

Measuring Impact of Consumer Education

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1.0 PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

According to the ERB's Strategic & Business Plan, the following are some of the activities aimed at educating consumers and various stakeholders:

- ❖ National exhibitions (trade shows)
- ❖ Television Programmes
 - ❖ Documentaries
 - ❖ Interviews
- ❖ Radio programmes
 - ❖ Community and national stations

1.1 PUBLIC AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

- ❖ Press briefings, statements and response to Media and general queries
- ❖ Publications
- ❖ Advertising
- ❖ Outreach activities
 - ❖ Media tours
 - ❖ Public fora
 - ❖ Workshops
 - ❖ Community meetings/public fora

2.0 FOCUS GROUPS

❖ **Public Perceptions of the Energy Sector in Zambia: Focus Group Research 2003: ERB/USAID project**

- ❖ To date, little objective research, either qualitative or quantitative, has been done on the public's (as well as specifically rate-payers) perceptions of the energy sector in Zambia;
- ❖ Qualitative study provided basic insights to the Zambian public's perceptions and opinions about the ERB and the energy sector;

2.1 FOCUS GROUPS

- ❖ The objective of the study was to collect qualitative baseline information on people's knowledge, attitudes, opinions and perceptions of the state of the energy sector and its regulation in Zambia;
- ❖ The focus group discussions were held in two major cities, Lusaka and Kitwe.

2.2 FOCUS GROUPS

- Although almost all of the focus group members had heard of the ERB, no one thought the ERB was doing a sound job of regulating the energy sector.
- In fact no one knew exactly what the ERB's mandate was or whom it represented.
- Some respondents stated that the ERB was established to represent consumers but felt it had instead become the energy companies' mouthpiece.

3.0 WINDOW IMAGES RESEARCH

- Window Images – Media in Development (WIMDEV) was awarded a contract to undertake the production, management and provision of programmes on four community stations;
- Prior to the launch of the programme, WIMDEV carried out a research to establish how much people knew about the ERB and the energy sector;
- Research was carried out in eastern, western, northern and southern provinces of Zambia;
- 400 questionnaires were sent out.



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3.1 WINDOW IMAGES RESEARCH

SUMMARY OF AWARENESS ABOUT ERB		
Awareness	Frequency	%
Yes	191	48.5
No	203	51.5
Total	394	100.0

4.0 MEASURING IMPACT OF CONSUMER EDUCATION

- ❖ The ERB has not undertaken formal assessments to determine how effective its awareness programmes are;
- ❖ However, there are isolated cases of success:-
 - ❖ Some consumers have become aware of our complaints resolution function through our outreach programmes especially through radio;
 - ❖ Weekly and monthly publication of Import Parity Pricing statements:
 - ❖ Public seems to now have a better understanding of pricing issues and are less aggressive when the ERB announces any upward increases;
 - ❖ Of course, much more needs to be done to ensure the majority of consumers understand the issues at hand;



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4.1 MEASURING IMPACT OF CONSUMER EDUCATION

- ❖ Other stakeholders have made contact with the ERB after reading our publications e.g. Energy Regulator Newsletter and requested for information or to be placed on the mailing list;
- ❖ E-mails or telephone contact after viewing our documentaries on television
- ❖ Translated brochures have been well received
 - ❖ Access of information no longer restricted to English speakers.
- ❖ Consumer watch groups
 - ❖ The ERB has started receiving applications from Mongu residents in western Zambia prior to the launch of a watch group in that area!

4.2 MEASURING IMPACT OF CONSUMER EDUCATION

- Radio quizzes
 - Have helped to raise interest in the ERB's operations. Programmes have encouraged people to submit their comments and take a genuine interest in our activities e.g. received 221 applications for the Lusaka consumer watch group.

5.0 FUTURE OUTLOOK

- ❖ There is need to undertaken detailed studies to determine the impact and effectiveness of awareness programmes;
- ❖ Studies must take into account the different target audiences;
 - ❖ Suggest best ways of packaging information given the varying needs;
- ❖ Consumer watch groups will help the ERB educate the public and demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding consumer interests.