



## Functional Performance of Voluntary Consumer Organizations (VCOs) Towards Consumer Protection and Welfare—A Study in Select Sample Districts of Andhra Pradesh

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**ABSTRACT**

India is the second most populistic country in the world. Indian markets are flooded with crores of consumers. These consumers are ready to buy any merchandise offered to them; there are certain complexities that are cropping up with Industrialization, Globalization and mass production cum distribution of goods and services. Adulteration, deceptive packing, short-weights and measures, poor after sales services and the like are giving more scope to consumers to lodge more complaints against traders with the different agencies such as district consumer redressal forum which fall under the purview of Consumer Protection Act, 1986. For educating, protecting the rights of consumers provided by the legislature, the working groups, Consumer activists groups like VCOs acting as the remedial mechanism for the welfare of consumer.

**KEYWORDS**

Consumer Protection and Welfare, Voluntary Consumer Organizations

**Introduction:**

India is the second most populistic country in the world. Indian markets are flooded with crores of consumers. These consumers are ready to buy any merchandise offered to them by global and domestic companies as well. There are certain complexities that are cropping up with Industrialization, Globalization and Technological development, mass production and mass distribution of goods and services. Manufacturers are trying rigorously to woo the customers for their products by different ways and means. Adulteration, deceptive packing, short-weights and measures, poor after sales services and the like are giving more scope to consumers to lodge more complaints against traders with the different agencies such as district consumer redressal forum which fall under the purview of Consumer Protection Act, 1986. To protect the rights of consumers and to get redressal for their grievances, consumer redressal agency mechanism came into existence. For educating, protecting the rights of consumers provided by the legislature, the working groups, Consumer activists groups like Voluntary Consumer Organizations (VCOs) acting as the remedial mechanism for the welfare of consumer.

VCOs are essentially non-profit and non-partisan organizations. They are largely independent of the Government and are characterized primarily by humanitarian or cooperative rather than profit making objectives. The VCOs create awareness among the consumers on their responsibilities and strengths, take up consumer grievances, guidance education and research, and ensure correct weights and measures, standards of quality and safety provide public forum for individuals who are otherwise un-organized. Promote consumer protection activities, develop consumer resistance through action programs, provide a forum in which national and regional bodies working for the consumer may discuss their problems and work out possible solution. Print or publish and circulate newsletters, journals, bulletins and booklets. Make efforts to introduce consumer education in schools, colleges and universities. Hence the present paper is prepared with an intention to examine the functioning of VCOs in select sample districts of Andhra Pradesh.

**Table 1**

**Distribution of VCOs over select sample districts and the level at which they operate to render their services to the consumers**

Name of the District	Level of operational area						Total
	Village	Town	Taluk/ Mandal	District	State	National	
Chittoor	N.A	N.A	N.A	14 (87.5) (42.42)	02 (12.5) (28.57)	N.A	16 (100) (100)
SPSR Nellore	N.A	N.A	N.A	08 (100) (24.24)	N.A	N.A	08 (100) (100)
Ranga Reddy	N.A	N.A	N.A	11 (68.75) (33.33)	05 (31.25) (71.43)	N.A	16 (100) (100)
Total	N.A	N.A	N.A	33 (82.5) (100)	07 (17.5) (100)	N.A	40 (100) (100)

**Source: Field Survey**

Table 1 reveals the distribution of VCOs over different select sample districts of Andhra Pradesh and the level at which they are extending their operations towards protecting consumer rights and interests. It is understood from the table above that majority of the VCOs 33 out of 40 VCOs in all the three districts together have responded that they are operating at district level and very less no. of VCOs seven out of 40 have responded that they are extending their services at state level.

Majority of the respondent representatives of VCOs 14 out of 16 of those who are working in Chittoor district have responded that they are rendering services to the deceived consumers who come from different parts of the districts and least number of VCOs of those who are working in Chittoor district are extending their services to the customers who ever come from different parts of the state.

All the respondent representatives of the VCOs which are working for their own VCOs in SPSR Nellore district have re-

sponded that they rendered services to the customers who ever come from different parts of the district.

Majority of the respondent VCOs which are working in Ranga Reddy (RR) district 11 out of 16 have responded that they have been rendering their services to the customers who are coming from different parts of district and five VCOs have responded that they are extending their services to the customers whoever are coming from different parts of state.

From the foregoing analysis one can infer that majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs irrespective of

the place where they established their offices said that they are rendering their services to the consumers whoever are coming from different parts of districts. Majority of the respondent VCOs of those whoever are working in all the three districts together of those which are extending their services at state level are found in RR district and majority of the respondent VCOs which are operating in all the three districts together of those which are restricting their services to the district level only are found in SPSR Nellore district and none of the respondent VCO of those which are functioning and representing all the three select sample districts together has responded that it is not extending its services at national level.

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of VCOs over select sample districts and their membership ranges**

Name of the District	No. of members in VCOs				Total
	Below 50	51 – 100	101 – 150	Above 150	
Chittoor	<b>07</b> (43.75) (43.75)	<b>06</b> (37.5) (50)	<b>02</b> (12.5) (28.57)	<b>01</b> (6.25) (20)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
SPSR Nellore	<b>04</b> (50) (25)	<b>02</b> (25) (16.67)	<b>01</b> (12.5) (14.29)	<b>01</b> (12.5) (20)	<b>08</b> (100) (20)
Ranga Reddy	<b>05</b> (31.25) (31.25)	<b>04</b> (25) (33.33)	<b>04</b> (25) (57.14)	<b>03</b> (18.75) (60)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
Total	<b>16</b> (40) (100)	<b>12</b> (30) (100)	<b>07</b> (17.5) (100)	<b>05</b> (12.5) (100)	<b>40</b> (100) (100)

Source: Field Survey

Table 2 Describes the distribution of VCOs over different districts and their membership range. It is understood from the table above that majority of the respondent VCOs which are functioning in all the three districts together have members below 50, 12 VCOs have membership ranging from 51 – 100, seven VCOs have membership ranging 101 – 150 and five VCOs have a membership of above 150.

Majority of the VCOs of those which are working in Chittoor district have a membership of below 50 members and the least number of respondent VCOs have a membership of above 150 members.

Majority of the VCOs which are working in SPSR Nellore district are having membership of below 50 members and one respondent VCO has a membership of above 150 members.

Majority of the VCOs of those which are working in RR district have a membership of below of 50 members and the least number of respondent VCOs have a membership of above 150 members.

From the foregoing analysis one can infer that majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs who are working in all the three select sample districts together have responded that they have membership of below 50 members and relatively least percentage of VCOs have members of above 150. Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs who said that they have membership of below 50 are found in Chittoor district and majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs of those who said that they have membership of above 150 are found in RR district.

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of VCOs over select sample districts and the membership range in their Governing Bodies**

Name of the District	Membership range in Governing Bodies of VCOs				Total
	Below 5	6 – 10	11 – 15	Above 15	
Chittoor	<b>06</b> (37.5) (42.86)	<b>05</b> (31.25) (41.67)	<b>03</b> (18.75) (42.86)	<b>02</b> (12.5) (28.57)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
SPSR NLR	<b>03</b> (37.5) (21.43)	<b>03</b> (37.5) (25)	<b>01</b> (12.5) (14.28)	<b>01</b> (12.5) (14.29)	<b>08</b> (100) (20)
Ranga Reddy	<b>05</b> (31.25) (37.77)	<b>04</b> (25) (33.33)	<b>03</b> (18.75) (42.86)	<b>04</b> (25) (57.14)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
Total	<b>14</b> (35) (100)	<b>12</b> (30) (100)	<b>07</b> (17.5) (100)	<b>07</b> (17.5) (100)	<b>40</b> (100) (100)

Source: Field Survey

Table 3 explains the distribution of VCOs over different districts and the membership range in their governing bodies. It is evident from the table above that 14 VCOs out of 40 have responded that they have members in their governing bodies of below five members, followed by 12 VCOs have members ranging from 6 – 10 in their governing bodies, seven VCOs have members ranging from 11 – 15 and another seven VCOs have members above 15 in their governing bodies. This indicates that, most of the VCOs have members ranging from 6 – 15 members in their governing bodies.

Majority of the VCOs which are working in Chittoor district have governing body members of below 6 and least number of VCOs have members of above 15 members in their governing bodies, VCOs of those which are working in SPSR Nellore district have

members of below 5 one and only one VCO of those which are working in SPSR Nellore district is having members of above 15 in its governing body. Majority of the VCOs of those which are working in RR district have members of below 5 in their governing bodies and least number of VCOs of those which are working in RR district have members above 15 in their governing bodies.

From the foregoing analysis one can infer that majority of the VCOs of those which are working in all the three districts together have below 5 members in their governing bodies. Majority of the VCOs of those which are working in all the three districts together have members of below 5 are found in Chittoor district. Majority of VCOs of those which are working in all the three districts have above 15 members in their governing bodies are found in RR district.

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of VCOs over different select sample districts and periodicity of conducting the CAPs by them in a year**

Name of the District	Periodicity of the CAPs conducted by VCOs				Total
	Monthly	Quarterly	Half Yearly	Yearly	
Chittoor	<b>09</b> (56.25) (39.13)	<b>04</b> (25) (44.44)	<b>02</b> (12.5) (33.33)	<b>01</b> (6.25) (50)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
SPSR NLR	<b>04</b> (50) (17.39)	<b>02</b> (25) (22.22)	<b>01</b> (12.5) (16.67)	<b>01</b> (12.5) (50)	<b>08</b> (100) (20)
Ranga Reddy	<b>10</b> (62.5) (43.48)	<b>03</b> (18.75) (33.33)	<b>03</b> (18.75) (50)	N.A	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
Total	<b>23</b> (57.5) (100)	<b>09</b> (22.5) (100)	<b>06</b> (15) (100)	<b>02</b> (5) (100)	<b>40</b> (100) (100)

Source: Field survey

Table 4 describes the distribution of VCOs over select sample districts and periodicity of conducting the Consumer Awareness Programs (CAPs) by them in a year. It is understood from the table above that majority of the respondent VCOs 23 out of 40 VCOs which are functioning in all the three districts together have responded that they conduct the CAPs on monthly basis and only two out of 40 which are operating in all the three districts together have said that they conduct the CAPs on yearly basis.

Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs nine out of 16 which are working in Chittoor district have responded that they conduct CAPs on monthly basis and only one representative of the respondent VCO out of 16 said that they conduct the CAPs on yearly basis.

Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs four out of eight of those which are working in SPSR Nellore dis-

trict have responded that they organize the CAPs once in a month and the least number of respondent VCOs which are working in SPSR Nellore district responded that they organize the CAPs on yearly basis.

Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs (10 out of 16) which are functioning in RR district have responded that they organize CAPs once in a month and no respondent VCO from the district is organizing the CAPs on yearly basis.

From the foregoing analysis one can infer that majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs which are working in all the three select sample districts together of those who said that they conduct CAPs on monthly basis are found in RR district and majority of the VCOs which are functioning in all the three districts together of those who said that they conduct CAPs on quarterly basis are found in Chittoor district.

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of VCOs over different select sample districts and the types of cases received and settled by them**

Name of the District	Health	Goods	Finance	Others	Total
Chittoor	<b>02</b> (12.5) (33.33)	<b>07</b> (43.75) (46.67)	<b>04</b> (25) (33.33)	<b>03</b> (18.75) (42.86)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
SPSR NLR	<b>01</b> (12.5) (16.67)	<b>03</b> (37.5) (20)	<b>02</b> (25) (16.67)	<b>02</b> (25) (28.57)	<b>08</b> (100) (20)
Ranga Reddy	<b>03</b> (18.75) (50)	<b>05</b> (31.25) (33.33)	<b>06</b> (37.5) (50)	<b>02</b> (12.5) (28.57)	<b>16</b> (100) (40)
Total	<b>06</b> (15) (100)	<b>15</b> (37.5) (100)	<b>12</b> (30) (100)	<b>07</b> (17.5) (100)	<b>40</b> (100) (100)

Source: Field Survey

Table 5 explains the distribution of VCOs over different select sample districts in the Andhra Pradesh and the types of cases they received and settled. From the table above it is understood that majority of the VCOs 15 out of 40 who are working in all the three districts together have expressed that they received complaints relating to goods and the least number of VCOs have received complaints relating to health.

Majority of the respondent VCOs of those who are working in Chittoor district have received complaints relating to goods from consumers who approached them for grievance redressal and very less number of respondent VCOs have received complaints relating to health in Chittoor district.

Majority of the respondent VCOs of those who are working in SPSR Nellore district have received complaints relating to goods from their members who are exploited by the traders and the least number of VCOs have received cases relating to health.

Majority of the respondent VCOs of those who have been working in RR district have received complaints relating to finance from the members who approached them for grievance redressal and the least number of VCOs have received complaints relating to others (miscellaneous) from the members of their own VCO and who approached them for getting grievance for their redressal.

From the foregoing analysis one can infer that majority of the respondent VCOs have received complaints relating to goods and least number of respondent VCOs have received complaints relating to health. Majority of the respondent VCOs of those who said that they received complaints relating to goods are found in Chittoor district whereas majority of the respondent VCOs who said that they received complaints relating to health are found in RR district.

**Conclusion:**

Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs irrespective of the place where they established their offices said that they are rendering their services to the consumers who are coming from different parts of districts. Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs who are working in all the three select sample districts together have responded that they have membership of below 50 members and relatively least percentage of VCOs have members of above 150. Majority of the VCOs of those which are working in all the three districts together have below 5 members in their governing bodies. Majority of the VCOs of those which are working in all the three districts together have members of below 5 are found in Chittoor district. Majority of the representatives of the respondent VCOs which are working in all the three select sample districts together of those who said that they conduct CAPs on monthly basis are found in RR district. Majority of the respondent VCOs have received complaints relating to goods and least number of respondent VCOs have received complaints relating to health.