs and poor market access. With CUTS' support, the FPO provided affordable agri inputs, built a warehouse under the Rajasthan Agro Policy 2019, and sold our produce at ₹200 above MSP, increasing my income by 15 percent.

**– Ram Lal**

*Member, Swabhiman FPO*

Because of CUTS interventions, our nomadic community has found recognition and support. Despite many challenges, we now walk with strength and confidence. Our lives are changing, and I can finally hope for a better future for our children.

**– Badam Bai**

*SHG member, Gadia Lohar (Nomadic) Community*

Thanks to CUTS, I learned about the Palanhar Scheme and received the financial support I was entitled to. It will help me provide food, clothing, and education for my children. Now, I dream of giving my daughter a higher education.

**– Varjudi Katara**

*Beneficiary of Palanhar Yojana, Banswara*

With CUTS' support, I found my voice and the strength to stand up for others with disabilities. Through our Disabled People's Organisation, I've become an advocate for those who cannot fight for themselves.

**– Preeti Taneja**

*Former President, Disabled People Organisation*

With my bedridden husband and no other income source, I faced severe hardship. Guided by CUTS and encouraged by my group, I secured loans to start poultry and tailoring businesses, now earning a steady income to support my family.

**– Reshma**

*Member, Jawala Mahila SHG*



CUTS aims to expand its presence in underserved areas and deepen its work on public health, digital economy, and climate resilience while staying rooted in its community-first approach.

### Value for People

- Grassroots Philanthropy Mapping
- Electricity Governance in Rural Households
- Digital Financial Consumer Protection Studies

### Collaboration

- Government of India
- State Governments in Rajasthan, West Bengal and Assam

### CUTS Vision@50

- **Technology for inclusion:** AI-enabled grievance systems, digital awareness
- **Youth leadership:** nurturing adolescent change agents
- **Climate justice:** mainstreaming local knowledge into state action plans
- **Gender-responsive governance:** women-led community structures



A group of children enrolled back to school



Women empowerment through electoral process

### Together We Can

Reimagine development, co-create solutions.



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Also at Delhi, Kolkata and Chittorgarh (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Accra (Ghana); Hanoi (Vietnam); Geneva (Switzerland) and Washington DC (USA).