Fact Sheet
Consumer Protection and Sustainable Consumption in India

Client: Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ)
Country: India
Lead Executing Agency: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution (MoCA), Government of India
Overall Term: January 2007 to December 2012

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH was established by the German government in 1975. As an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with worldwide operations, the federally owned GTZ supports the German Government in achieving its development-policy objectives. It provides viable, forward looking solutions for political, economic, ecological and social development in a globalised world. Working under difficult conditions, GTZ promotes complex reforms and change processes. India and Germany celebrated 50 years of development cooperation in 2008. GTZ is active in India on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

GTZ-ASEM (Advisory Services in Environmental Management) is a joint programme of the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India and GTZ (on behalf of BMZ).

Context
Under the thrust area “Sustainable Consumption and Consumer Protection” of the ASEM programme, the Department of Consumer Affairs under the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India has joined hands with GTZ, to provide technical advice for streamlining and strengthening consumer protection in India.

Objective
The objective of the project is to provide best international practices tailored to the special needs of consumers in India to empower the demand side of the market. By improving the structures for consumer advice, comparative testing and legal redress, consumers will increasingly be able to make informed purchase decisions.

As the quality of products, services and good business practices become more transparent and consumers are enabled to make informed purchase decisions, the manufacturers and suppliers in India will increasingly be pushed towards adopting international quality, environmental and safety standards. This will improve India’s competitiveness in the international market and its export opportunities. At the same time this will help to reduce the number of unsafe, unhealthy and contaminated products especially in rural areas thus improving the quality of life for the underprivileged citizens.

Approach
The approach of the project is to strengthen the institutional structure of consumer protection in India, to improve the enforcement of consumer rights and to increase the awareness of citizens on consumer rights and the environmental impact of their consumption patterns. The Government of India may be supported in the possible establishment of a new Consumer Protection Authority. The authority could take a coordinating role for the provision of consumer advice and function as a law enforcement body. Private consumer organizations are also supported as they play an important role in promoting consumer interests within the country. During the second phase of the project implementation (2009 to 2012) pilot projects will be focusing on advice and redressal to test models which can be replicated in other areas creating multiplier effects. A coordinated system of consumer advice centers will be set up with centralized...
support for content and data availability, capacity building and IT infrastructure. Consumer courts will be supported with mediation facilities for reducing the time consumed in resolving consumer complaints satisfactorily. The implementation of recommendations suggested during the first phase will be an important area of focus.

Selected Consumer Clubs in the Schools and Colleges in the focused area would be guided to take up effective consumer awareness especially among the younger generation with a result oriented planned activities for impact which can be sustained.

Transparent regulation of measuring instruments under the legal metrology system acts as an effective mechanism for preventing disputes among stakeholders and support for getting best value for money for the consumers, extensive capacity building programmes and training for the enforcement officials is envisaged under the Project in coordination with the Department of Consumer Affairs and the State Government Departments. Suitable support to the Department of Consumer Affairs for upgrading the legal provisions of legal metrology in line with the best international practices and for its effective implementation across the country is envisaged during the 2nd phase.

The activities of the project are concentrated on the following areas:
- Consumer information and market transparency
- Raising awareness about energy efficiency and environment friendly products
- Institutional framework for consumer protection
- Unfair trade practices and their enforcement
- Legal redress for consumers
- Capacity building in the field of Legal Metrology

The project cooperates with various other stakeholders including Government, bench marked VCOs and apex industrial associations like FICCI, CII. The States of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have been selected for pilot projects.

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Important websites:
http://www.asemindia.com
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http://consumer-voice.org
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