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**Enhancing Consumer Movement - Means to Facilitate Development of
Independent Consumer Groups**

**MGP India – Role Model of Independent Consumer Association
A case study of Mumbai Grahak Panchayat’s Annual Consumer Plaza**

Contribution

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by

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MGP India – Role Model of Independent Consumer Association

A case study of Mumbai Grahak Panchayat’s Annual Consumer Plaza

At very outset UNCTAD deserves compliments for recognizing the need for existence of independent consumer movement across the world and all stakeholders must support this initiative to encourage growth of independent consumer associations.

By “independent” we mean financially independent and independent of the influence/pressure from the Governments, Trade/ Industry, Funding Agencies etc. Independent consumer groups are rare to find. However, there are a few consumer associations which are quite independent, self-sufficient and operating without being influenced by any forces for last several decades. MGP-India is one such organisation quite independent and active for last 49 years. It does not receive any grants/funds from Governments or from any Funding Agency. MGP is a membership-based voluntary consumer organization. Its unique monthly Grocery Distribution system and its Annual Consumer Plazas have made MGP financially independent and self-sufficient consumer association. It allows MGP to undertake consumer awareness campaigns, class-action litigations, complaint guidance and mediation, consumer policy & law research and advocacy activities etc.

MGP’s unique monthly Grocery Distribution system finds a mention in Box 2 of UNCTAD Note dtd 19th April 2024 on this subject (page 8 & 9).

This Note briefly outlines MGP’s yet another activity “**Annual Consumer Plaza**”, which goes a long way in making MGP financially independent.

Key Features of MGP’s Annual Consumer Plaza:

The Annual Consumer Plaza is a unique platform created by MGP where MGP brings producers and consumers on the same platform for their buying–selling requirements. These Consumer Plazas are being held at 12 different locations every year within state of Maharashtra in India for a period ranging 7 to 10 days. Let’s see how it operates.

- MGP announces the schedule of such Annual Plazas and invites applications from interested producers/vendors.
- MGP’s Selection Committee decides what products will be offered for sale, thoroughly examines their quality and determines the fair prices and fair terms & conditions.
- Fair business practices, consumer-friendly refund/replacement policy, ban on deceptive discounts/bargain sales, promoting environment-friendly

products, encouraging local quality product and products made by organizations of tribals or physically disabled persons are some of the important features of MGP's Annual Consumer Plazas.

- Ban on plastic bags, encouraging use of paper bags or cloth bags.
- Producers/Vendors are happy and eager to participate in MGP's Consumer Plazas because their selection at these Plazas by MGP itself is a recognition of better quality and fair pricing of their products.

MGP expects the producers/vendors participating in these Consumer Plazas to donate 2 % of their sales turn over to MGP for promoting consumer movement. This amount goes to make MGP financially independent and strong. This activity has been going on for last 45 years.

Some Add-ons: Scope of these Consumer Plazas is not restricted to mere buying-selling shopping exercise. MGP adds further value to these Consumer Plazas by providing following additional attractions:

- Stalls for Consumer Awareness, Complaints Guidance, Environment Promotion.
- Stalls for games and contests for young children.
- Stalls to show how to detect food adulterations, deception in weights & measures and spurious products etc.
- Stalls for launching signature campaigns on any burning issues affecting consumers.

It is thus a unique shopping festival for consumers organised by the consumer body for the consumers in collaboration with producers/vendors.

Recommendations/Suggestions: This activity can make consumer groups/associations financially independent. This activity is replicable by consumer associations in developing and under-developed nations.

With active support and co-operation from UNCTAD, Consumers International (CI) and Dept. of Consumer Affairs of Government of India, MGP can take initiative in **developing a Tool Kit of MGP's Unique Grocery Distribution System and MGP's Annual Consumer Plazas**. This Toolkit can be shared and circulated among all UNCTAD Member States and CI's memberships.

After such Circulation, MGP in collaboration with UNCTAD, CI and Govt. of India can organise an on-line **Webinars to actually demonstrate how these two Models operate** at some length.

Those Consumer Associations, after studying the Tool kit and attending the Webinar would be interested in actually replicating both or any of these two models would be welcome in Mumbai for hands-on training. For this CI and concerned national governments should extend financial assistance/support for such training programme.

Such initiative and support from UNCTAD, UN Member states and Consumers International will go a long way in promoting and encouraging independent consumer associations in different parts of the world.
