



Consumers International Strategic Plan 2012-2015

Executive Summary

During the period of this plan, CI will adopt a more programmatic approach in order to concentrate limited resources where we are well-placed to deliver impact at an international level for the benefit of consumers worldwide.

We will select issues in consultation with our membership, develop and review the programme together and remain responsive to important emerging issues.

We will help our members to help themselves by creating more opportunities to participate in our work and learn from others.

We will improve organisational and governance efficiency, find additional sources of income and strengthen communications and member engagement. In this way, we will increase the real and perceived value of membership and seek to build Full membership as well as a wider network of supporters.

Three over-arching objectives have been set and will be reported upon:

1. To lead our movement's international fight for a fairer, safer, more sustainable future for all consumers.
2. To support the development of the consumer movement to articulate, serve and defend consumer rights across the world.
3. To develop an innovative, efficient and sustainable membership organisation to support a 21st century consumer rights movement.

About Consumers International

Consumers International (CI) is the world federation of consumer rights groups. With 220 members spanning 115 countries we serve as the only independent and authoritative global voice for consumer rights.

Members of CI range from large well-established organisations offering information and advisory services to consumers as well as running significant national advocacy programmes, to much smaller newer organisations working to build their capacity to champion consumer rights – often in the most impoverished parts of the world where consumer protection is weak.

Our members fund a small central staff based in four offices across the world (Kuala Lumpur, London, Pretoria and Santiago) and contribute effort and staff resource to joint programmes to achieve beneficial change for consumers worldwide.

CI staff work with and for the membership, share and promote our common values and lead and coordinate agreed programmes of work to deliver CI's Mission and Vision.

Our Mission

To build a powerful movement to champion consumers rights and to help protect and empower consumers everywhere

Our Vision

A world where people have access to safe and sustainable goods and services, exercising their individual rights as consumers, and using the force of their collective power for the good of consumers everywhere

Our Values

Highest standards of ethical conduct
Independent and non-partisan
Mutual respect and solidarity among our members
Integrity, transparency, and accountability
Inclusiveness

A Track Record of Success

CI was founded in 1960 and over its fifty year history has established a considerable reputation as an agent for change. Building on the four consumer rights articulated by President John F Kennedy in 1962:

- the right to safety; the right to be informed; the right to choose and the right to be heard.

CI added another 4 rights:

- the right to the satisfaction of basic needs; the right to redress; the right to consumer education; and the right to a healthy environment

These 8 Consumer Rights have informed the work of CI over the years leading to action to protect and support consumer rights. For example:

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) code on the marketing of breast milk substitutes, WHO recommendations on junk food marketing to children, and WHO ethical criteria for medicinal drug promotion.
- An international hazardous product warning network and the publication by the United Nations (UN) of the first consolidated list of banned and dangerous products
- UN Guidelines on consumer protection
- UN Food and Agriculture Organisation first international pesticides code
- The International Organisation of Standardisation (ISO) 26000 standard on Corporate Social Responsibility
- World Consumer Rights Day – established in 1983 and still celebrated with a concerted worldwide campaign every year.
- The OECD principles for consumer protection in financial services requested and endorsed by the G20 world leaders.
- The Transatlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD), linking consumer groups in Europe and North America and joining forces to influence policy makers at European and US levels.

CI will continue to ensure that the voice of consumers – the largest economic group in the world economy – is heard in the most powerful international policy and decision-making bodies, and has an impact on international business practice.

Current Challenges

CI is committed to securing basic consumer rights for individuals and families, wherever they may live, and to do so in a way which rises to the challenges of the 21st century.

At a global level, the recent worldwide financial crisis is an example of the continuing need for a strong consumer voice at the international level. The growth of multi-national corporations, the development of the worldwide web, scientific and technical advances and environmental pressures all create circumstances where national boundaries become blurred or circumnavigated requiring international agreement and action.

Recent political developments in different parts of the world have shown how social media can be used in new ways to achieve change. Economic power in the world is shifting with emerging economies gaining in importance as the powers behind economic growth and the management of international debt.

At the same time CI is operating in an increasingly difficult internal climate. As budgets get tighter an even greater premium is placed on delivering value to members and achieving results. Competition for funds from foundations and other grant-making bodies to support the activity of our smaller and less established members is strong.

Our ambition is to tackle issues that matter most to consumers and reduce the inequality in consumer protection across the world. But different issues are more of a priority in some places than in others.

The challenge for CI is how to use limited resources to best effect. The requirement for the period of this plan is to tighten our focus on a small number of issues where our capabilities, alongside the work of our members and other expert partner organisations, is particularly well placed to achieve changes in policies or operating practices at international level. We need to improve the efficiency of our organisation and find additional sources of income to tackle more issues in the future. We need use our considerable historical knowledge and other assets to help members to help themselves. This Strategic Plan aims to do just that.

Leading change for the world's consumers

Objective 1: Draw upon our collective strength and expertise to lead our movement's international fight for a fairer, safer, more sustainable future for all consumers.

CI works best when staff and members work together, sharing resources to achieve clearly defined goals. We will:

- Persuade international bodies to adopt standards or guidelines on a small number of priority issues to reduce unfair practices, improve the safety of products and services and increase the voice of consumers in future product design and policy decision-making.

Our choice of issue will depend on:

- The scale of the problem across the world.
- The interest of our members, and the availability of expertise and resource.
- The potential to achieve change.

To assist this process we will:

- *Work with our members to develop evidence-based policy and co-ordinate international campaigns and advocacy programmes.*
- *Expand our existing expertise in influencing international decision-making processes to speed up the pace of change.*
- *Build our brand profile, visibility and reputation developing greater credibility and a stronger voice on behalf of consumers.*
- *Spot and respond to new and emerging issues and, where possible, tackle challenges faced by consumers in different parts of the world so consumers are fairly protected wherever they live.*
- *Track the implementation of international guidelines and aggregate data from members across the world to produce good quality global information to strengthen our case for change.*
- *Bring together members working on issues outside the priority programme to facilitate the exchange of ideas and learning and help them deliver change for consumers on other issues.*

Creating a stronger, better connected, global consumer movement

Objective 2: To support the development of the consumer movement to articulate, serve and defend consumer rights across the world.

CI's strength is in its global membership. Over the period of this Strategic Plan we will:

- Strengthen the capacity of a limited number of members in order to make sure the international movement has strong consumer representation in strategically important parts of the world – creating a more universally safe and sustainable marketplace for all consumers.

To assist this process we will:

- *Help members to help themselves by providing guidance on fund raising, sharing success stories, offering training where appropriate and working together on priority issues.*

- *Develop an asset base of training materials, guidance, briefings, techniques and toolkits, and make it available to all of our members.*
- *Establish a clear case for support and engage members, supporters, donors and funders to strengthen our international coalition to deliver real change to the lives of consumers in every part of the world.*
- *Create more opportunity for member involvement, through advance planning, reporting and the creation of expert programme steering groups.*
- *Make effective use of social media, video and web conferencing to strengthen our relations with members and maximise the use of modern communications to achieve change.*

Building our operational strength

Objective 3: To develop an innovative, efficient and sustainable membership organisation to support a 21st century consumer rights movement.

- *Over the period of this plan we aim to recruit more members, supporters, donors and sponsors to help us achieve change and deliver services to the world's consumers in order to minimise inequalities of protection, inadequate sources of advice and information, and give more consumers access to the help they need in their daily lives.*

To assist this process we will:

- ***Strengthen CI's financial position and significantly increase CI income and reserves by:***
- *Clarifying the appropriate levels of membership and targeted member recruitment, conversion and retention.*
- *Pursuing longer- term funding partnerships with international foundations, government and grant making bodies, building on our project funding to create longer term relationships for the benefit of consumers.*
- *Reducing costs by minimising administrative bureaucracy and by careful costing, control and monitoring of our finances.*
- ***Create a more effective and efficient CI office by:***
- *Improving the transparency of decision-making and reviewing CI governance.*
- *Improving member relationship management.*
- *Developing our staff and bringing renewed clarity and coherence to working arrangements between CI offices, capitalising on the ability of regional offices to respond to the diverse needs of members and consumers across the world, while at the same time building a strong international network.*