

Report on Civil Society Coalition for Reforms in Electricity Distribution

6th February, 2020, Jaipur, Rajasthan

INTRODUCTION

CUTS International and Bask Research Foundation are working to improve consumer participation in electricity related regulatory affairs in Rajasthan, safeguarding consumer rights and advocating for better standards of performance for electricity utilities.

In line with the above stated objective, a one-day workshop was organized in Jaipur focusing on power sector issues and inefficiencies which impact electricity consumers, and potential role of civil society in improving accountability and efficiency in the sector (electricity distribution). Some key tools were released for capturing evidence / data related to commonly prevalent issues on the ground related to electricity services.

The key objective of the workshop was to form a coalition of civil society organizations for collective advocacy and mobilize grass-root resources for capturing evidence for issues so that they may be raised through appropriate platforms¹.

KEY DISCUSSIONS

I. Issues in Power Sector impacting Electricity Consumers

The session discussed issues across 3 key categorical divisions: Policy Design, Regulatory Compliance and Execution and Electricity related Consumer Services. The session covered challenges of accountability, inclusivity and transparency in policy design. This was followed by discussion of inefficiency and performance of distribution companies, while highlighting apathy towards consumers. Challenges such as passing on costs of DISCOM non-performance to consumers, increasing accidents, poor state of grid infrastructure (especially in rural), poor integration of IT services and blatant non-compliance of RERC regulations and orders were discussed. Lastly, the state of services rendered to electricity consumers, especially in rural areas, was discussed. This included issues like grievance redressal, VCR filing, power quality, safety, metering and billing.

II. Role of Civil Society for ensuring accountability and delivering reforms in Power Sector

¹ Detailed workshop agenda available in Annexure 1.

The objective of the session was to highlight the potential of impact through collective civil society action in power sector and the need for same. While the session discussed various channels for engaging key actors in power sector, resources and capacity required for same, it also outlined a strategy for coordinated efforts and sharing resources for taking collective action across the power distribution value chain at the least.

III. Panel Discussion: Learning from the Consumer Activists

This panel discussion focused on learning from Consumer Rights activists active in the power sector. A brief about panelists and the discussion is as below:

- Mr. Liaqat Ali, an activist based in Jodhpur discussed his experience of working in regulatory reforms through participation and filing petitions with RERC.
- Mr. Manish Mehta, a CA by profession, shared his journey from a common electricity consumer to an informed electricity consumer. He has filed 125 cases against JVVN in last 12 years. Cases have largely been litigated in CGRF and Ombudsman level.
- Mr. Hari Prasad Yogi, a consumer advocate from Sawai Madhipur shared his experience of fighting for consumer rights, and discussed legal options available to consumers.
- Mr. Rakesh Parmar, an active selfless consumer advocate from Dholpur, informed the participants about potential of RTI and how to use it as an effective tool to ensure accountability. He also discussed best practices to take up grievances with CGRF and Ombudsman.

IV. Tool for capturing Evidence

The last session of the workshop launched app based tools for capturing evidence related to following issues:

- Inaccurate metering or billing
- Electricity related accidents
- Faulty or poor electric infrastructure
- Incorrect filing of VCR
- Reporting poor quality of supply (curtailment, voltage fluctuations)

The session offered a hand on training to the participants.

Annexure-I

Agenda of the Workshop

**The Maker's Space, 3rd Floor, C24-A, Pankaj Singhvi Marg, Vidhayak Nagar, Lalkothi, Jaipur,
Rajasthan 302015**

Thursday, 6th February, 2020

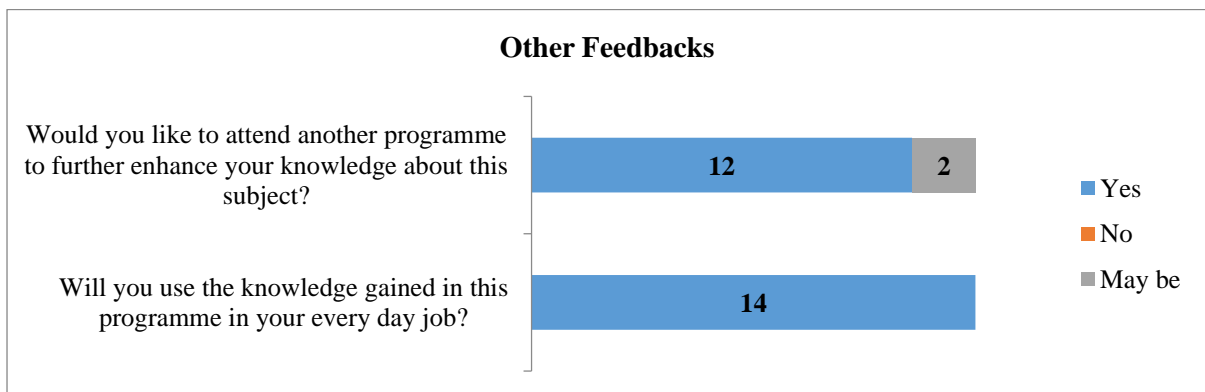
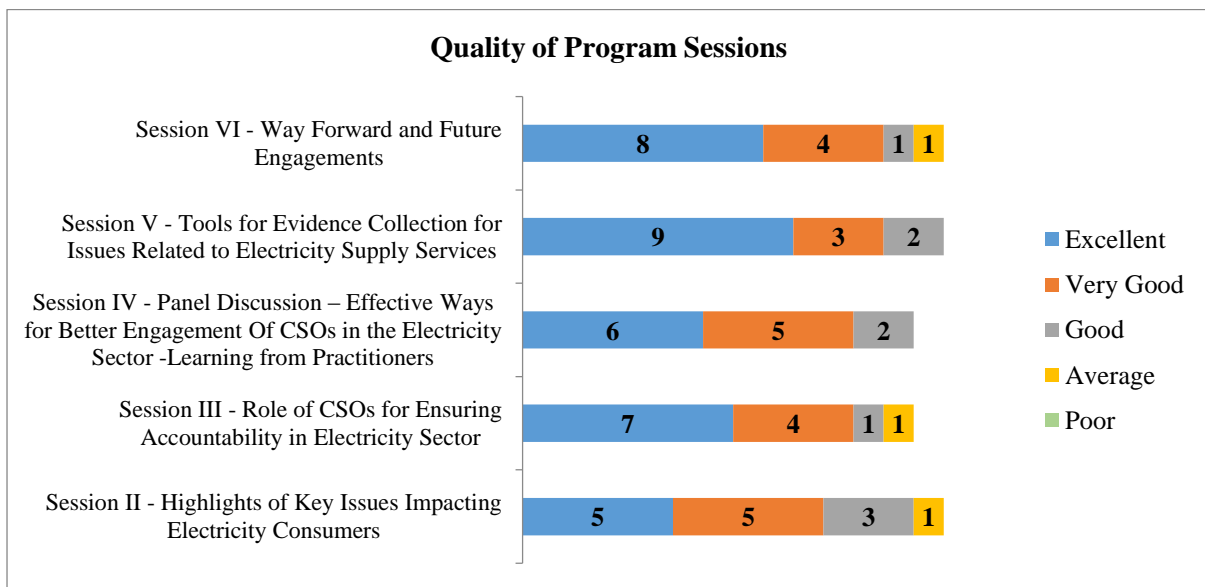
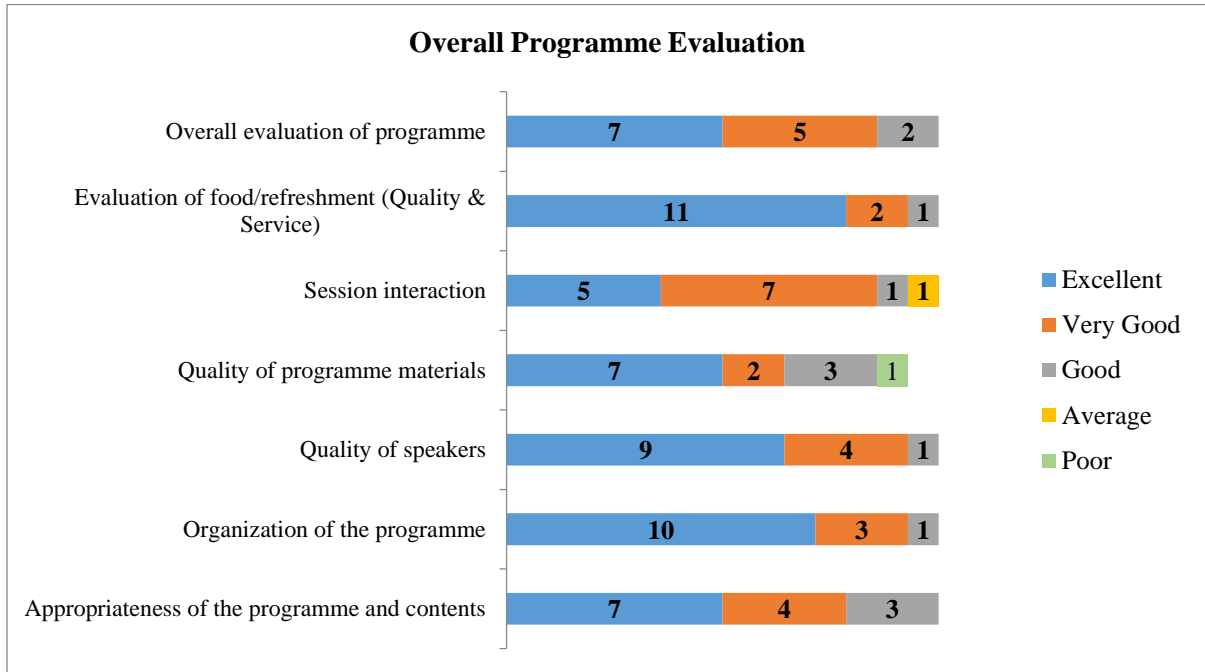
09:30 – 10:00	Registration & Filling up of Pre-Workshop Questionnaire
10:00 – 10:30	Session I: Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Udai S. Mehta, Deputy Executive Director, CUTS International ● Simran Grover, CEO, Bask Research Foundation
10:30 – 11:15	Session II: Highlights of Key Issues Impacting Electricity Consumers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anurag Mishra, Associate Fellow, CUTS International
11:15 – 12:00	Session III: Role of CSOs for Ensuring Accountability in Electricity Sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Simran Grover, CEO, Bask Research
12:00 – 13:15	Session IV: Panel Discussion – Effective Ways for Better Engagement Of CSOs in the Electricity Sector - Learning from Practitioners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Chair: Anshuman Gothwal, Executive Director, Bask Research Panel: Liyakat Ali , Consumer Advocate Hari Prasad Yogi , President, Consumer Legal Help Society Manish Mehta , Consumer Representative Rakesh Kr Parmar , Founder, Samajik Vikas Samiti
13:15 – 14:15	Lunch
14:15 – 14:40	Session V: Tools for Evidence Collection for Issues Related to Electricity Supply Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Simran Grover, CEO, Bask Research Foundation ● Vishal Narula, Research Associate, Bask Research
14:40 – 14:50	Tea Break
14:50 – 15:15	Session V: (Continued) Tools for Evidence Collection for Issues Related to Electricity Supply Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Simran Grover, CEO, Bask Research Foundation ● Vishal Narula, Research Associate, Bask Research Foundation
15:15 – 15:45	Session VI: Way Forward and Future Engagements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anshuman Gothwal, Executive Director, Bask Research
15:45 – 16:00	Session VII: Closing Remarks and Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anurag Mishra, Associate Fellow, CUTS International

Annexure-II
List of Participants

Sr. No.	Name	Designation and Organization	Location
1	Akshay Sharma	Programme Associate, CUTS International	Jaipur
2	Anmol Soni	Research Associate, Bask Research	Jaipur
3	Anshuman Gothwal	Executive Director, Bask Research	Jaipur
4	Anurag Mishra	Associate Fellow, CUTS International	Jaipur
5	Banshi Lal Meena	Gram Chetna Kendra	Jaipur
6	Bhagwan Lal Sharma	Nutan Shiksha Vikas Samiti	Chittorgarh
7	Bhanu Raika	CONASC Staff	Bikaner
8	Bharat Bhati	Marudhar Ganga Society	Jodhpur
9	Deepak Gode	CONASC Manager	Bikaner
10	Deepak Saxena	Assistant Director, CUTS International	Jaipur
11	Devendra Kumar Sen	Consumer Representative	Chittorgarh
12	Hari Prashad Yogi	CONASC Manager	Sawai Madhopur
13	Harsh Kumar Sharma	CONASC Staff	Sawai Madhopur
14	Jitendra Singh	CONASC Staff	Dholpur
15	Khusboo Jain	Programme Assistant, CUTS International	Jaipur
16	Liyakat Ali	Upbhokta Margdarshan Samiti	Jodhpur
17	Madan Giri Goswami	CONASC Manager	Chittorgarh
18	Manish Mehta	Consumer Advocate	Bundi
19	Mohanlal Meghwal	CONASC Staff	Chittorgarh
20	Mohini Ganguly	Research Associate, CUTS International	Jaipur
21	Prakash Sahu	Consumer Advocate	Bikaner
22	Prerna Nijhawan	Aajeevika Bureau	Udaipur
23	Rajendra Sen	Sarathi Seva Sansthan	Sri Ganganagar
24	Rakesh Kumar Parmar	CONASC Manager	Dholpur
25	Sagar Bendre	Urja Initiatives Producer Co. Ltd	Udaipur
26	Shailendra Kumar	Vidyut Upbhokta Sangh	Hanumangarh
27	Shyam Lal Taylor	CONASC Staff	Chittorgarh
28	Simran Grover	CEO, Bask Research	Jaipur
29	Udai S. Mehta	Deputy Executive Director, CUTS International	Jaipur
30	Uma Shankar Yogi	CONASC Staff	Sawai Madhopur
31	Vinod Kumar Sharma	Awareness Training and Motivation for Action	Jaipur
32	Vishal Narula	Research Associate, Bask Research	Jaipur

Annexure-III

Feedback on the workshop



Glimpses

