



‘KATIYABAAZ (POWERLESS)’

*An outreach campaign sensitising stakeholders
regarding India’s energy crisis and theft issues*

SUBMISSION OF DISTRICT SCREENING REPORT

Monday, December 22, 2014

CUTS INTERNATIONAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. BACKGROUND.....	3
2. METHODOLOGY	3
3. REPORTING ON UTTAR PRADESH	4
4. REPORTING ON RAJASTHAN	8
5. REPORTING ON BIHAR.....	10
6. KEY MESSAGES	12

I. BACKGROUND

With over a quarter of India's population living without access to electricity, there is surprisingly little public discussion about the country's overwhelming energy crisis. While tremendous work is undertaken by several organisations to formulate better energy policies, their efforts find limited attention in the public sphere areas with the worst access to electricity, particularly in the states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Further, transmission losses of about 30 percent, much of it arising from electricity theft, compound the problem for utilities. There is an urgent need to create ground-level awareness of the scope/scale of the impact of lack of electricity and electricity theft, and the need to look towards sustainable alternative resources in the long run.

'*Katiyabaaṣ* (Powerless)' is an award winning documentary feature directed by Deepti Kakkar and Fahad Mustafa. The film narrates the story of the conflict between the citizens of Kanpur and its bankrupt electricity supply company, and is told through the eyes of two protagonists – a woman bureaucrat and an electricity thief whose actions contribute heavily to the electricity utility's losses. The film, which has found tremendous critical and audience acclaim, encapsulates the everyday story of small towns across the country that are under threat of economic and social stagnation in the lack of sufficient infrastructure. It charts the relationship between electricity, governance, citizenship and economic prosperity.

The energy debate in India needs strong grassroots involvement to lobby effectively for better and more sustainable energy policy, and for civil awareness of the impact of electricity theft and limited access. *Katiyabaaṣ* provides a medium to create this awareness across a cross-section of society and media. Thus, Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS International) implemented an outreach programme with the aim to generate awareness/debate amongst the public as well as high-impact stakeholders on issue pertaining to energy crisis and theft in India.

II. METHODOLOGY

Engagement with Consumers (Screening and Panel Discussion): *Katiyabaaṣ* screening was organised in 12 districts in three States of India, namely Bihar (Darbhanga, Madhepura, Arrah & Gaya), Rajasthan (Chittorgarh, Bhilwara and Udaipur) and Uttar Pradesh (Allahabad, Varanasi, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur and Ghaziabad). The screening was organised with support from local partners involving participants from elected representatives of state government, district administration, distribution companies (discoms), academic institutions, consumer groups, media and other key stakeholders to apprise them about the issues raised by this documentary. Approximately close to 70-100 people participated in each of the screenings.

At the beginning of each screening, the background of the meeting and the movie was explained, which was then followed by screening. Post showcasing of the documentary, a panel discussion was organised which comprised of representatives from the government (local admin, electricity companies), consumer organisation, elected representatives etc. to debate on the issue of theft. The purpose of such screenings was to reach out to consumers and sensitise them on issues pertaining to electricity distribution reforms. The screenings resulted in educating consumers and civil society groups about the reform process, and moreover about their rights and

responsibilities. Further, the screening and the panel discussion helped sensitising other stakeholders, such as utility, politicians, media, consumers, block and district administration officials and regulators to needs and concerns of consumers.

For all media coverage, please visit: <http://www.cuts-ccier.org/Katiyabaaz/Media.html>

For all details regarding the events (List of participants, Glimpses, etc): http://www.cuts-ccier.org/Katiyabaaz/District_Screenings.html

UTTAR PRADESH

In Uttar Pradesh, *Katiyabaaz* was screened in five districts namely Azamgarh, Varanasi, Allahabad, Gorakhpur and Ghaziabad in collaboration with Poorvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited. CUTS local partner Consumer Guild took the lead in organising all the screenings in Uttar Pradesh, whereas, Gaurav Shukla from Jaipur, represented CUTS in all the screenings of Uttar Pradesh.

Azamgarh

CUTS along with its local partner Consumer Guild, Lucknow and in collaboration with Poorvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited organised the first district screening in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh on October 28, 2014. The purpose of the screening was to generate awareness among the grassroot stakeholders as well as local administration, Discom, consumer groups, media houses etc.

The screening was well attended by spectrum of dignitaries including Indira Jaiswal, *Nagar Panchayat* President, Azamgarh; Rajendra Prasad, Chief Engineer; B. Prasad, Technical Member, Consumer Grievance Redressal forum (CGRF); Vidhyanchal Sharma, Member, Consumer Forum Azamgarh; Vijay Bahadur Singh, President, Civil Court Azamgarh; Advocate Ashok Kumar Singh, Vice President, Civil Court, Azamgarh; Atul Kumar Verma, Secretary, *Zila Gram Vikas Shayata Samih*, Azamgarh and others.



After screening of the documentary, the floor was opened to facilitate the discussion among stakeholders on issues related to electricity theft and its impact on discoms and consumers. It emerged from the discussion that there is a communication gap between consumers and officials of the electricity department, which can be filled through activities, such as stakeholder consultations. It is important to involve all stakeholders in the regulatory process to generate sense of ownership among consumers.

One of the participants pointed towards the huge losses suffered by discoms on account of electricity thefts undertaken by consumers. He emphasised that if neighbour steals electricity than ultimately whole society has to bear the cost of that electricity. Thus, there is a need to create awareness and sensitise consumers on issues related to electricity theft and enhance public participation to curb it. Further, he also highlighted the role consumer groups can play in bringing such awareness in the society.

Varanasi



CUTS along with its local partner Consumer Guild, Lucknow and in collaboration with Poorvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PUVVNL) organised the second District Screening at Vidyut Bhawan Conference Hall in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh on October 30, 2014. The purpose of the screening was to generate awareness among the officials of Discom, members of consumer grievance

and redressal forum, media houses etc.

The screening was well attended by spectrum of dignitaries including Kajal (IAS), Managing Director, PUVVNL; M L Sharma, Director Technical, PUVVNL; Sudhanshu Dwivedi, Director Finance, PUVVNL; Aayush Kumar, Chief Engineer Planning; A K Gupta, Adviser, *Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyut Yojna*; G D Singh, EE (R-APDRP); Abdullah Khan, System Analyst; S P Tripathi, Officer on Special Duty and among several others.

Few key issues discussed were absence of coordination, trust deficit, complicated procedures etc. between consumers and officials of Discom. Most of the participants were of the opinion that problems can be resolved with the proper communication between consumers and discoms. The need was also felt to bridge the gap between consumers and discoms by bringing them together on a common platform, more regularly.

Kajal inspired her staff members to build cordial relation with consumers in order to improve the efficiency of electricity sector. She emphasised that buyer-customer relationship runs on a primary condition of mutual trust and service delivery. If the Discom is able to provide reliable and good quality service, than electricity theft will definitely reduce. She noted that discoms need to introspect within themselves before demanding consumers to change their behaviour and if they change their own attitude toward consumers than the situation will improve.

Allahabad

CUTS along with its local partner Consumer Guild, Lucknow and in collaboration with PUVVNL organised the third District Screening at *Vigyan Parishad*, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh on November 01, 2014.



The screening was well attended by spectrum of dignitaries including Anugraha Narayan Singh, Member of Legislative Assembly, Allahabad North; Shiv Sevak Singh, *Parshad*, Nagar Nigam, Allahabad; Raghvendra Singh, *Parshad*, George Town, Allahabad; Sanjay Pandey, Social Worker; A R Verma, Senior Engineer, Allahabad Zone; Karan Singh, Consultant; Anoop Tripathi, Allahabad Consumer Welfare Society; Anil Srivastava, Assistant Secretary Eastern U.P Chamber of Commerce, among others.

Anugraha Narayan Singh appreciated issues raised in the documentary. He noted that besides such kind of screening, there is need for several other modes of public awareness on issues pertaining to electricity. He identified non-cooperative attitude of government officials as the main reason behind electricity issues.

Further, several other participants presented their views and issues showcased in the documentary. Many of them found it a suitable platform to bring their problems, local issues to the attention of discoms, MLAs, media and consumer groups. However, common message emerged out of the discussion that electricity situation will only improve when all stakeholders come together.

Gorakhpur

CUTS along with its local partner Consumer Guild, Lucknow and in collaboration with PUVVNL organised the fourth District Screening at Chief Engineer Gorakhpur Division office PUVVNL, Gorakhpur, Uttar



Pradesh on November 03, 2014. The purpose of the screening was to generate awareness among the grassroot stakeholders as well as local administration, Discom officials from Gorakhpur, Maharajganj, Deoria, Kushinagar, consumer groups, media houses etc.

The screening was well attended by spectrum of dignitaries including representatives of Rajmati Nishad, MLA, Pipraich, Gorakhpur; A K Khare, Chief General Manager (Retd.); C P Gupta, Senior Engineer, EDC Gorakhpur; Dhananjay Kumar Singh, Senior Engineer Technical, Gorakhpur Urban & Rural; Santosh Sharma, Journalist; Chandra Shekhar, Parshad, Shahpur, among others.

In Gorakhpur, participants were well aware of issues pertaining to electricity theft and the fact that, it is an illegal activity. However, they did not have much understanding regarding its indirect negative consequences on themselves and/or the overall electricity supply. Thus, there is need to generate awareness among consumers and consumer groups and sensitise them about the ill effects of electricity theft. Several consumers admitted that they were forced to steal electricity as they were unable to procure the connection from discoms, even after repeated requests. Many consumers were willingly to shift to a legal connection, if given proper opportunity and reliable supply.

Ghaziabad



CUTS along with its local partner Consumer Guild, Lucknow and in collaboration with PVVNL organised the fifth and last District Screening at ABES Engineering College Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh on November 12, 2014.

The screening was well attended by spectrum of dignitaries including Udai Singh, ADM-Administration, Ghaziabad;

Kapil Singh, City Magistrate Ghaziabad; Keshav Kumar SDM, Sadar, Ghaziabad; A K Gupta Chief Engineer, Ghaziabad & Bulandsahar Zone, PVVNL, Meerut among others.

During the discussion, it emerged that several consumer choose '*Katiya*' instead of proper connection due to the lack of awareness and knowledge of procedures. They usually find the procedure too cumbersome/difficult to understand. Thus, discoms should identify reasons due to which consumers are compelled to seek illegal connections and take relevant steps to address the same.



The need was felt for awareness generation and capacity building for consumers, so that public participation can be increased in the electricity sector. Public participation and representation through consumer groups was identified as one of the most effective modes to relay consumer concerns to relevant authorities by most of the participants.

RAJASTHAN

CUTS organised three district screenings in Rajasthan with support from its local partner – CUTS Centre for Human Development, Chittorgarh (CHD). First screening was organised in Chittorgarh on September 30, 2014; second in Bhilwara on November 05, 2014; and third in Udaipur on November 12, 2014 respectively.



Chittorgarh

Katiyabaaz documentary was screened in Chittorgarh on September 30, 2014 in presence of many eminent dignitaries, viz. politicians, bureaucrats, regulators, law abiding citizens, consumer groups and several other stakeholders. The screening was well received and appreciated by electricity consumers and more than 150 participants attended it. The screening provided an opportunity to bring all stakeholders on common platform to debate and discuss the issue related to electricity theft and supply.



Post the screening, several participants expressed their views and shared their experiences with the gathering. One of the participants shared an interesting practice being followed in a village named *Chaukedi* from Bhopal Sagar in the state of Rajasthan. *Chaukedi* introduced a mechanism of community monitoring system within the village. As per the practice, if anyone was found guilty of electricity theft then he would need to pay certain fine to the village community. This worked out well for the village and within no time, the village was totally free from electricity theft.

Further, few key messages that emerged out of the discussion were:

- There is a need to create an effective system to eliminate electricity theft and provide proper electricity supply
- Awareness generation and capacity building of consumers and producers can resolve issues pertaining to electricity sector
- Deficit of electricity supply and unavailability of connection are some of the reasons for electricity theft



Bhilwara



CUTS along with CHD organised the second screening of the documentary at Gayatri Shakti Peeth, Bhilwara on November 05, 2014. The event was attended by several dignitaries including Rampal Sharma, CEO, *Zila Parishad* as a chief guest of the event.

The key issue that emerged out of the discussion was '*Jan Bhagidari*' (public partnership). Most of the participants felt that *Jan Bhagidari* can play a vital role in eliminating the electricity theft from the society. Further, it is equally important to educate and make consumers aware of consequences of electricity theft and its negative impact on electricity supply. As a responsible citizen people should take a pledge to not get involved, nor let others steal electricity. They should assist government officials to identify such culprits and bring them to justice. Rajpal Singh, Executive Engineer, *Ajmer Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd.* (AVVNL) stated that committees of active women and youth should be formed to prevent such kind of activities.



Udaipur



CUTS along with CHD organised the third and the last screening in Rajasthan at *Kisan Bhavan* in Udaipur on November 12, 2014. The event was well attended by 125 participants including Nishkam Diwakar, CEO, *Zila Parishad*; K S Sisodiya, Superintending Engineer, AVVNL; P L Paliwal, Executive Engineer, AVVNL; representatives of consumer groups, ward

members, media and others. After the screening, the floor was open for discussions. One of the key issues emerged out of the discussion was that service delivery system should be improved in order to encourage legal connections among the consumers. One of the participants informed that his agricultural connection has been pending since four-five years. Given this, he has no other option other than relying on illegal electricity connection. If consumers are not provided with legal connections, they will be forced to steal electricity, because it is no more a luxury but a necessity.

BIHAR

In order to generate awareness among various stakeholders, viz. household, farmers, producers, regulators, government etc. on energy crisis and its prospective solutions to eliminate electricity theft by taking appropriate actions, CUTS, along with its local partner Nidan organised four district screenings in Darbhanga, Madhepura, Arrah and Gaya during October-November 2014.

Darbhanga

CUTS along with Nidan organised the *Katijabaaaz* screening in Darbhanga district at Chandradhari Museum on October 16, 2014. The event was well attended by nearly 100 participants including Vivekanand Jha, Deputy of Development Commissioner of the District; Gauri Paswan, Mayor (District); Virendra Prasad, Deputy General Manager of Bihar Power Holding Corporation; Representative of Member of Parliament, Darbhanga (Kirti Azad); Gagan Kumar Jha, President (District), LJP; consumer groups, media, among others.



After the screening of the documentary, participants discussed problems and challenges raised in it. Vivekanand Jha stated that it is essential to see both sides of the coin. It is easy to blame and identify problems, but the challenge is to understand the problem and take corrective measures/steps in order to overcome it.

Virendra Prasad noted that electricity theft is a social evil and joint efforts are required to fight against this issue. He emphasised on organising awareness programmes at the *panchayat* level to generate mass awareness. Further, he also suggested CUTS to host such programmes at blocks and districts level.

Further, few key messages that emerged out from the discussion were:

- Discoms should simplify the process of getting the electricity connection
- Discoms should generate proper and lucid electricity bills to consumers

Madhepura

CUTS along with Nidan organised the *Katijabaaaz* screening at Hotel Mid Way, Madhepura on October 18, 2014. The screening was attended by 100 participants including Bablu Kumar Yadav, Mayor (Madhepura); Dhayani Yadav, Deputy Mayor; Siyaram Pd. Yadav, Ex MP from

RJD; District Head of all political parties' viz. Rama Shankar Pd. (Congress); Anil Kumar (BJP); Rajak (LJP); and Sitaram Pd. Yadav (JDU). Further, representatives from district administration, electricity departments, consumer groups and media participated actively in the screening.

During the discussion, several participants noted that conditions have improved lately as discoms have started initiating quick actions/prompt solutions of problems. The key message that emerged out of the discussion was that there



should be time-bound delivery system within discoms to address consumer problems. If discoms start resolving problems and providing connections in a time-bound manner than consumers will stop looking for alternatives, such as electricity theft, etc.

Arrah

CUTS along with Nidan organised the screening of *Katiyabaaaz* documentary at Vidya Bhawan, Campus of DDC Office in Arrah on November 14, 2014. The event was attended by several dignitaries including the Chief Guest of the event Shyam Nandan Sharma, Deputy Development Commissioner, Arrah. Further, several other participants, such as *Ward Parishad*, Representatives of Electricity Department, District head of different political parties, SDO, DEO from District Administration, consumer groups, media etc. actively participated in the screening.

The key message that emerged out of the discussion post screening was that consumer voice is missing from the whole system of electricity distribution. Most of the participants admitted that they find it difficult to approach relevant authorities for their issues and concerns related to electricity supply. Moreover, they are not aware of procedures to file their complaints through any other medium. Thus, there is a need to identify a consumer voice, which can represent consumers on such forums and relay their concern to the relevant authorities in appropriate manner.



Gaya

CUTS along with Nidan organised the screening of *Katiyabaaaz* at Holiday Inn in Gaya on November 15, 2014. The event was attended by 100 participants including Phoolchand Manjhi, MLA, Bodh Gaya; Giribar Dayal Singh, Deputy Development Commissioner; Representative of

Women Development Corporation; Geeta Devi, *Mabila Jila Parishad*; Kumari Shobha Sinha, Chairman, *Zila Parisad, Nagar Ayukt, Panchayati Raj Institution* member's women cell; ward members; SDO, Executive Officer from Electricity Board, among others.



The key message emerged out of the discussion was that consumers also have equal responsibility towards the system. It is not only the government which is responsible for providing electricity, but consumers should also ensure that they use electricity efficiently and eliminate electricity theft from the society. It is with the support of the people only the government would be able to resolve issues of electricity theft.

KEY MESSAGES

Overall, the following key messages emerged from the various discussions held across Rajasthan, UP and Bihar:

- People need to be made aware of energy conservation. They should be taught about their duty of not stealing electricity and paying proper bills
- Use of technology, such as smart meters with integrated billing functions, which provide real time energy balance
- Electricity theft in its various forms can be reduced and kept in check only by strong and assertive action by power companies. The strategy and the action should be based on a thorough understanding of the specific nature of the theft problem
- Undertake publicity campaigns targeted at consumers to make them aware of high penalties for theft of electricity
