

Role of Voluntary Consumer Organisations in Consumer Protection and Welfare

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1. Introduction

The perception of the term consumer and consumer movement has been undergoing changes as it is being constantly redefined as society progresses and more areas come within its purview. With each new scientific discovery and technological innovation, society is undergoing rapid transformations – socio-economic and political. So is the case with consumers' movement the world over and in India too.

In pursuing the present study, the author has followed a doctrinal method of research. It involves the collection of data from primary and secondary sources; primary sources like statutes, reports of the commissions and committees and secondary sources like books written by eminent authors and articles found in the journals and websites.

This paper first highlights the basic Consumer Rights, and explains what Consumer Organizations are. This paper then mentions the development of VCOs for the consumer protection in India. In the following part this paper discusses the importance of VCOs in consumer protection along with its functions. The author then concludes and gives suggestions.

The genesis of consumer protection movement and consumer cooperation lies in protection of consumer interests by consumers themselves. A sound, healthy and efficient consumer organisation having support of the people at large, patronage of its members and encouragement of the government can be a powerful instrument in protecting and safeguarding interests of consumers. It requires different kinds of organisations like cooperative societies, consumer education and guidance societies and guidance societies and consumer action groups to safeguard and protect consumer interests. Their role is not only to educate and lead the consumers with respect to redressal of their complaints but also to make the consumer movement a reality through coordinated efforts.

CONSUMER RIGHTS

Consumer rights are now an integral part of our lives like a consumerist way of life. They have been well documented and much talked about. We have all made use of them at some point in our daily lives. Market resources and influences are growing by the day and so is the awareness of one's consumer rights.

As Under section-6 of Consumer Protection Act, consumer has the following rights:

Right to safety: It is Right to safety against such goods and services as are hazards to health, life and property of the consumer.

Right to be Informed/ Right to Representation: Consumer also has the right that he should be provided all those information on the basis of which he decides to buy goods or services. This information relates to quality, purity, potency, standard, date of manufacture, method of use, etc. of the commodity. Thus, producer is required to provide all these

information in a proper manner, so that consumer is not cheated.

Right to choose: Consumer has the full right to buy goods or services of his choice from among the different goods or services available in the market. In other words, no seller can influence his choice in an unfair manner. If any seller does so, it will be deemed as interference in his right to choice.

Right to be heard: Consumer has the right that his complaint be heard. Under this Right the consumer can file complaint against all those things which are prejudicial to his interest. First the rights mentioned above (Right to Safety; Right to be Informed; Right to choose) have relevance only if the consumer has right to file his complaint against them.

Right to seek redress: This provides compensation to consumer against unfair trade practice of the seller. For instance, if the quantity and the quality of the product do not confirm to the promise of the seller, the buyer has the right to claim compensation, such as free repair of the product, taking back of the products, changing of the product by the seller

Right to consumer education: Consumer education refers to educate the consumer constantly with regards to their rights. In other words, consumers must be aware of the rights they enjoy against the loss they suffer on account of goods and services purchased by them. Government has taken several measures to educate the consumers. For instance, Ministry of civil supplies publishes a quarterly magazine under the title "Upphokta Jagran". Doodarshan telecasts programme titled "Sanrakshan Upphokta Ka".

These rights are well-defined and there are agencies like the government, consumer courts and voluntary organizations that work towards safeguarding them.

2. Consumer organisations

Consumer Organization are voluntary bodies which work for the welfare of the consumers in given area. They help consumers to understand their rights to protect them from any kind of exploitation and to get justice by using the redressal machinery. These organizations work for the removal of ignorance of the consumers. The main aim of any consumer organization is to uphold the rights of consumer and to obtain his welfare. They try to solve the disputes before going to the consumer forums.

A voluntary consumer organization (VCO) is an association of consumer activities which works for the protection of consumer's activities and the society as a whole. From the Memorandum of Association of various consumer organizations, it is observed that they pursue various objectives such as information, education and organization of consumers so as to enable them to secure, protect and preserve their 100 interests and to assert their rights as consumers of goods and services and to guide consumers to seek redressal from the

appropriate authority. VCO plays a significant role in providing protection to the consumers against the fraudulent activities of businessmen. The VCOs have made history in the consumer movement not only in developed countries like the USA and the UK, but also in developing countries like India. It is largely due to the contribution of these organizations that today consumers freely talk about their rights and demand their implementation. Many times laws have been modified and framed under their pressure of Consumer Organizations.

Even in a democratic system it has not become possible for governments to 'completely' protect the interest of consumers. Peter Drucker writes, 'I know that if one waits for the politician to find a solution, it is always the wrong one because politicians, by definition, react to the headlines'. In this scenario consumers and their organisations have to fight on 'their own' to protect their interest. Even if government comes out with more and more regulations, it may not serve the purpose as has been the case in India in the past. 'If the 21st century has to avoid the folly of the reassertion of the state in response to the excesses of the market, the strength of the civil society institutions needs to be built up as a balancing force between the state and market institutions'.¹

Today there are around 1000 VCOs in India. 'Following the CPA, there has been a spurt in the number of VCOs in India which were around 180 prior to the Act but are now over 900', writes Vasanth Kumar Parigi, a consumer activist.² But the majority of VCOs exists only on paper and only a few are working.

3. Development of VCOs For Consumer Protection In India Pioneers In The 60s

Over time the consumer movement found expression in efforts to bring pressure on business firms as well as government to correct business conduct that may be unfair and against the interest of consumers at large. Consumer movement as an organised effort may be said to have begun in 1951 when the 'Passengers and Traffic Relief Association (PATRA)' as set up in Mumbai. It was formed with a view to ameliorate the hardship and trouble faced by passengers travelling by Railways and Steamers and also to redress the grievances of the Indian trading community. With this aim in view, it planned to represent the voice of commuters and the trading community through judicious persuasion and through conferences, seminars, meetings. PATRA has been more than seventy five years in existence and even though it planned to be a social organisation with a national outlook, yet it represented the problems faced by Bombay commuters and not the rest of the country.

The sixties is a very unique point in the history of consumer movement. The consumer movement got a great boost and moral support from late President of US John F. Kennedy. In his 15 March 1962, declaration of the US Congress, Kennedy said "Consumers, by definition, include us all, they are the largest economic group, affecting and affected by almost every public and private economic decision. Yet they

are the only important group...whose views are not often heard."³

The first organisation to really make a durable impact was the Consumers Guidance Society of India (CGSI), which started in 1966. The nine housewives got together to inform, educate and organize consumers in order to protect their interests during the drought and the war with Pakistan. They made an impact by testing the quality of items of daily use of food stuffs such as milk, oil, tea, condiments etc. these activities gave a real break to the whole consumer protection which no amount of group meeting, exhibition and printed leaflets could do.

CGSI was the first consumer organization to demand special Consumer Court for redressal of consumers' complaints. In 1975, CGSI led a delegation of five consumer organizations from different parts of India to the then Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Mr. T. A. Pai and demand for a comprehensive Consumer Protection Act, Special Consumer Courts and a Directorate for implementation of the Act. CGSI's constant follow-up was instrumental in enacting the "Consumer Protection Act 1986" by the "Government of India".⁴

The CGSI in a few years established several branches of various places to undertake programmes of consumer education, publicity and exhibitions. It also started publishing a magazine Keemat in English for consumer information. Besides testing and reporting the quality of various items of foodstuffs of daily use, it started handling consumer complaints at the same time. Due to the efforts of such organisations in certain pockets of society, the consumers were starting to become aware and would not accept things lying down. It was the beginning.

Spreading The Roots In 70s

The movement gained momentum in the 70s. The organisation that made a strong impact was the Bangalore-based 'Karnataka Consumer Service Society (KCSS)' formed in 1970. The main strength of KCSS is JajieMandanna, who spread the word of consumer movement throughout the country, especially in government circles at a time when the word 'consumer' was not very familiar to many in India. KCSS was one of the earliest VCOs to be started in India. It is the second Consumer Organisation (next to CGSI) which made quite an impact in making the cause of the consumers known throughout the country.⁵ It organised national and regional seminars and conferences such as the second All India Consumer Conference (1974) and Asian Seminar on Consumer Education in Schools (1982). Mandanna was nominated to the Karnataka Legislative Council in 1976. This gave more coverage to KCSS to be able to influence the Karnataka Government to constitute a Karnataka Consumer Protection Board in 1980. This board did very good work in the initial years of its formation and even drafted Karnataka State Consumer Protection Bill in 1985. Chairman of that board was JajieMandanna. The bill did not see the light of day as the Government of India passed CPA in 1986. As a result, the bill

¹Mahajan, Vijay : "Challenges before voluntarism", In : Seminar 473, January 1999, p.86

²Parigi, VasanthKumar: "Organised Citizen Response - The Consumer Movement in India", In: Consumer Protection and the Law (Ed. D. Himachalam), APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1998, p.85.

³Kennedy, J. F. (March 15, 1962). *Special Message to the Congress on Protecting the Consumer Interest*.

⁴<http://cgsiindia.org/about-cgsi/cgsi-profile-in-brief/>

⁵Shah, Pritee (ed.): *Emergence and Formation of Consumer Groups - A Perspective*, CERC, Ahmedabad, 1992, p.11.

was not placed before the Karnataka State Assembly. But it had its effort indirectly.

Later on Indian VCOs turned towards Professionalization and Institutionalization. Keeping up with the spirit of the time KCSS facilitated the formation of IICS in Bangalore in 1987. A.V. Hailgol writes, 'Smt.JajeMandanna is the first consumer activist in Karnataka to institutionalize the consumer activities'.⁶

Almost each of the pioneering consumer organisations which have made a significant contribution to the consumer movement has had a different approach which made an impact on the consumer protection.

One such organisation formed in Andhra Pradesh in 1973 was the Vishakha Consumer Council, set up in Vishakhapatnam. It started not to fight against unscrupulous and only an eye to profit making manufacturers and traders, but to represent the plight of the poor ration card holders and the LPG gas users.

Several organisation set up in the 70s including the AkhilBhartiyaGrahak Panchayat (Pune), Mumbai Grahak Panchayat and Grahak Panchayat, Jamshedpur took up the cause of consumers being overcharged by traders for products of daily use, purchasing the items at wholesale rate and selling the same at much lower price. These organisations have also been engaged in conducting programmes of consumer education and consumer aid.

In 1978, the Consumer Education and Research Centre was set-up in Ahmedabad. It added a new dimension to the consumer movement. With CERC it wasn't the people banded together with a specific purpose of trying to get redress but the four members of already existing 'Foundation for Public Interest (FPI)' who decided to make a representation to Gujarat govt. They questioned the validity and legality of the proposed increase in fares of the Gujarat State Road Transport Corporation (GSRTC). These four representatives of the FPI went to the meeting with well researched economic and legal data and convinced the govt not to raise the fares. With this success behind them CERC was formed with an objective to take the issue to its logical and core level to get results. CERC took various matters to the court and fought cases ranging from that of the harmful toothpaste like Creamy Snuff to broad issue of misleading advertisements.

One of the CERC activities to spread the cause of consumer is the internship training at the centre for any consumer organisation interested on professional development of its personnel. This is in addition to the routine exhibitions, seminars, publications of magazines and books on topics of consumer interest. It also has its own laboratory for testing consumer products like pharmaceuticals, food items and domestic appliances.

Extended Outreach In 80s

A large number of organisations were formed in the 80s. The total number of consumer associations by the end of the last century was estimated at more than 800. Many of the organisations have been consistently engaged in activities concerning consumer issues.

JagratGrahak was started in 1980 in Baroda, by ten retired professionals to concertedly work in the gigantic task of consumer protection and enlightenment. They help consumers

with their problems mostly through negotiations, persuasions and compromise. In keeping with the characters of its founders – all retired persons – it is unique that it works in mutual cooperation and concerted action and approach with other consumer organisations all over the country. It imparts consumer education through seminars and publications, and runs 45 complaint centres.

Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) was another association that started in 1983 from Jaipur as a small voluntary group of citizens. Today, CUTS has four centres across India- Jaipur, New Delhi, Chittorgarh and Calcutta. It has one centre in Lusaka, Zambia.

Voluntary Organisation in the Interest of Consumer Education (VOICE) was formed in Delhi in 1983, it was founded when angry young students and teachers of the Delhi University could no longer stand the way consumers were being cheated and fooled by not merely small companies like the TV manufacturers but also by corporate giants like Bata and ITC. They therefore took on companies individually in protest against unfair trade practices and won most of them. They have since been engaged in promoting and protecting the interest of consumers, besides consumer advocacy.

Paving its Way into The 21st Century

The consumer movement took another stride in the concluding decade of the last century. A large number of VCOs came into existence after the enactment of CPA, 1986. Government's financial assistance also attracted many to start VCOs. But a majority of them failed to make any impact. During 1990s more stress was given in the voluntary sector to form federations at the national and the state levels. Important federations which came into existence at the national level are Confederation of Indian Consumer Organisations (CICO), (1991) and Consumer Coordination Council (CCC), (1993). At the state level, Federation of Consumer Organisations of Tamil Nadu (FEDCOT) (1990), Gujarat State Federation of Consumer Organizations, Gujarat (GUSFECO) (1992), Consumer Coordinating Committee of Kerala (CONCORD) (1986), and Federation of Consumer Organisations of West Bengal (FACWB) (1994), have done considerable work. Of all these federations only CONCORD was established in 1986, the remaining in the 1990s. No noteworthy VCO came into existence during 1990s. Hence, 90's can be rightly observed as the Decade of 'Federations'.⁷

4. Importance OF VCOs In India

In a country like India, the functioning of VCOs of one state influences the scenario of consumer protection in other states also. For example, VCOs like CERC/CERS, Ahmedabad, CGSI, Mumbai, MGP, Mumbai, CUTS, Jaipur, Common Cause and VOICE from New Delhi have directly and indirectly influenced consumer protection movement in other states as well.

However out of the 800 odd consumer associations, only few can be regarded as well organised and recognised for the useful work they have been pursuing by educating the

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Venkatesha, H R. Consumer protection in Karnataka a diagnostic study. Thesis. Karnatak University, Shodhganga. Web.31/12/2001 <<http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/96233>>

⁶Huilgol, A.V.: History of Consumer Movement in Karnataka (Unpublished), Citizen Forum, Hubli.

consumers, advocating their causes, fighting court cases for them, handling consumer complaints, initiating public interest litigation and representing consumers as members of official committees and consultative bodies.

The Government of India enacted the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. There is a three tier consumer protection mechanism at the district, state and the national level. The number of NGOs and voluntary organisations has helped the Consumer movement in picking up its momentum in India, however, as compared to the western countries its awareness and growth as a social phenomenon is very minimal. Consumer protection is a newly, and sharply too, highlighted field of activity of state in India.⁸ There are a good number of laws which have been enacted to protect consumer interests, and many consumer organisations are working for consumer protection and consumer awareness. However, relatively little is known about consumer's attitudes towards market information, consumer's right and responsibilities, packaging and labelling, laws and regulations drafted for consumer protection etc.⁹ Many consumer welfare organisations have sprung up in the country to help the state in its action for promoting their welfare or pull up the state for its inaction on the front of consumer protection. The consumer welfare organisations in India are also linking their activities with their international counterparts.¹⁰

A Consumer Organisation can be registered under the Companies Act, 1956 or any other law for the time being in force such as the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the Indian Trust Act, 1908 or Cooperative Societies Act. In any case, the purpose of forming such organisations should be for protecting the interest for the consumers. Consumer organisations function under different names such as consumer councils, Consumer Consultancy, Consumer Social Trust, and Consumer Guidance Society and so on.

Voluntary organisations render a very useful service to economy by making people aware of their rights and duties. Voluntary organisations play a vital role to serve economy in a variety of ways. Socially conscious and dedicated members of such societies greatly supplement the Govt. effort which alone is not sufficient to meet the social needs. Moreover imbalances in economy through consumer exploitation can be removed at two levels, namely, the NGO sector and govt. sector. There has been a considerable effort in NGO sector in co-ordinating their effort to fight for the cause of the consumers.¹¹

The Department of Consumer Affairs under Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is responsible for the formulation of policies for Consumer Cooperatives, Monitoring Prices, and Consumer Movement in the country and Controlling of statutory bodies like Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Weights and Measures. Department fund the Voluntary consumer organisations to carry protection activities.

⁸Shabir K. Bhathager, "Consumer Protection: MacabresqueMens Rea and Plight of Petty Offenders", The Indian Journal of Legal Studies, Vol. 10, 1990, p. 71.

⁹"Consumer Awareness: A Survey", Consumer Confrontation, Vol. 12, May - June 1992, p. 13.

¹⁰Shabir K. Bhathage, "Consumer Protection: MacabresqueMens Rea and Plight of Petty Offenders", The Indian Journal of Legal Studies, Vol. 10, 1990, p. 71.

¹¹"Regional and International Cooperation in Consumer Protection", UpphobtaJagran, Vol. 7, Special issue, 1997, p. 5.

A list of consumer organisations that have been granted assistance from consumer welfare fund during Standing Committee is published in UpphoktaJagran (Journal published by Department).

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and the related legal framework have provided the bases for voluntary consumer organisations, to create alternate forums for consumer complaint redressal. Manufactures, service providers and consumers alike, often prefers such organisations for dispute reduction, since they are easily accessible at free of cost and provide both parties, fire and provide both parties a 'win-win' situation.¹²

Another important aspect of the consumer organisations is that they try to solve the dispute before going to the consumer forums when approached for help. It is due to these facts that the government is encouraging the formation of consumer organisation in India.

The public awareness of consumer forums has become possible with the establishment of consumer organisations. Releasing this fact the government of India has allocated funds for the use of voluntary consumer organisations to promote the objective of consumer awareness and consumer education.

All these roles that consumer organizations are playing in society can be grouped under five categories, such as consumer awareness and education, product appraisal, networking with other consumer organisations, complaints, settlements and consumer research. Voluntary Consumer Organisations have acquired momentum in the last few of decades due to direct linkages with public and hence able to promote dialogue and enable participation of general masses. On a cost benefit analysis, voluntary organisation deliver services free of cost as compared to government machinery.

With the development of standardization of products and the consumer protection efforts initiated by the Government, the consumer organizations are in a better position to play an important role in protecting and educating the consumer. It can instil a feeling of poise in the minds of the consumers and make them feel that there is no substitute for their combined efforts. The producers also lean to lend an ear to the consumers' complaint when voiced through the organization of consumers. A consumer with a grievance on confronting a manufacturer will generally be able to get his grievance redressed when the manufacturer gets the note that a consumers organisation is also behind him. Consumer's organizations also play an important role as an arbitrator between the consumer and the manufacturer for resolving the grievances that are not settled for a long time.¹³

For many consumers, handling a complaint would be a first experience; but for a consumer organization, it is different as several such complaints are handled by them usually, and would be well acquainted with the procedure for a settlement. In fact, consumers organizations are always in touch with the manufacturers and their good will be of much help in the agreement of the consumer's complaints.¹⁴

¹² V.S. Vadival, "History of Consumerism in India", The Chartered Accountant, Vol. 50, No. 3, September 2001 pp. 292-296.

¹³Kumar, C. (2015). The Role of NGOs in Consumer Protection. *International Journal of Innovative Research in Science, Engineering and Technology* .

¹⁴ Ibid

Voluntary Consumer organisations have contested many cases before judicial authorities on behalf of individual consumers. Voluntary organisations have always effectively stressed the need for protecting consumer rights in the meetings of advisory councils, namely, Central Consumer Protection Council and State Consumer Protection Council constituted under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. The achievements of some of the voluntary organisations may be highlighted.

In an action by Common Cause almost three million pensioners benefited from three important decisions the organisation secured from the Supreme Court in relation to pensions. The organisations' major achievement has been to secure amendments by the government of the relevant rules prescribing the mode of price printing on packages with the results that now the price, including local taxes is being printed on packaged commodities all over the country. Matters relating to various areas of inefficiency of the public sector functioning, as of electricity supply, telephone services, airlines, etc. have taken up for redressal of the grievances of the consumer. Cases were filed by the organisation for setting right the inadequacies of the quality control in manufacture of sensitive items such as intravenous fluids, removal of distortions and strict observance of orders for supply and sale of iodised salt. Common Cause also involved itself deeply in the problems of consumerism in the context of implementations of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 Omissions and delays in the implementation of the Act by the State government were highlighted in a writ petition, filed in the Supreme Court consequently the process of setting up of quasi-judicial machinery under this Act have been expedited.

Another Organisation Consumer Unity Trust Society, CUTS succeeds in getting a toxic addictive, brominated vegetable oil banned for use in soft drinks in 1990. The BOV episode triggered an amendment in COPRA empowering consumer courts to stop the sale of and the withdrawal of unsafe or hazardous goods from being sold in the market. By a class action petition under the Consumer Protection Act, the organisation endured the legal and human rights of nearly 800 poor victims of adulteration in Behala oil tragedy.

Another important point raised by the organisation in CUTS v. State of Rajasthan¹⁵ was whether the services rendered by the doctors in the government hospitals under CGHS schemes were free service or not. As is evident various individuals and groups have worked relentlessly for consumer rights through the decades and it has not been in vain. The results are to be seen in the awareness that has been caused and the attention which the subject consumer protection base in rural areas and educate and spread awareness amongst the rural population. There is also need to professionally manage such organisations and have a monitoring body to exercise control over their working, finances and funding. They need to identify their working areas and then spread out through collaboration with other organisations. It will not be exaggerating if it is said that consumer movement has gained strength through the consumer organisations.¹⁶

¹⁵LAWS(RAJ)-1991-11-30

¹⁶ 51 Mamta Rao, Public Utility Services under the Consumer Protection Act, Deep and Deep Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1999, pp. 348-356.

5. Various Functions of NGOs/VCOs

These organizations perform the following functions:¹⁷

Accelerating consumer awareness/Educating consumers:

The first priority of consumer organization is to accelerate consumer's awareness towards their rights. Every one of us is a consumer and therefore, has the right to consumer education. But it is the right education that would facilitate us to act as an informed consumer, throughout one's life. One of the problems of the Indian consumers is their ignorance. Most of the consumers are apathetic because they are not aware of their rights. Then, they do not have the strength to resist whenever they are cheated or exploited and they suffer silently. It is for this reason that education should be given to each and every one of them. The NGOs and consumer organisations educate the consumer about their rights through various training programmes and workshops. They publish journals and periodicals to spread knowledge and awareness about various consumer problems, legal remedies available and other such matters.

*Helping educational institutions:*¹⁸ These organizations tell the educational institutions the way to prepare courses of study keeping in view the interest of consumers;

Promoting network of consumer association: Consumer organizations are trying to grow their numbers. They want to cover all regions so that consumers of all regions get benefited by their services;

Extending support to government: Consumer organizations by informing government agencies about adulteration, artificiality, inferior quality products etc. This helps government to conduct proceedings in time.

Legal Assistance: They also provide legal assistance to the consumers and help them in seeking suitable redressal.

Encouraging Protest against Exploitation: They encourage the consumers to protest against any form of exploitation and unfair trade practices.

Assistance in Filing Complaints: They encourage the consumers to file complaints in appropriate forums and also file complaints on their behalf.

Taking Initiatives: They not only encourage the consumers to register complaints but also take initiatives themselves in filing cases in the general interest of the public.

Testing Quality of the Products: They carry out the quality tests for various products in laboratories and publish the results

6. Conclusion

There appears to be a well knit grid of consumer associations. The movement which started as a small drop of water in the early part of this century has taken shape of a full water rich pond. In the period of last 90 years a good number of consumer associations have come into existence and they are here to stay.

7. Suggestions

¹⁷ Prepared for Partners for Development Summit, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Lyon, France November 9-12, 1998

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<http://www.old.thejakartapost.com/detaileditorial.asp?fileid=20070823.E03&irec=2>

It is seen that the movement till now has been confined to the middle class citizens in urban centres by the large. It has yet to spread among the masses in rural and semi-urban areas. More VCOs have to come up in small towns and villages. A lot more effort is to be made to take consumer movement to the grass roots with the true spirit of 'voluntarism'.

The VCOs have to 'market' themselves to reach out to consumers. The VCOs have to build up proper infrastructure to expand their activities. News-letters have to be 'marketed' by making them a 'Consumer magazine'. This gives strength to the consumer movement and helps to take consumer movement to the concerned.

VCOs have to spread their network to reach more funding agencies. As a first step in this direction VCOs have to be 'institutionalized'. Professionalism in management also helps VCOs to mobilize resource.

VCOs can act as social innovator when there are problems due to shortage or unavailability or danger from some goods or services. Alternatives can be developed and popularized, for example, popularization of solar power as a substitute to non-renewable energy or popularization of natural farming to overcome the problems of pesticide residue in food products and environment pollution.

In our society, where half of the population are illiterate and poor, VCOs have more responsibility to work for consumerism. Institutionalization and professionalising the management of VCOs and taking the movement to all sections of consumers is need of the hour.