CHAPTER SIX

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONING OF

THE VOLUNTARY CONSUMER ORGANISATIONS

6.1 Introductory

As I have mentioned in the earlier chapters, consumers are the largest group in our country but they are not well organized and have to suffer because of the lack of awareness and also because of delay in the disposal of their complaints by the Consumer Disputes Redressal Forums. It is, therefore, necessary that awareness should be generated among the consumers about their rights, particularly among such consumers who are living in the semi-urban and in the rural areas. Consumers do not generally seem to seek and process large amounts of information when dealing with the problems related to consumption and purchasing and an extensive problem solving process is quite unusual even in connection with major durable appliances.\(^1\) Voluntary consumer organisations are certainly doing commendable work in raising awareness among consumers. While working for this noble cause, they face certain problems, which have been discussed in chapter five of the thesis. After visiting all these organizations personally and after interviewing the leading consumer activists, the researcher would like to suggest the following points for improving their day to day working.

As stated earlier, a registered consumer organisation with certain objectives and a sizeable number of members can perform well if its basic requirements like the office equipment and funds are assured. It may also be able to perform various other activities like consumer education, research, counseling, publications, vigilance etc.etc. However, we find that in actual

practice, many consumer organisations are not able to perform well or survive for a long time. A consumer activist who takes the pains and initiative to establish an organisation should ensure that the organisation survives and grows and does not close down within a short period. For this purpose, some factors which affect the working and longevity of an organisation are discussed under two main headings. Adherence to these suggestions can make the organisation viable and effective.\footnote{Premavathy Seetharan, \textit{Consumerism: Strategies and Tactics}, Mohini Sethi, CBS Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2002, p. 228.}

In the last chapter, I had listed some of the problems faced by the voluntary consumer organisations. The present chapter is, thus, inter-connected with the last chapter. As mentioned earlier, the researcher, after knowing the difficulties of these organisations, would like to suggest certain tips for the improvement and for proper functioning of these consumer organizations.

6.2 Suggestions for the Voluntary Consumer Organisations

In the light of different problems faced by voluntary consumer organizations while dealing and interacting with consumers and performing their role in the arena of consumer protection, it becomes necessary to strengthen them to a great extent so as to enable them to discharge their role in an efficient and an effective way. The following suggestions should be kept in mind for strengthening them.

6.2.1 Need to Make the Working Conditions More Sustainable and Favourable

With an adequate support from government, voluntary consumer organisations can have integrated research how to deal these hardships, that is, dividing consumer issues that need immediate attention, that need attention in future etc. Recognising this need, the Government of India, Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies entrusted the Consumer Education Research Centre, Ahmedabad with the task of devising and organising a Workshop for Consumer Organisations, with the primary objective of developing management skills, and imparting knowledge regarding organising and conducting consumer protection activities, fund raising, use of media, education, research and advocacy. Talking about the grants given by the Government to the prominent consumer groups, the researcher was informed in detail about the scheme followed by the
Government of Gujarat for the past 10 years regarding the ranks given to the groups and their registration. He expressed the hope that a similar scheme would be accepted by the Maharashtra and other State Governments.\textsuperscript{3} It was pointed out that the research work needs to discover integrated consumer protection plan. Under this plan priority area which needs immediate attention or which might erupt in future, needs to be set out. For this purpose, help from Law Universities, Law Colleges, research institutes can be taken, as there are so many students and research scholars who want to do this kind of job. Then each organization can pick and choose three to four priority areas and work on those with perfection. As it is said - Jack of all trades-master of none, getting experts in few priority areas will get them better chance of funding as voluntary consumer organisations will not be fighting for the same pie.

6.2.2 Need for More Finances and Financial Independence

Fund-raising and expenditure represent an important strategic decision for non-profit managers in the face of scarce donor resources. For majority of non-profit organisations that rely on private contributions, fund raising remains a primary mechanism of intra-agency competition for scarce donor resources. It is, however, difficult for non-profit managers to determine how much of their own resources to allocate towards fund-raising activities.

(i) Consumer Organizations should run cooperative bazaars so that economical buying can be made and the produce can be sold to the member consumers at nominal profits. Consumer Organizations can meet out their day to day expenses from these profits.

(ii) Sale of publications at the reasonable rates.

(iii) Consumers advocate and representatives of consumer organizations be allowed to travel at the concessional rates.

(iv) Govt. premises may be made available for the functioning of consumer organizations as renting a venue is always a problem for voluntary consumer organisations.

organisations.

(v) Services of legal experts are made available by the government.

(vi) Liberal grants may be allowed for rural and women Consumer Organization by the government.

(viii) Voluntary contribution may be had from complaints whose complaints are amicably settled.

(viii) Advertisement from Consumer Organizations may be entertained at nominal cost by Doordarshan, AIR and Newspapers.4

(ix) Drawing competitions, poster making competitions held in consumer clubs can be used to raise funds by selling prize winner entries. Even the students making these posters, drawings can get some portion, which will built confidence in winner students and will encourage other students to participate next time.5

Although these items will not attract much attention in rural areas, but if promoted through bigger organizations at national as well as international level, can help most voluntary consumer organisations make good money.

6.2.3 Need to Concentrate More on Consumer Education

While doing research for the present thesis, the researcher observed that although voluntary consumer organizations are doing good work in this field, but it did not make much difference in rural areas. This worked only in small pockets of economy, majority of consumers still do not know much consumerism. Manu Bhai Shah, the Chief Executive Officer of the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad explained the importance of consumer education for any consumer organisation. For the survival, growth and development of a consumer


5 CGSI is already using this as fund raising activity. Drawings made by students were converted into cards and then promoted by CGSI. Researcher was given one such card.
organisation, the support of the society is vital. And acceptance can come only when the people know of the group’s successes, efforts, and activities. Similarly for funding agencies also, the credentials and image of an organisation are important factors in deciding whether funds should be given. This is where visibility of the group becomes important. According to Shah, the CERC makes a distinction between consumer education and consumer groups. The latter is done by organising various training programmes, workshops, and seminars across the country. The CERC also makes use of audio visuals. He focused on the importance of the use of media for consumer groups, and talked about the series of media workshops organised by the CERC to train consumer activists in the use of media. He then talked about the CERC’s Internship Programme wherein consumer activists are called to the CERC and given training in consumer protection. Non legal measures like consumer education can also pose effective instruments of consumer protection. If consumers are educated and made aware of their rights, they would assert themselves in the market place.⁶

6.2.4 Need for Concentration on Different Target Groups

The researcher observed that all organizations are doing a lot of work in spreading consumer education, but still the desired outcome was not coming. The reason is that maybe a voluntary consumer organisation need to target at different levels to attract consumers to attend the consumer education sessions- workshops, seminars etc. at the Individual level; at the community and organizational level and also at the societal level.

And the age of the consumers, for example, targeting youth, that is, school, college going, adults and old aged consumers. For youth, few organizations have been doing commendable work already. As consumers in India have poor knowledge of their own rights as consumers, it is necessary to educate them. While adults can be made receptive to intensive consumer rights programmes through newspapers, magazine articles and radio/television certainly be better equipped to help them tackle market problems successfully. Considering this two models have been developed for school and college students. Each model has been divided in three stages, viz., awareness, understanding, and application. It also explains the objectives and activities

involved in each step. The model for school children could be incorporated in the social studies syllabus, while the model for college students could be treated as part of a general study (or qualifying paper) at the graduation level. The students will learn about interdependence of business and society as well as the manner in which this relationship unfolds itself.\(^7\) Foremost, the students are too explained the need and areas for consumer protection. In this next, news from national dailies, magazines and television on adulteration, over-pricing short weight etc. would be useful. Teachers could help students prepare scrap books and make checks on purchases at home, thus making students familiar with common consumer problems.

6.2.5 *Need to Effectively Use Services of the Consumer Activists and Volunteers*

As hiring and holding professional and highly skilled staff has always been a problem for most consumer organisations, their solution lies is hiring the trained volunteers. However for this work, seeking support from government is highly recommended. On similar guidelines as per the western countries, volunteers have to be rewarded for their work and time. Government has to sponsor some special awards for the volunteers annually which will keep them motivated. Also small funding schemes needs to be launched by government, where volunteers can get at least transport allowance. As a matter of fact, volunteering should be encouraged from schools students during their school holidays, retired people, and those who are looking for employment as the experience gained during volunteering will help them get practical experience of work force. Even law students and scholars can help them by offering volunteer services. Participation of educational institution can and should be secured by encouraging research.

6.2.6 *Need for Dividing the Work Among the Consumer Volunteers to Ensure Perfection*

Consumer organizations should take one cause at a time and concentrate all the activities to that cause. Talking about prioritization of issues, Manu Bhai Shah observed that a group should decide consciously the areas upon which it is going to concentrate its energies time, efforts and resources. It has to define the issues and decide its priorities. He said that whatever consumer groups do, there are going to be consequences, and fallouts. Therefore, it must constantly and

consciously do whatever it wants to do. He stated from the CERC’s experience that more resources enable more work to be done, and that there was nothing wrong in accepting money as grants and donations from the government, Business houses and even the foreign resource agencies. The idea behind utilising the entire spectrum of funding resources is to prevent being dependant on any single source.\(^8\)

We in India have consumer organisations dealing with all consumer rights-publications, testing, litigation, that is, dealing with more than two or three of these functions. However, we need to have specialized organisations conducting tests, publications, etc. Here the question is what are your strengths as we need to have specialization. We know about organisations in past and present, but now we need to know what type of organizations we want in future.

Manu Bhai Shah also quoted about some of the voluntary consumer organizations working in the developed countries which are dealing with just one or two causes but are doing it perfectly. One in the USA is on environment, that is, Public Advocates Incorporated at California like Citizens group. It deals with all the problems of woman, children, environment etc.etc. They are acting as the Public Advocates. This organisation has grown in size and it is one of the oldest and the earliest organisations. Like the USA, we need to have specialized organisations, dealing or focusing on particular issue or point.

In the United States, organisations are issue based. Most organisations are still under the influence of Ralph Nader. He was a highly committed and a dedicated consumer activist who did a lot for the consumer movement in the USA. For example, the Civil Aviations Centre does not deal with any other issue and deals only with consumer rights dealing with civil aviations. Then there is Citizens Groups Inc. which is a legal service centre with its headquarter at Washington D.C. All other organisations like the Civil Aviation, Auto Safety Centre forward their matters to the Citizens Group. Thus the focus of a consumer organisation is also important. However, in India, we cannot identify organisation with particular issue / focus.

Consumer organizations can visualize the activity which is likely to be undertaken by them. From the analysis, it is clear that the future course of action depends on the aging factor. New

organizations gave emphasis on the publicity through publications and likely to conduct more seminars / conferences etc. etc. and establishment and extinction of library facilities. Some people are of the view that they will improve the system of complaints handling and lobbying with the Govt for new legislation and amendment to the existing legislations. A few organizations express the view that they would set up laboratories for product testing conduct research in various consumer problems. Internship programmers would be lunched to train the consumer activists. Emphasis was also given to improve the public distribution system and some were interested in tackling the environment pollutions too. To conclude, the future plans of various organizations depended on their maturity. Some consumer organization intended to concentrate on education publicity, extension of library facilities, lobbying the government, setting of laboratories and providing internship to consumer activists. This way all of them would not be fighting for same pie-funding from Govt.

6.2.7 Need for Sharing Resources and Information

At this stage all organizations say that they do not have adequate funding to carry out activities. However, actually they are duplicating the work done by other organizations which is wasting resources as well as time. Almost all organizations have their publications. There is, however, need to get one publication at state level in an organized way. Similarly with other activities can be carried out by them. The best option is to share resources and information from other organizations. If one organization has already done some research or product testing, other organizations can share that information and use it by acknowledging the agency who did the actual work.

6.2.8 Need for Creating Effective Networks and Partnerships at the National and State Level

Some of the leading consumer activists consider partnerships as an important mechanism for building and sustaining capacity to promote consumer protection. This emphasis is particularly relevant when working across multiple sectors and with a range of organisations.

---

One of the leading consumer protagonists associated with the Consumer Education and Research Centre, Preeti Shah very clearly supported the idea of networking and partnerships. She mentioned that why consumer organisations are not ready to work together is unimaginable for her. One man with that energy and passion for movement starts the organization and treats that organisation as its own baby and is not ready to share it with others. When they apply for funding, plan of different organisations clash. They compete with each other for funding. As pie is very small, there are so many takers.

According to her, partnerships are important vehicle for bringing together diverse skills and resources for more effective consumer protection outcomes. Partnerships can increase the efficiency of systems that have an impact on consumer protection by making the best use of different but complementary resources. Celebration, joint resourcing and planned action can also potentially make a bigger impact on consumer protection across diverse sectors. Pritee Shah argued that if partnerships were to be successful, they must have a clear purpose and value to the work of partners, and also be carefully planned. According to her, a partnership is a voluntary arrangement developed between parties who agree to work co-operatively towards should and/or compatible objectives. A partnership does not compromise the principles of the partners, but the term ‘partnership’ carries responsibilities about sharing of resources risks and decision making, trust co-operation towards shared/or compatible objectives and negotiation of should goals towards interests in a shared future.

**The levels of partnerships**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Co-operating</th>
<th>Share Resources, High Level of Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Networking</td>
<td>Co-operating</td>
<td>Coordinate Needs / Activities, Limit Duplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operating</td>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>Build Capacity, Build Interdependent Systems to Address Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td>Share Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For strengthening the consumer protection movement, the coordination with other agencies is of paramount importance. It is to be build up at district, state, national and International levels. Regular network meetings to be organized for not only CEOs, chairmen, presidents, but also for office bearers and volunteers, which will make working of consumer organisations more transparent and everyone will know who is doing what. Strong networks and partnerships are being used effectively by western countries NGOs to promote their causes.

6.2.9 Need to Strengthen the Principles of Planning

Principles of planning have to be incorporated in implementing programs and services of the voluntary consumer organisations to improve effectiveness. These organisations need to plan for effectiveness (change of behavior we can see) as well as success (attended by so many people). Consumer Organisations should use evidence when possible or base your work on promising work that others are undertaking and should gather its own resources. Consumer groups need to consider integrating this agenda into existing projects. This will show professionalism in their working and will lead to credibility. Few major organizations are required to do the following:

(i) To improve design and delivery of evidence based activities to consumer protection.

(ii) To strengthen existing partnerships and develop new partnership – between organisations and across sectors to support planning and implementation of activities to prevent consumer protection and education.

(iii) To facilitate consistent good practices in the primary prevention of consumer exploitation.

(iv) Developing program objectives.

(v) Selecting preventative strategies and activities.

(vi) Evaluating all the consumer education programs by pre and post evaluation forms from participants.

(vii) Documenting Summary, reflections and action planning.

(viii) Setting SMART goals for all programs:
Specific - Clear

Measurable - How Many

Achievable - Practically Possible

Relevant - To Issue

Timed - Specified, Days, Month, Year, Objectives.

(ix) Using a structured approach to project/program planning and evaluation.

(x) Ensuring that their actions are multi-level (individual, organizational, community and societal).

(xi) Work collaboratively and in partnerships to strengthen all the process involved.

6.2.10 Need to Emphasise on the Sustainability of Programmes

Consumer Organisations need to emphasise on the sustainability of programmes. Sustainability of programs means:

(i) Maintaining the programs.

(ii) Sustaining the benefits achieved by the program even if the program itself finishes.

(iii) Having the program continue, but with other organisations or sectors taking on the operation.

(iv) Documenting and disseminating the program so others many adopt it.

(v) Requires more than continued funding.

(vi) Requires workforce development-training monitoring and support from management.

(vii) Requires community and political support.

(viii) Requires forward planning.

For sustainability of effective programs, voluntary consumer organisations should:

(i) Use coherent conceptual approaches to program design.
(ii) Are based on careful analysis and research, and have a theoretical framework to guide their development.

(iii) Address the most significant determinants of consumer exploitation.

(iv) Develop smart objectives.

(v) Undertake inclusive, relevant practice.

(vi) Imported training and capacity building - Professional development for staff and volunteer.

(vii) Reach those most at risk especially rural consumers.

(viii) Use multiple strategies.

(ix) Involve other sectors in partnership like Govt and private sector.

(x) Are implemented for sufficient time to make difference.

(xi) Use effective evaluation strategies.

6.2.11 Need for Doing Cost-Benefit Analysis Before Starting Any New Project

Voluntary consumer organisations need to start working towards evaluation system for their work and using evidence based approach. The strategies used by these organisations are not working or consumers have indifferent attitude towards consumerism, because consumer groups are delivering them pre-structured consumer awareness programs and never consult what consumers want to hear or want to know. NGOs from the western countries have been using need analysis and evaluation tool to make their programs successful. They keep roughly 20-25% budget of the funding for need analysis and evaluation.

Manu Bhai Shah, while speaking on evaluation, said that it was vital for a consumer group to know as to whether it was doing its work on time, doing it well and with least expenditure. He then explained the different methods of evaluation. A consultant from outside can be called in and asked to analyses the organisation’s progress over a period of time, its strengths and weaknesses, effectiveness, and what is needed to be done. The CERC has greatly benefitted from this exercise in the past. The other method explained by Shah was self evaluation by the people
of organisation itself. The results of such evaluations are indicators of the presence of absence of public support.\textsuperscript{10}

6.2.12 Need for the Voluntary Consumer Groups to Advocate for Giving More Teeth to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986

Another prominent consumer protagonist Swaran Kohli stressed the importance of lobbying, advocacy, and litigation for public voluntary organisations. She defined advocacy as the art of making administrators accountable and referred to administrators as authorities under different laws who have the powers for redressal and protection of public grievances. She explained the Three Is of advocacy: Initiation, Innovation, and Implementation. She said that Initiation means, to raise the visibility of the issue and bring it to public notice. Innovation consists of the strategies, and methodology involved in advocacy, and implementation is enforcement of what exists but is not practised. She then spoke at length about importance of research, data collection and documentation, and explained the rules for successful advocacy.

6.2.13 Need for the Voluntary Consumer Organisations to Work for Internal as well as External Capacity Building

During the course of her research, the researcher observed that the office bearers of the voluntary consumer groups need ongoing professional development opportunities. To give efficient services to consumers, service providers themselves need to get up to date training and information. To carry out its various and diverse functions, consumer groups need trained as well as non-trained staff on regular basis to work for the cause of the organisation in itself, there are a number of NGOs that offer jobs to individuals at various lends-some of these positions are on a voluntary basis offering rewards/returns in the form of experience certificates, a fulfilling and satisfying experience and a chance to work for a social cause others may pay a good salary. Bigger organizations can carry out this activity very well. CERC, MGP, CGSI are already involved in it this for long time. Office bearers of voluntary consumer groups from the African, Asian countries have also been to the CERC and the MGP for professional development.

6.2.14 Need for Initiating Transparent Procedure in their Working and In Creating System of Public Accountability

When the researcher visited some of the prominent consumer organizations from across the country, a couple of them refused to give Annual Reports to her due to privacy reasons. However, actually they need to have transparent working and there should be nothing to hide. The CERC has already adopted it, especially in incoming or outgoing mails / emails. Preetie Shah told the researcher that any mail received by any office bearer goes to reception and then is circulated to everyone working at the CERC. Bringing transparency will improve credibility for all voluntary consumer groups for getting funding. They should develop appropriate policy for recruitment, recitation and training of their staff. Their programmers and achievements should be properly documented and widely publicized through the radio, television and the press in the form of success stories so that people can read, understand and also evaluate their performance. They should be a radical change in the attitude and in the manner in which the bureaucracy deals with the voluntary organizations.

6.2.15 Need to Make an Effective Use of the Media

Media can successfully mould public opinion and has an important role to play in establishing consumer sovereignty in the country. Concerted efforts by the media in this direction can eventually convert even the most passive consumer into an activist, create a healthy respect for the rights of consumers among manufacturers and traders and encourage consumer organisations to strive better in their endeavour. Even the best of campaigns launched by consumer organisations in public interest can become ineffective without the support of the media. Newspapers and magazines can project consumer interest through regulating ads and writing about topics of consumer interest in the news columns. Effective use of media and consumer protection if properly conducted, it has all the potentialities of becoming a powerful agent of social and economic change. One of the problems faced by the voluntary consumer organisations was non cooperative attitude from media. With time, support from media has improved but still

---

media is not ready to publish reports of product testing as it affects their relationship with big business houses. Voluntary Consumer Organisations have to build strong relationship with media so that the latter could become a partner in their crusade against consumer exploitation.

6.2.16 Spreading Awareness Amongst Youth to be Part of the Consumer Movement

The researcher found that majority of the voluntary consumer groups were being run by people above 45 years. Even consumer activists reported that young blood is not joining the movement. Efforts have to be made by the consumer groups as well as government to encourage young consumers to join this noble cause. Moreover, they themselves are consumers and need to be educated on consumerism. Although consumer club is an initiative in that direction but it need to be spread amongst college going and University students. Consumerism has to be made part of their curriculum. And these consumer groups need to advocate for this to happen.

6.2.17 Need to Work More Hard in the Rural Areas to Spread Consumer Awareness

The consumer agencies would have to spread themselves far and wide, especially in the villages. We are well aware that in India, 75% of the total population resides in the rural area. Among the above population majority of people are illiterate, uneducated, poor and are agriculturists or engaged in agricultural activities. They are recognized as backward or under developed people. The surrounding situation of these people requires their allround development, which can be achieved by providing infrastructure facilities, essential information, education, knowledge to them. Knowledge is that weapon which makes the man perfect to face the situation. All this clusters around the Human Resources Development (HRD). HRD is the basic concept to develop human beings and society into that portion that any individual person will be able to face any type of exploration.\(^\text{12}\) Local volunteers could be identified in various localities and villages, who could merely note down the complaints that the consumer in that locality, or village, had. The consumer agency representative could then visit the area once a fortnight or month and collect the complaints as well as meet some of the consumers - a cheap, but effective way of spreading

---

the agency's reach and services, as well as spreading the message of consumerism, in addition to training and developing volunteers.\(^\text{13}\)

### 6.2.18 Some More Suggestions for Voluntary Consumer Organisations

- There can be Information Centres (\textit{Soochna Kendras}) started in 50-50\% partnership with Government and NGOs. Government can provide hardware and NGOs can provide manpower;
- They should convince the society first. That what they are doing is worth. They should react to society’s problems and in return get support of the society. They should look into needs/issues of society, community and then come up with redressal. Means they need to build rapport with society;
- So many NGOs are there in Mumbai. But no one is doing much for consumer movement. NGOs working for other causes can help in spreading consumer movement;
- It is impossible to have Consumer Organisation everywhere in every city. What can be done is NGOs already working in different areas can start a consumer cell with them;
- Difference between Urban and rural approach. Urban area consumers are aware of their rights. But still they have indifferent attitude towards very few consumers activists are there now. Consumer movement. They think that nothing can happen, wastage of time;
- Co-ordination with govt. is to be improved;
- New consumer organisations which are mushrooming like anything should be given training at initial level to how to form, run and work as Consumer Organisations;
- No misuse of funds should be there. Voluntary organisations gets crores of rupees from Ministry and misuses for their personal use. Fair working should be there;
- Consumer organisations take hospitalities of corporates and enjoy at their expenses, and are well looked after them which should not be there;
- Bigger organizations because of surplus funds, they develop attitude, which is more akin to discourage consumer movement.

\(^{13}\) Audrey J. Rebello, “A Few Hints to Consumer Agencies”, \textit{The Indian Express}, 13 December 1989, p. 7..
• Few organisations conduct programmes only for name sake. Seminars / Workshops / Conferences are held, they invite people, discusses only for name sake;
• Till now, most organisations are induced in consumer rights of goods, but not much has been done in the field of services-like Airlines, Hotels, Electricity services etc. So, this field is yet to be explored;
• Complaint handling at local level to be enhanced and for the awareness to people for the Consumer Protection Act should be made. And above all, redressal in time should be made available that people believes in it;
• Then testing is not root of organisations. It is very expensive. So all organisations can not do it. And more over everyone should not do it. It is repetition of product testing done sometimes. Organisations must have their focus fixed on some field and work. Why to waste resources in it;
• Voluntary Consumer Organisations should assert their right and pursue remedies;
• In consumer complaints, common consumer is not having equal status to MNCs. MNCs involves lawyers in litigation again causing delay in formalities- need to work on this; and
• Programmes are conducted in Five Star Hotels, where participants come and have food, enjoys and goes back without any active contribution to the movement. Instead of it, awareness is needed at rural level and not in those Hotels, so such functions should be conducted at such rural places.

6.3 Suggestions for the Smaller Organizations

During the course of her study, the researcher sampled a combination of some voluntary consumer organizations - both big and small purposively in order to get balanced information from them. Majority of consumer activists were of the opinion that smaller organizations are sham and exist on papers only. After analyzing all the data collected and interviewing consumer activists, researcher has also listed few suggestions for small organizations lessons from bigger organizations.

(i) Small organizations should be organised, motivated, dedicated-efforts needs to be made to spread consumer education;
(ii) Infrastructure with organisation is not up to mark or we can say, they have small infrastructure. The small organisations do not have internet facility. Govt should give them some money to set up basic infrastructure. As there are so many sham organizations now, so to prove their credibility they need to make partnerships with bigger organizations;

(iii) They should include students and volunteers from colleges and schools;

(iv) Should make team of volunteers, who can go to far flung areas and reach grassroot level consumers;

(v) Try to work with big organisations- may link up temporarily with bigger organisation in their vicinity;

(vi) In order to get big they have to think big. Partnership with bigger organizations- may be temporarily;

(vii) Big organisations can help them, only if they come together to fight by getting united; and

(viii) Smaller organizations need to work a little bit towards bringing professionalism in their working. A plan takes them from starting point to end point. It is a process that answers

These organisations should analyze how should they approach this issue based on the evidence of best practice. Smaller organizations need to learn how they can be effective. Smaller organizations need to think strategically about setting up clear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Long term benefits (20 yrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Intermediate achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Impact evaluations 4-5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions / Strategy</td>
<td>Short term achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Process evaluations months)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smaller organizations can also learn the importance of having clear and achievable goals and objectives for their programs. Along with this, they can learn how to write program objectives in a way that will support good program planning and evaluation. The concept of capacity building, partnership development, and program sustainability, which are important, if programs are to deliver long-term change benefit. Mr George Cheriyan told that CUTS has already worked out vision for 25 years on the website named VISION-2034-split in 5 years each. On similar grounds, smaller organizations need to think the same way.

6.3.1 Need for Capacity Building

It is an approach to development that builds independence. Capacity building increases the range of people, organizations, and communities who are able to address problems and in particular, problems that arise out of social inequity and social exclusion.

- Capacity to Solve the Problem and Initiate Action
- Capacity to Take Action
- Capacity to Sustain Action

Following are the strategies for Capacity Building

- Mobilise resources for implementation (people, money).
- Build capacity through training and infrastructure development.
- Develop roles with key people.
- Create opportunities for action by raising public and political awareness.

6.4 Conclusion

The success of the consumer movement depends a great deal upon the effectiveness of the consumer groups. And consumer groups can be effective only if they are equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills. Manu Bhai Shah, Managing Trustee of the CERC said that possession of the requisite skills and resources is vital for the effective development of consumer groups. Zeal and enthusiasm are necessary but not sufficient, professional inputs in the movement are most vital. There is a need to make consumer groups around the country aware of these skills, techniques, and resource utilization so that they become more effective. Real consumer protection
is possible only when there is consumer education and awareness, and the proper functioning of consumer groups. A noted consumer activist and a trustee of the CERC, Swarn Kohli was a Chairperson of the Development Committee of the International Organisation of Consumers Union (IOCU). She stressed on the need for consumer groups to be well informed of the strategies, tools and techniques used by other countries to fight mal-practices, and exhorted consumers of all sections of society to join hands, and act globally. Prof. Shah supplemented this by stating that it became important for Indian consumer groups to constantly know, and learn from the happenings on International front.

Voluntary consumer organizations can play crucial role in consumer protection by supplementing government efforts as they are close to the minds and hearts of the rural consumers. They have their roots in the people and can respond to the needs and aspirations of the community very effectively. They can experiment new approaches to consumerism. They, however, face problems in terms of funding, recruitment and retention of trained and qualified staff, leadership crisis, and poor maintenance of records and accounts, lack of professional competence, apathy of the bureaucracy and the tendency of politicians and others to use them for personal or political gains. There is a strong need to take steps such as simplifying and streamlining grants-in-aid procedures, training of personnel, improving the organizational structure and administrative competence of the personnel to strengthen voluntary organizations.

The role of the voluntary organisations will help not only the consumers but also the Government to identify and to rectify the lacunae in the implementation of the laws. At the same time the organisations should not forget that “Everyone is a consumer, the young and old, the rich and poor, workers and idlers, consumers do not constitute a separate class. Everybody is included.” Keeping this in many more organisations must come forward to create a good healthy environment and to protect the rights and privileges of the consumers that are guaranteed under various laws and especially the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.14

With reference to the future of the consumer movement, a supportable inference is that it will not make any noticeable progress until the existing

---

organizations change in a number of ways. For example, many of these organizations are dedicated to the “consumer movement”, but there is no unified consumer movement. If such unity is to be achieved, it is necessary to establish an order of priority for the various consumer issues. After this has been done, the organizations should go to work in a concerted fashion. A problem is that while there are a multitude of national organizations, none has achieved strong leadership. Various organizations exist in an atmosphere of Friendly distance. They do not really communicate. National organizations tend to be successful when they have active local chapters and when communications flow in both directions. Within the total consumer organization structure there are local organizations with no ties to national groups and national groups with no local chapters. A strong local- national network does not exist. This must be achieved if the movement is to succeed.15