



ELECTRICITY CONSUMER CHARTER OF ZAMBIA

2007

BACKGROUND

On 15th February 2007 Zambia's first ever Electricity Consumer Charter was launched by electricity consumers, ZESCO Limited and Energy Regulation Board (ERB). The launch followed the development of the charter, which involved nationwide stakeholder consultations with various stakeholders. With the support of USAID's Education Academy for Development (EAD), ERB engaged stakeholders through a series of public meetings countrywide between 2004 and 2005, and collected people's views on the development of an Electricity Consumer Charter. The Charter aims at protecting consumers and ensuring the obligations of ZESCO are clearly defined.

WHY THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT?

The ERB decided to collaborate with the public to develop the Charter for the following reasons:

1. To strengthen its relationship with the people of Zambia and consumer organisations
2. To educate the public about the concept of paying for electricity and value they receive for the costs.
3. To educate consumers about the Regulations that exist for electricity suppliers
4. To educate the public on the role of the regulator
5. To educate consumers about the ERB's Consumer Complaints function.
6. To provide direct interface
7. To bridge the information gap between the consumers, ERB and ZESCO — The TRIANGLE of participation.
8. To create awareness about consumer rights and responsibilities

WHAT IS THE CHARTER

The Charter is a pledge of trust and commitment among the three stakeholders in the provision of electricity services — consumers, ZESCO and ERB. It recognises that addressing consumer complaints is most efficiently and cost-effectively handled directly by ZESCO. The ERB should be the last resort for consumers when ZESCO has failed to resolve the complaint. Though not legally binding, the Charter lays the foundation for future legally binding consumer legislation.

The charter therefore places a responsibility on the service provider to render acceptable services, the consumers to meet their obligations and the regulator to ensure that the appropriate quality of service is provided. A failure to meet obligations by any of the stakeholders would be deemed a breach of the trust by the other parties to the charter.

Significantly, the charter helps to expand knowledge and understanding of the role of each the stakeholders namely:

- The Regulator - ERB
- The consumers
- The Service provider.

Further, the Charter lays a solid foundation upon which the regulator and utility can provide high quality services to consumers and serve as a constant reminder of the customer care pledge.

CONSUMER RIGHTS:

All consumers have the right to:

1. Access reliable and safe electric power consistent with the power supply network in a particular area;
2. Receive clear and complete billing information about charges, terms and conditions for available services, and to be charged only according to one's contract terms;
3. Receive accurate and timely bills;
4. Access information about service connection, quality of service, service problems, meter reading, billing procedures, service charges, price structure, complaint procedures, disconnection and termination of service, and pay points;
5. Receive advance notification that ZESCO intends to terminate services and be told the circumstances under which service will be terminated;
6. Access fair, courteous and expeditious complaint resolution mechanisms to redress grievances and seek settlement measures;
7. Be treated equally to other similar customers, free of prejudice or disadvantage; and,
8. Privacy and to have confidential information respected and protected.

CONSUMER OBLIGATIONS:

With electricity consumer rights also come consumer responsibilities to:

1. Pay electricity bills in full, promptly and honestly;
2. Observe the terms of your electric service connection contract;

3. Pay in advance applicable security deposits for electric services;
4. Allow the record of consumption to be reflected in the appropriate metering device faithfully and accurately without interference;
5. Use electricity for only those purposes as per contracted terms and tariff category;
6. Allow ZESCO employees/representatives access into premises in reasonable time for purposes of inspection, installation, reading, testing, removal, replacement or disposal of their apparatus/electric watt-hour meter;
7. Give prior notification to ZESCO when intending to change residence;
8. Ensure not to use electricity unlawfully via illegal connections, metering tampering or any other device that interferes with normal connections; and,
9. Cooperate with and support programmes on the effective and efficient use of electricity.

UTILITY OBLIGATIONS

ZESCO is licensed by the ERB to generate, transmit, distribute and supply electricity to different categories of consumers. In that regard, ZESCO has an obligation to supply electricity to consumers. Through the charter, ZESCO has committed itself to fulfill the following responsibilities:

1. Provide reliable electricity
2. Provide safe electricity
3. Despatch accurate and timely bills
4. Respond to faults in a timely manner
5. Educate consumers on energy tips
6. Be proactive when handling complaints
7. Notify consumers on planned power outages

REGULATOR'S OBLIGATIONS

Under the Charter, the ERB as the sector regulator also has responsibilities as follows:

1. Regulate the provision of energy services to consumers
2. Monitor the efficiency and performance of energy companies
3. Receive and investigate complaints from consumers and/or licensed energy companies
4. Balance the needs of energy consumers against those of energy the electricity service provider

5. Educate consumers on their rights, obligations and responsibilities
6. Carry out enforcement action on erring service providers

Most electric service problems are best solved by first contacting your local ZESCO Customer Service Centre.

If you have problems or complaints, please contact the ZESCO customer service 24-hour hotline at:

01 363-636 or 097 913-636

If ZESCO representatives are unable to address your electricity problem or complaint, then further consumer queries may be made with the Energy Regulation Board (ERB). The ERB regulates the energy sector and works to protect consumer rights.

Located at 8th Floor, Premium House, Nasser Road, Lusaka or (260) (1) 236-002 telephone. The **ERB is there to safeguard consumers' interests.**

For further information, please contact:

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