

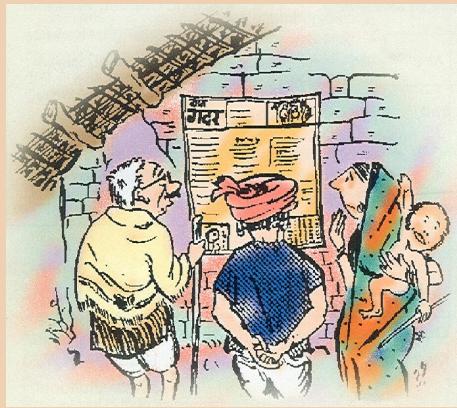
CUTS@GRASSROOTS

EMPOWERMENT
SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
GOVERNANCE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



CUTS promoted Self Help Group members taking part in World Women's Day Celebrations on 8th March 2008

In 1983, CUTS began out of a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper entitled *Gram Gadar* (Revolution in Villages). Even today it regularly reaches far-flung and remote villages of the Rajasthan State in India and has been instrumental in providing a forum for the vulnerable communities and underprivileged classes to get justice. Starting with a rural empowerment programme, it has expanded its scope to include issues related to women's empowerment, reproductive and child health, economic and legal literacy including economic and social rights, and natural resource management through activities which relate to the grassroots as well as the design of policy.



Engaging, Mobilising and Empowering Consumers

- Has been creating awareness among consumers in rural Rajasthan through the *Upbhokta Mitra* (friends of consumers) initiative to suitably empower them to seek justice
- Facilitated consumer awakening at the grassroots by strengthening the capacity of networkers in 20 selected blocks in Rajasthan to lay the basis for a strong consumer movement; and brought out a path-breaking book entitled *Rajasthan Mein Upbhoktaon ki Stithi* (State of the Consumers in Rajasthan)
- Continues to make small investors aware of their rights and available redressal mechanisms, besides suitably educating them to protect their rights and empowering them to become effective investors

Upbhokta Mitra (friends of consumers) initiative proved to be a novel approach in providing consumer friendly information on judgments provided on consumer issues by various courts and it helped in creating a healthy culture for spreading consumer movement



I truly believe that this organisation will be helpful in making the society more aware by publishing articles and views of experts and dynamic writers on various issues. This will help in finding solutions of various problems pertaining to the common man, eradication of poverty and corruption, good administration, etc. On the part of my government, I will extend full support.

Ashok Gehlot

Chief Minister of Rajasthan, India's largest state

CUTS, a leading non-governmental organisation in Jaipur, has long experience of over 25 years of working on economic policy issues. In this area they have also achieved considerable reputation nationally and globally.

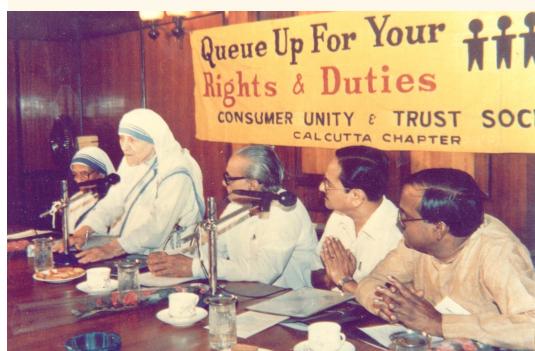
Vasundhara Raje

Former Chief Minister of Rajasthan

Mother Teresa speaking on the occasion of the World Poverty Day

Campaign against child labour

Consumer empowerment through *Upbhokta Mitra* training





Women's voices have started to be heard – public action matters!



A *Chaupal Baithak* (public meeting in villages) on Universal Birth Registration



A group of children enrolled back to school



CUTS has contributed a great deal towards strengthening the democratic processes and structures of our country by enhancing peoples' involvement and voice in determining their future, on the one hand, and by promoting debate and discussion on government policies and programmes, on the other.

Kamal Nath
Minister for Road Transport & Highways

CUTS developed a draft National Consumer Policy on the request of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India which provided the basis for the final National Consumer Policy

- Focuses on two aspects of good governance at the grassroots: access to information and promotion of accountability
- Assists consumers in seeking transparency and accountability at the grassroots through awareness generation and by empowering them to use the *Right to Information Act* (2005)
- Has been facilitating active involvement of consumers in power sector reforms
- Implemented road safety programmes in Jaipur to create awareness among citizens (consumers)
- Has been working for the cause of women and children by upholding their rights, taking up protection issues and providing policy inputs
- Has been actively involved in interventions related to Tobacco Control
- Have enhanced the capacity of rural artisans working in the handicrafts sector
- Have contributed to strengthening the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (local self governance) and grassroots organisations in Rajasthan
- Initiated a forum at the state level in Rajasthan called *Vidhayak Samvaad* (a non-partisan forum of state legislators) to discuss issues related to infrastructure, state of the economy and centre-state relations

Ratni Bai Khatik, a CUTS animator, was awarded an international prize on the 'Creativity of Women in the Rural Life' by the Women's World Summit Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland in 2002

CUTS emerged from *Gram Gadar*, when they found many of our rural folk complaining about consumer abuses, such as burning out of electric motors due to voltage fluctuations; short weighing at fair price shops etc. CUTS is working vividly on these issues, in as much as they remain consistently engaged on grassroot issues. This linkage is one of the greatest strength of CUTS.

C P Joshi
Minister for Rural Development & Panchayati Raj



CUTS received the prestigious India Power Award 2008 for its outstanding networking and outreach activities towards consumer awareness on electricity reforms and energy issues and associated rights



I have been seeing a variety of CUTS' publications, especially the one which is in the form of a wall newspaper called the 'Gram Gadar', which has been helping our rural folk in a big way by its regular columns, such as on women's rights. CUTS has rapidly diversified its work areas and the need of the future is that it should set goals according to the needs of a common man, maintaining its identity.

Bhairon Singh Shekhawat
Former Vice President of India

Reshma's husband used to be a truck driver and the family was struggling to eke out subsistence. Reshma benefited from CUTS' intervention to organise the poor into self-help groups which enabled her to start a poultry business with a loaned sum of Rs 4500 and a parallel business of sewing by purchasing a sewing machine. These two businesses have contributed significantly to the family's income and raised its quality of life

Strategic Interventions in Rural Areas

- Has put into practice its belief that self help groups are not merely about making money available but a platform to deal with issues such as food security, health, education, housing and other livelihood related matters
- Continues to be engaged in enhancing awareness on child rights and sensitising people to help mitigate violence against girls
- Has contributed actively to improvements in reproductive and child health indicators in under-served and un-served areas, with specific focus on family planning, immunisation, institutional delivery, reproductive tract infection/sexually transmitted diseases and adolescent reproductive healthcare
- Has been raising awareness about sexually transmitted diseases and precautions needed for their prevention as well as contraception and birth spacing; and has organised drives to alleviate misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS, and promote good and healthy living
- Has created awareness among the public to make environmental protection a people's movement (National Environment Awareness Campaign)

It confirmed my view that often the simple lack of awareness lies at the root of so much misery. Furthermore, the impact and success of a relatively simple publication like this one 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
Former Secretary General of UNCTAD

Om Niwas Sharma, Coordinator, Society for Sustainable Development, Karauli while applauding the National Environmental Awareness Campaign, highlighted its contributions in making people more aware of the need and means for bio-diversity conservation, as illustrated by their efforts to conserve the seeds of plants and trees threatened by extinction

Durga Kumari, President of Ghagsa Bal Panchayat (village level forum for children) – a CUTS initiative in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan – was felicitated by Girija Vyas, Member of Parliament and Chairperson, National Commission for Women for protesting against her own child marriage. Ever since Durga has been working fervently against the social evil of child marriage in nearby rural areas

Road Safety Awareness Rally in Jaipur

Villagers expressing their concerns about electricity and other energy needs



Durga Kumari felicitated by Girija Vyas, MP and Chairperson, National Commission for Women





Despite the enormity and gravity of the deep rooted problems existing in rural areas, efforts are being made to empower weaker sections, through a process of education, training, networking, and building up grassroots and community action groups. And therefore there is hope. I witnessed at close range, through CUTS Centre for Human Development, the extraordinary spirit and relentless efforts by the team at Chittorgarh and got ample evidence of the fruit of that labour. It was tremendous – the progress and the achievements made with children in these backward areas was indeed phenomenal.

Mitali Gupta

*Assistant General Manager, Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
Rural Planning and Credit Department (RPCD), Jaipur, Rajasthan*

CUTS succeeded in getting the use of a toxic additive, Brominated Vegetable Oil (BVO), in soft drinks banned in 1990. This triggered widespread consumer awareness on health and safety issues which resulted in an amendment to the Consumer Protection Act in 1993 that empowered consumer courts to stop the sale of and/or order the withdrawal of unsafe or hazardous goods from the market

Consumer Safety a Priority

- Has been working on consumer safety issues, i.e. protection of citizen's rights against unsafe goods, services and technologies
- Brought out a publication entitled '*Is it Really Safe?*' to look at consumer safety issues which was preceded by '*How to Survive as a Consumer?*' which dealt with consumer protection issues
- Continues to work on health issues through its focus on medically inappropriate and economically inefficient use of medicines, a common problem among consumers
- Has been making consumers aware of their rights and responsibilities in regard to the rational use of drugs

Capacity Building of Consumer Organisations

- Has undertaken capacity building of consumer organisations on electricity reforms and the regulatory process; enhanced capacities of civil society organisations to participate in regulatory processes; evolved a channel of communication between consumers and policy makers/regulators on electricity reforms; and educated the consumers about their rights and responsibilities in regard to the curbing of electricity theft, conservation of electricity, etc.
- Has been engaging in identifying the linkages between power and other sectors – for instance, the impact of rural electrification on the social, environmental and economic fabric of villages; linkages of agriculture to water, irrigation and energy issues etc.

Rajeshwari Meena, *Pradhan* (Chief),
Panchayat Samiti, Chittorgarh serving food
to under-privileged children under
the mid-day meal scheme

Gail Cockburn, Team Leader, CIDA, India
interacting with women artisans

A *Bal Panchayat* (Children's
Parliament) to discuss rights
and responsibilities





Generating awareness on quality education



National Environment Awareness Campaign



SHG members attending a training programme



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. CUTS is now on the frontline of research and advocacy on global trade issues.

Jagdish Bhagwati

*Professor of Economics & Political Science
Columbia University, USA*

CUTS filed the first complaint in regard to unfair trade practices before the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission in August 1984 to successfully stop the misleading sales practices of a hosiery dealer

Grassroots Voices in International Trade

- Has been engaged in generating a more coherent civil society voice on economic governance and globalisation and the impact of associated initiatives on the livelihoods of the poor, particularly women and other marginalised sections of society
- Continues to engage civil society in trade policymaking in a socially inclusive manner and thus contribute to the development of conditions needed for mainstreaming trade into the national development strategy
- Has been looking at the differential impact of liberalisation on various stakeholders at the grassroots to get a picture of net as well as group specific impacts
- Has studied the socio-economic impact of Special Economic Zones in India and made policy recommendations

India needs more groups such as CUTS and that is the challenge for CUTS to replicate and multiply all over the country. CUTS is a professionally managed and organised group and government can usefully utilise their talents and skills in the cause of the consumer.

Chairman, Telecom Equipment & Services Export Promotion Council, Government of India



Vinod Vaish

Based on a successful intervention made through the project entitled, 'Grassroots Reachout & Networking in India on Trade & Economics', National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) has expressed its willingness to collaborate with CUTS for uplifting the weaver community engaged in producing Kota Doria sarees (a particular variety of women's textile) in the Kota district of Rajasthan



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Also at Calcutta, Chittorgarh and New Delhi (India); Lusaka (Zambia); Nairobi (Kenya); Hanoi (Vietnam); and Geneva (Switzerland)