

CUTS CRC Activity Report

October-December 2011

ONGOING
PROJECTS

Building Capacity of Consumers to Demand for Renewable Energy in India



Arnab Ganguly conducting Focus Group Discussion in Cooch Behar district in West Bengal

CUTS with the support of Climate Works Foundation, USA through Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF), India is undertaking an initiative over two years (2011-2012) in 2 states of India (Gujarat and West Bengal).

The overall objective of the project is to increase long-term capacity/awareness of consumer groups to demand for demand side management (DSM) and renewable energy (RE) initiatives, and also to understand, document and communicate their specific needs to relevant policy makers.

The project is being implemented in partnership with grassroots civil society organisations (CSOs). In this direction ten CSOs have been identified from four districts in West Bengal, whose capacity will be built through various activities of the project.

The major activities under the project during this quarter included entry, consolidation and analysis of the Baseline Survey data and drafting of the Territorial Base Paper.

Upcoming activities under the project will include finalising the Territorial Base Paper covering the findings from both secondary & primary data analysis, followed by a Reference Group Meeting to share the major findings with the state specific project advisory group.

www.cuts-international.org/crc/DREC/Index.htm

25 years
1983 2008
CUTS International

**CUTS Calcutta
Resource Centre**

3, Suren Tagore Road,
2nd Floor
Kolkata 700019
Ph: +91.33.24604985
Talefax: +91.33.24604987
E-mail: calcutta@cuts.org
Website: www.cuts-international.org/CRC

Consumer Assistance Cell at Grassroots (CONASC)

CUTS Calcutta Resource Centre (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 are being 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 are helping consumers with their queries on new & temporary connections, billing & metering, complaint redressal, etc.

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

Under the project, nine CSOs are now operating the CONASC cells in their respective locality wherein they meet consumers on specific days of a week to listen to consumer complaints and guide them on how to go about a particular problem. Meetings are being organised involving utility officials, consumers & CONASC staff in all nine districts every month to redress long standing consumer issues & problems. A Dissemination Workshop was also organised on December 28, 2011 to share learning & findings with higher officials of WBSEDCL.

Regional Office Meetings

18 Regional Office (WBSEDCL) meetings were organised during October-December 2011. In total 176 short listed consumer issues were discussed in these meetings. 132 Informal Pockets meetings were organised by district partners in remote and interior villages in their respective districts reaching out to roughly 4000 consumers in those areas.

www.cuts-international.org/CRC/CONASC



A View of the Dissemination Workshop

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.

During October-December 2011, 18 camps were organised reaching out to a total of 270 consumers. Remaining consumers' camp will be organised during January 2012.



Prithviraj Nath in a Club in Tollygunge, Kolkata during one of the Consumer Camps

ConsumersUp

CUTS with the support of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India is undertaking an initiative over one year (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". This report 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 derive policy lessons therefrom. Other than the results and analysis of that survey, the report also will contain 10 input papers on and around the given research elements. The other activities are Regional Consultations, National Conclave and State Level Knowledge Enhancement Workshops etc.

The forthcoming activity under this project includes scoping visits to Agartala and Ranchi to canvass the prospective partner organisations in these territories. This will be followed by Knowledge Enhancement Workshops in both the territories.

REPRESENTATIONS



- Keya Ghosh attended the FSSAI Shadow Committee meeting for 43rd session of Codex Committee on Food Hygiene in New Delhi on November 28, 2011. She also met the Chairman FSSAI, V. N. Gaur to explore possibilities for CRC & FSSAI to work together on food safety issues. Gaur suggested her to come up with a proposal which looks at a model for the new Whistleblower Scheme of FSSAI and submit the same to FSSAI.
- A Dissemination Workshop was organised jointly by CUTS & WBSEDCL on December 28th to share the findings and learning from CONASC so far. It had participation from Sunil Mitra, Power Secretary, Chairman, WBSEDCL, General Managers (all departments), CRM Cell, CUTS, select CONASC Partners (2) and 2 consumers. The principal findings and concerns were shared and deliberations were done regarding the future road map for the project.