

CUTS CRC Activity Report

January-June 2012

ONGOING PROJECTS

Building Capacity of Consumers to Demand for Renewable Energy in India

CUTS with the support of Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF), India has implemented a project entitled “A Diagnostic Study to Build the Capacity/Awareness Among CSOs to Demand for Demand Side Management (DSM) & Renewable Energy (RE) in India – DREC Project”. The objective of the project is to increase long-term capacity/awareness of consumer groups to demand for DSM and RE initiatives especially in the context of climate change, and also to understand, document and communicate their specific needs to the relevant policy makers. The DREC project is being implemented in two states of India - West Bengal and Gujarat.

The project is being implemented in partnership with grassroots civil society organisations (CSOs). In West Bengal, 10 CSOs were identified from four districts in West Bengal namely South 24 Parganas, East Midnapore, Nadia and Cooch Behar.

As part of the initiative, during the mentioned period CUTS organised a Mid-Term Review Meeting to discuss the progress of the project, including results and fulfilment of agreed obligations; and issues of concern for the implementation of remaining activities, as part of the project. Further, a First State Reference Group (SRG) meeting was organised in both the project states in order to present the findings of the consumer perception survey before the SRG members and to seek their inputs/guidance in translating the findings into key messages to be disseminated during the policy advocacy dialogues. The valuable inputs received during the meeting helped us in finalising the advocacy strategy targeted to policymakers, regulatory bodies, media, etc.



Finally, CUTS alongwith CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre, partner in West Bengal organised a five-day State Level Training Workshop in Kolkata on March 13-17, 2012 to build capacity and awareness of representatives of consumer organisations. As an outcome of the workshop, a cadre of consumer organisations have been created who are in a position to better comprehend issues and be able to advocate the need for DSM/RE and also build capacity of other consumer groups at the community level.

During the period, CUTS alongwith VIKSAT, State partner in Gujarat, organised a five-day State Level Training Workshop in Ahmedabad to build capacity and awareness of representatives of consumer organisations. A cadre of consumer organisations have been created to better comprehend issues and be able to advocate the need for RE/DSM and also build capacity of other consumer groups.

Further, 20 Consumer Interface Meetings (CIMs) were organised in each project state to reach out to different category of consumers at the state level and make them aware of the role that they need to play in advocating for implementation of renewable energy and demand side management.

As a logical follow up of the CIMs, Policy Advocacy meetings would be organised at the State and National level in order to communicate the findings to the policymakers and sensitise them, so as to ensure consumer interest is kept in mind while taking policy decisions, on behalf of consumers.

25 years
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Consumer Assistance Cell at Grassroots

CUTS CRC, with the support of West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (WBSEDCL) is working on a pilot project entitled, 'Consumer Assistance Cell (CONASC) at Grassroots'. Under the project, assistance cells will be run for electricity consumers in nine districts of West Bengal, viz., North Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Purulia, West Midnapore, Howrah, North 24 Parganas and Nadia.

The main objective of the project is to form CONASCs at the grassroots level to improve and supplement the service delivery at the grassroots, with focus on improving the grievance redressal system of the utility service provider. The assistance cells will help consumers with their queries on new and temporary connections, billing and metering, complaint redressal, etc.

Domestic and agricultural consumers in the rural and sub-urban areas constitute the principal target groups for the project.

During the period January-June 2012, the activities under the project included the Project Assessment Survey, Final Report preparation and submission. The project Assessment Survey covered 2250 consumers across nine districts of West Bengal. The objective was to understand the impact of the project on general consumers in those nine districts.

To this end, a Surveyor Orientation training was organised on January 29, 2012 in Kolkata for the partners in Nadia, North 24 Pgns., Medinipur, Howrah and Hooghly. Surveyors for Purulia and districts in North Bengal, viz. Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, and Murshidabad and were trained in the respective districts. CUTS team provided hands-on training in administering the questionnaire. The survey was completed in February 2012 and data entry and analysis was undertaken. The findings and inferences from the survey was included in the Final Report submitted to WBSEDCL in June 2012.



Grahoker Mukho-Mukhi

Consumer Camps are being organised by the Centre in partnership with local clubs and associations in and around Kolkata. The activity being undertaken with support from Calcutta Electric Supply Company (CESC) Ltd aims to raise awareness and assist consumers with basic queries about electricity supply and services, safety issues, energy conservation, etc.; provide consumers a platform to get their grievances redressed; and function as a two-way communication platform between the consumers and the utility. In total, 50 camps are planned under this initiative.

A total of 22 camps were organised in partnership with local clubs & CSOs with support from CSEC during January-February 2012. The project concluded in March 2012 and the Final Report was submitted to CESC in April 2012.



ConsumersUp

CUTS with the support of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India is undertaking an initiative over one years (November 2011 to December 2012) in 4 states of India (Tripura, Jharkhand, Chandigarh and Karnataka).

The overall objective of the project is to create an enabling environment for protection and promotion of consumer interest contributing towards the national interest and to bring out thematic report on the 'State of the Indian Consumer' and to enhance the knowledge of the CSOs working on consumer issues in 4 identified states in India with the facts and information on the concerns of the common people and on new generation consumer issues, with the aim to strengthen and take the Indian consumer movement forward. The project activities included research on the "State of Indian Consumer 2012".

The report on this subject will be based on a comprehensive survey of consumer concerns taking consumer rights as per UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection as a yardstick. Total sample of 11,000 households including a reasonable (statistically significant) number of suppliers of those rights (members of consumer courts, departmental officials, etc.) will be surveyed to understand the state of the Indian consumer and device policy lessons therein. Other than the results and analysis of that survey, the report also will contain 10 input paper on and around the given research elements. Some of the important activities under this project include State Level Knowledge Enhancement Workshops (KEWs), Regional Consultations, and National Conclave etc.

During the period January-June 2012, scoping visits were undertaken in Agartala and Ranchi to canvass the prospective partner organisations in these territories. CRC was responsible for the Tripura territory. The 2nd KEW was organised in Agartala on May 18-19, 2012. Some qualitative surveys of State Consumer Department officials, CSOs and grievance redressal officers of West Bengal were also undertaken during this period as part of the project activities.

The forthcoming activity under this project includes the Regional Consultation Workshop in Tripura and Ranchi.

Business Regulation and Corporate Conduct

CUTS with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in collaboration with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) India, conceptualised a project titled “Business Regulation and Corporate Conduct (BRCC)”.



The objective is to assess the policy environment with respect to its ability to facilitate ease of conducting business and promoting corporate conduct in India. The initiative aims to raise awareness thereof, to promote entrepreneurship and sustainable business development in the country. It is being implemented by undertaking research to comprehend constraints in business regulation across select states of India and in such a prevailing environment, how best to motivate corporate entities to emerge as champions of responsible business conduct. The project is being implemented in four states of India, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal over the **period from** March 2011 to December 2012. The project goal is to stimulate better business to achieve sustainable development objectives in India.

Under the project, two interrelated sets of activities commenced during January-March 2012: 1) field research leading to the development of survey tools; and 2) fact finding mission to four states of India, namely Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. During the visits, stakeholders comprising key people from the government, industry, academia and media were interacted to gather their first hand insights on the conduct of pharmaceutical and private healthcare sectors in the corresponding state.

The two sectors have been chosen on account of their considerable implications for public interest and consumer welfare in the country. The design of the survey tool will be of such nature that it will build the case for promotion of rational use of drugs in country, on one hand, and over raising adherence to standard diagnosis and treatment protocols, on the other. Alongside, there will be advisory on minimising the environmental impact being caused through the two sectors.