

Consumer Unity of Trust Society

CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society) began its journey in 1983 in Rajasthan, from a rural development communication initiative, a wall newspaper Gram Gadar (Village Revolution). This monthly is published regularly and has been instrumental in providing a forum for the oppressed classes to get justice. On seeing Gram Gadar, Rubens Ricuperro, the immediate past Secretary-General of UNCTAD observed: “It confirmed my view that often the simple lack of awareness lies at the root of so much misery”.

In 1983, CUTS was a small voluntary group of concerned citizens operating out of a garage on a zero budget at Jaipur. Today, its annual budget exceeds US\$2.5mn or Rs13crores. The organisation consists of five programme centres and one resource centre in India (at Jaipur with headquarters, Chittorgarh, Calcutta and New Delhi), two resource centres in Africa (at Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya) and one resource centre in London, UK. CUTS is probably the only Indian NGO with such overseas operations. The current staff strength is over 130 persons, of which one third are females at managerial levels too.

CUTS is registered since 1984, under the Rajasthan Societies Registration Act, 1958, the FCRA and under Sec: 80G of the Income Tax Act. It is governed by a 12-member Executive Committee, which is elected every three years from a general body of 350 life members and 150 institutional members.

With the Vision of “Consumer sovereignty in the framework of social justice and equality, within and across borders” the activities of CUTS, as a research, advocacy and networking organisation working on several areas of public interest, are divided into:

- Consumer protection,
- International trade and development,
- Competition, investment and economic regulation,
- Human development, and
- Consumer safety.

CUTS works with several national, regional and international organisations, such as Consumers International, London; International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, Geneva; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, Kathmandu. It serves on several policy-making bodies of the Government of India, such as the Advisory Committee on International Trade of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Central Consumer Protection Council of the Ministry of Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs. It is accredited to the UNCTAD and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. CUTS is a member of a number of international networks in the areas of its work programme, such as the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade of the UN ESCAP. It has catalysed the setting up of International Network of Civil Society Organisations on Competition. In addition, CUTS representatives serve on various advisory bodies of WTO, OECD, UNCTAD, World Bank, University of Manchester, Loyola University, Chicago etc.

Over a period spanning more than two decades, CUTS has received support from individuals and institutional sources, such as Government of India (Commerce, Consumer Affairs, Environment & Forests), UK's Department for International Development, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Novib (Oxfam Netherlands), Swedish International Development Agency.