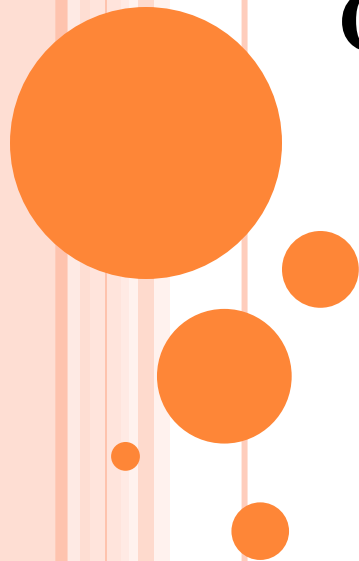


WORKSHOP ON  
“ROLE OF CONSUMER REPRESENTATIVES TO FURTHER  
POWER SECTOR REFORMS IN UTTAR PRADESH”

Nov. 27, 2017

**EXPERIENCE SHARING ON  
CONSUMER ADVOCACY STRATEGIES:  
RAJASTHAN**

**George Cheriyan  
Director**



# OVERVIEW OF ELECTRICITY SECTOR

- Underwent significant changes in last two decades.
- Better physical infrastructure, but huge population still unconnected or connected with appalling service quality.
- Until 2003, State Legislations had more consideration for Consumer Interests & Protection Compared to the Centre.
- Electricity Act, 2003 has provision for consumer protection.
  - Retained provision for State Advisory Committees at SERC level.
  - Regular public consultations & hearings by Regulatory commissions
  - Provision for Consumer Grievance Redressal Forums at discom level; & Ombudsman at state level.



# PROTECTING INTEREST OF CONSUMERS

(OBJECTIVE OF PREAMBLE OF ELECTRICITY ACT, 2003 )

## HOWEVER...

- While the preamble and the Act included consumers in their considerations, still consumers not given top-most priority.
- Act has failed to outline the nature and level of consumer engagement, especially at the SERC level.



# NEED OF CONSUMER PROTECTION VS. CHALLENGES FACED BY CSO'S

## Need of Consumer Protection

- Consumer Satisfaction
- Better Governance
- Represent Public Interest
- Increases Social Acceptance
- Contributes to Democratic Legitimacy

## Challenges faced by CSO's

- Lack of Awareness
- Lack of Interest
- Lack of Training
- Lack of Capacity
- Lack of Resources



# HOW TO OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES

- Awareness Generation and Education to Stakeholders
- Capacity building of Consumer Groups
- Reduce information asymmetry & improve efficacy of consumer groups.
- Action oriented research and advocacy on regulatory/policy issues undertaken by CSOs,
- Create vertical mechanisms complemented by horizontal linkages among stakeholders to take concerns/views from grassroots to policy level & vice-versa.
- Encourage large scale consumer education programmes.
- Collaborate more with local CSOs to undertake activities at grassroots level.



# SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS OF CUTS


- CUTS –FES (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung) Project on Involvement of Consumers in Power Sector Reforms in Rajasthan, India (2001 -2007)
- A Pilot Project on Capacity Building on Electricity Sector in Bangladesh, Nepal and India (2008- 2010) (RESA Project)



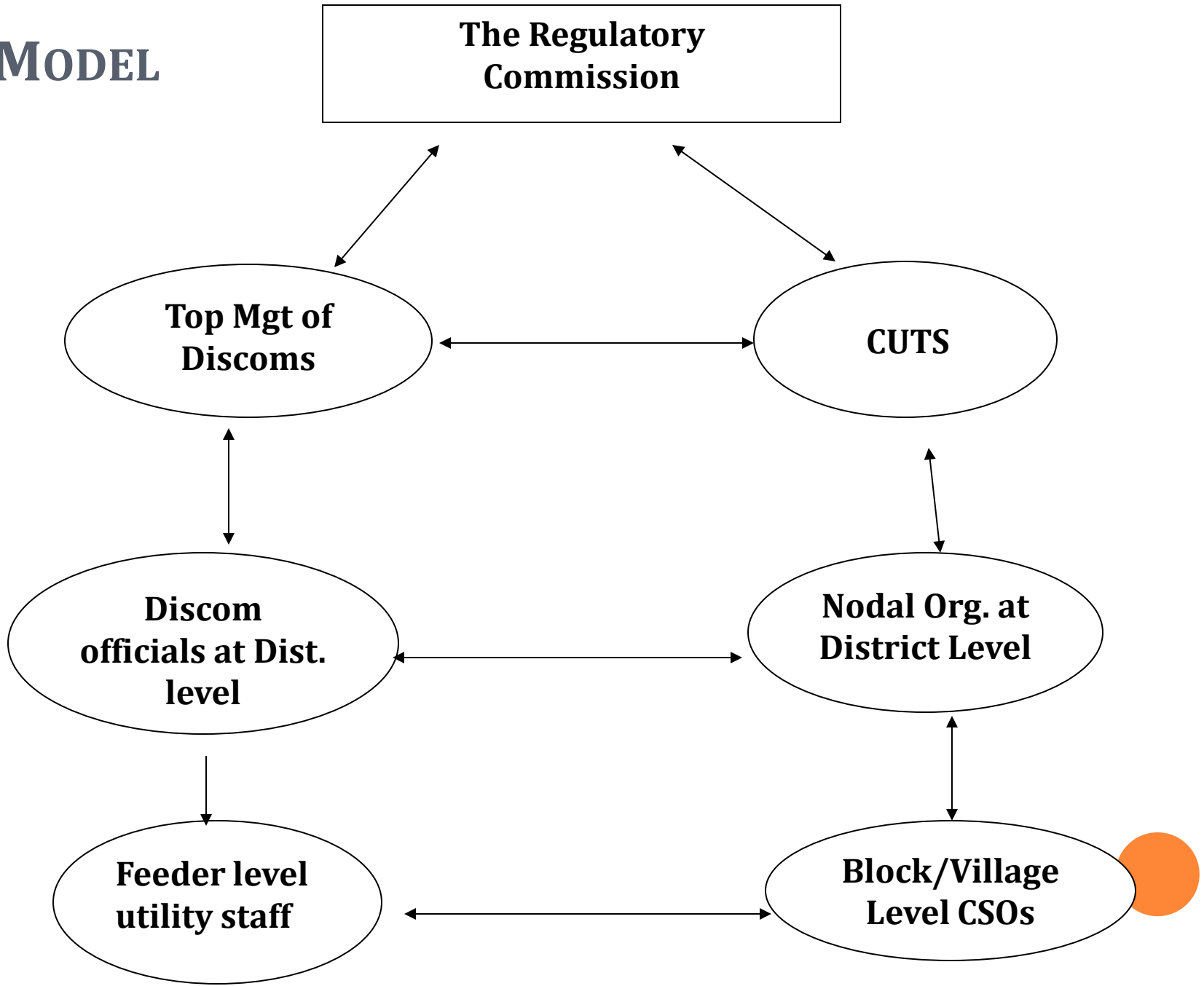
# CUTS- FES PROJECT: OBJECTIVES

- Sensitise service providers, regulators and consumers
- Mobilise community participation; Enhance capacities of CSOs and consumers
- Improve allocation & availability of resources; Achieve better & cogent economic reforms

## STRATEGY

- Awareness and Capacity Building
  - Network Formation
  - Consumers' feedback and information gathering
  - Raising policy issues at appropriate forums
    - At national level
      - Central govt
      - Other consumers' organizations
    - At the state level
      - RERC
      - State govt
      - Service delivery agency
- 

# THE MODEL





# OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

- Institutional Spaces
  - Provided under regulatory framework
    - Advisory Committee
    - Grievance Redressal Mechanism Created under the programme
    - *Chaupal baithaks (village meeting)*
    - *Jan Sunwaiis (public hearings)*
- Network
  - *District level partners*
  - *Vidyut Sudhar Samitis (electricity reform councils)*



# RESA PROJECT

## Overall Objectives:

- To increase long term capacity of CSOs to improve consumers' representation as a measure to enhance effectiveness of regulatory regimes in electricity sector.

## Project Area :

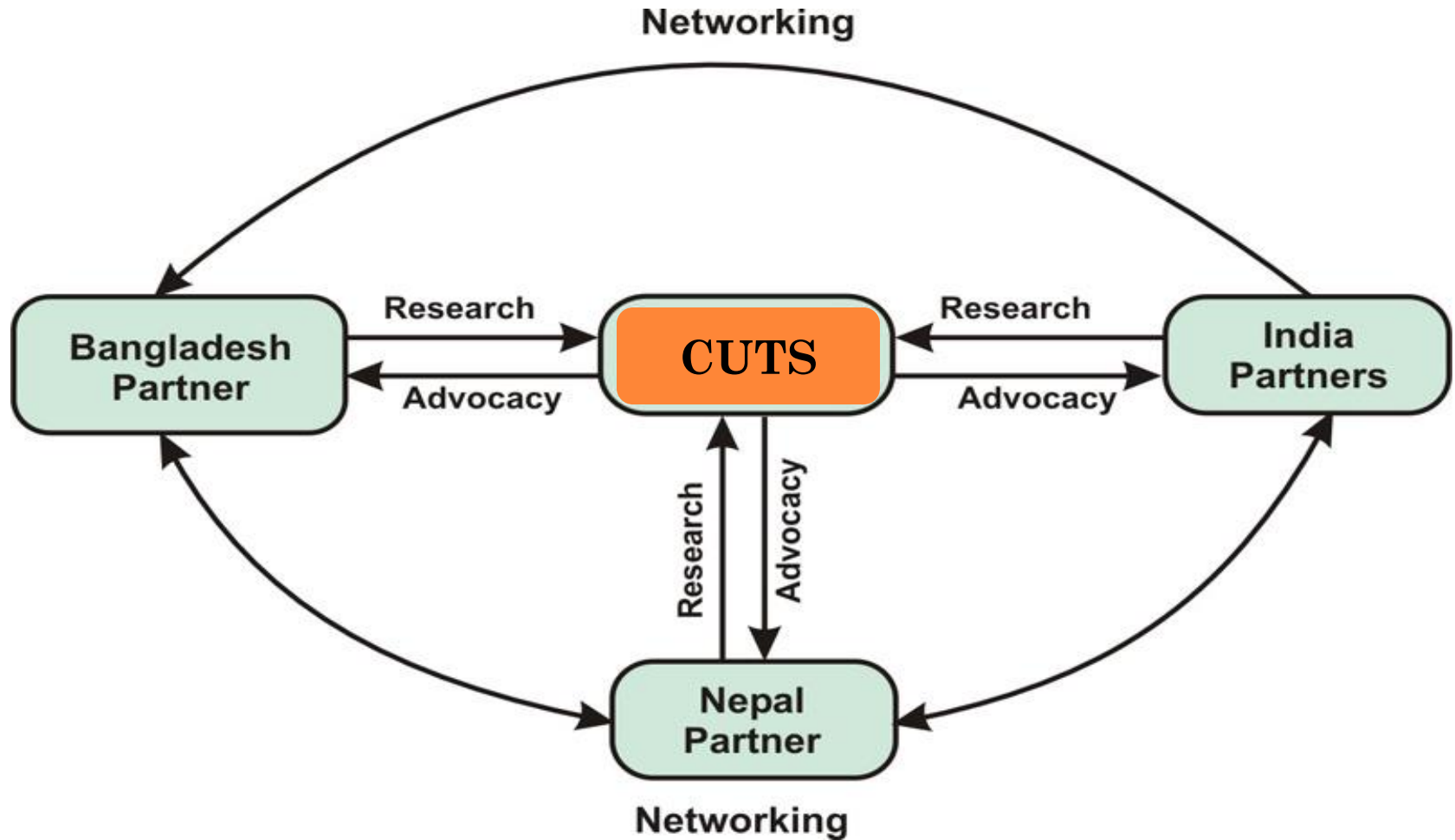
- Bangladesh, Nepal and India (Rajasthan & West Bengal)

## Project Support:

- NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation)



# PROJECT MODEL



## MAJOR ACTIVITIES

- Field Research & Consumer Base line Survey
- Reference Group Meetings
- Territorial Trainings of CSOs
- Grassroots Interface Meetings
- Advocacy Seminar
- Regional Conference



## MAJOR OUTCOMES

- Several pro-people changes in the electricity policy & regulation
- Consumer participation increased substantially.
- An informal network of CSOs working in the power sector at the national level



## AT THE POLICY LEVEL

- Ministry of Power recognised '*Sensitising the Consumers*' as one of the strategic action-point.
- Regulatory Commission released guidelines to Distribution Companies to resolve consumer complains effectively.
- CUTS re-nominated to Commission's Advisory Committee.
- Greater institutional space exists for consumer movement.

## AT THE CONSUMERS' END

- Amazed to observe senior officials of distribution companies coming out in public.
- Grassroots consumer organisations/activists are working to mould the society's opinion against mal practices.
- These organisations are better informed about the role of regulator and their obligations towards consumers.
- *Jan-Sunvais* (public-hearings) achieved building a constructive partnership between consumers and local utility staff.


# CREATING AN INFORMAL GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL MECHANISM



- CUTS established “*Vidhyut Sudhar Samitis*’ at village level in project area.
  - to act as a ‘Watchdog’, and help villagers redress their grievances vis-à-vis power supply.
  - to come out with an informal code of standards for power supply.



# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UP POWER SECTOR

- More representation for CSOs, working on electricity issues, in the State Advisory Committee of UPERC.
  - Awareness Generation Programmes -by Regulatory commission & UP govt.
  - Consumer education -ensuring participation of weaker sections
  - Interventions to reduce Electricity Theft-by Govt., CSO's and Public.
  - Institution setup- for facilitating public intervention (such as the Office of the Consumer Advocate as followed in Karnataka & Delhi).
  - Capacity Building - Granting financial assistance to CSO's
- 

**THANK YOU**

