

Consumer Benefits – rights & responsibilities

**Presentation to the
ERB & NARUC
partnership
programme**

**Friday, February 25,
2005**

STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

- Responsibilities of a regulator
- Responsibilities of a Consumer
- Responsibilities of Utilities
- Electricity Consumer Charter

Responsibilities of a regulator

- Safeguard interests of consumers.
- Monitor efficiency and performance of service providers.
- Receive and investigate consumer complaints.
- Educate consumers on their rights and responsibilities.
- Carry out enforcement on erring service providers.
- Enforcement of Quality of Service standard
 - (To assess the quality of the consumer service provided)

Rights of a consumer

- Access to reliable energy services,
- Access to safe energy services,
- Access to affordable energy services,
- Benefits of new services, technological advances,
- Improved efficiency and competitive prices,
- Uniform standards of electricity.

Responsibilities of a Consumer

- Pay bills on time
- Report faults
- Take an active role in fighting vandalism
- Conserve energy

Responsibilities of a service provider

- Provide reliable energy services.
- Provide safe energy services.
- Despatch accurate bills in good time.
- Respond to faults in a timely manner.
- Be proactive when handling complaints.
- Notify consumers on planned power outages.

Responsibilities of a service provider

The licensee shall provide reasonable education to ensure:

- the safe use of electricity,
- the economic use of electricity,
- consumer service rights, and
- that consumers are made aware of tariff classification and rates.

Consumer Charter

- USAID/AED support
- Public meetings (from February 2004) held throughout the country to collect views to draw up a charter.
 - To create awareness about consumer rights & responsibilities.
 - To educate the public on the role of the regulator.
 - To educate consumer about the ERB's Consumer Complaints function.
 - Public participation critical to success of the project.
 - To provide direct interface.

Consumer Charter

- To strengthen relationship with consumers and consumer organisations.
- To bridge the information gap between the consumers, regulator and service provider—The Energy Triangle.
- To educate the public about the concept of paying for electricity service.
- It is a reminder of the customer care pledge.

Consumer Charter

- To protect consumers.
- Ensure obligations of service providers and utilities are rightly stated.
- Charter to explain **(in English and seven main local languages)** the rights and responsibilities of the "Energy Triangle"...
- Final Charter will be placed in large poster-size formats at strategic points to emphasise the utility's commitment to good customer service and the ERB's role as a fair regulator.

Consumer Charter—public comments

- Majority welcomed the proposal but wanted assurance it would be legally binding.
- Had heard of the ERB but had not benefitted from its services.
- The regulator should be given more teeth!
 - The regulator seems to "protect" utilities more than the consumer.
- Regulator must be firm on the power utility.
- Frequent power interruptions resulting in loss of property.

Consumer Charter—public comments

- Complained about unreliable power supply
- Complained about poor customer service
- Electricity too expensive
- Late delivery of bills
- Low voltage
- Vandalism on the increase

Consumer Charter – Way forward...

- Draft Charter review process begins early March 2005.
- Draft Charter reviewed with ZESCO.
- Draft Charter reviewed through final public consultations.
- Final Charter launched/placed in pay points.
- Marketing/Public education (June – July 2005).