



# OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

FOR

# CONSUMER WATCH GROUPS



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|     |                                |    |
|-----|--------------------------------|----|
| 1.0 | Introduction.....              | 1  |
| 2.0 | Overview of CWGs .....         | 2  |
| 3.0 | Orientation of CWGs .....      | 3  |
| 4.0 | Management of CWGs.....        | 3  |
| 5.0 | Workplans and Budgets .....    | 5  |
| 6.0 | CWG Focal Persons .....        | 6  |
| 7.0 | Monitoring and Evaluation..... | 6  |
| 8.0 | Funding of CWGs .....          | 8  |
| 9.0 | Logistics .....                | 10 |

## ANNEXES

|   |                                     |    |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|
| 1 | Advert for Application to CWG ..... | 12 |
| 2 | Workplan and Budget .....           | 14 |
| 3 | Accounting for Funds.....           | 15 |
| 4 | Reporting Format.....               | 16 |
| 5 | Complaints Report Forms.....        | 16 |
| 6 | Assets Handover Record.....         | 17 |

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Following the dissolution of Consumer Watch Groups (CWGs) established by the Regulatory Alliance comprising the Communications Authority of Zambia (CAZ), Energy Regulation Board (ERB) and National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO), new CWGs which are solely managed by the ERB have been created. The rationale for establishing Watch Groups is to extend the regulatory arm of the ERB to the grass root level in various communities in the country.

The concept under which CWGs are established was initiated by NWASCO - Water Watch Groups (WWG's). WWG's were mandated to represent the interests of consumers in water supply and sanitation. The regulatory alliance CWG's mandate extended to water supply and sanitation, information communication technologies (ICTs) and energy. However, the new ERB managed CWG's mandate will only cover energy issues.

In view of the above, the objectives of the CWGs are to ensure the following:

- Improved communication between consumers and service providers;
- Improved quality of services, particularly by speeding up the resolution of consumer complaints in line with the complaints procedures of ERB;
- Speedy resolution of consumer complaints;
- Creating awareness among consumers of their rights and responsibilities as well as the roles and functions of the service providers and the Regulator; and

- Giving sufficient feedback on public opinion to the Regulator. This information should be adequate to enable regulation meet the requirements of a given area.

To aid the coordination process, these operational guidelines outline general procedures in managing the CWGs.

## **2.0 OVERVIEW OF CWGs**

The CWGs comprise a maximum of sixteen VOLUNTEERS from the targeted community. The population of the town/district is ideally the key factor in determining the size of the group. In addition, the absence of ERB offices in an area and history of consumer issues are considered in determining the number of members.

The establishment of a CWG will be mainly on demand/needs basis identified either by the consumers or the ERB. In either case, written communication will be given to the ERB highlighting the reasons for which a CWG is required. Where a need has been identified and resources permitting by either the regulator or the community, a CWG may be established in that particular area. The ERB may however turn down such request and advance its reasons for not supporting the idea of a CWG in a particular area. In order to enhance better representation on the CWG, problem prone areas shall be identified in a particular location and CWG members recruited from around those areas. This

is in order to have representation from targeted areas so that CWGs are better placed to address the issues within those areas quickly.

## **2.0 ORIENTATION FOR CWG MEMBERS**

The induction of CWG members will be carried out by a team constituted for that purpose in line with Terms of Reference developed by the Regulator. The team, proficient in all aspects of CWGs, the functions of each of the ERB and monitoring and evaluation shall be responsible for the induction and capacity building for all CWGs.

## **4.0 MANAGEMENT OF CWGs**

Each CWG shall be headed by an elected Coordinator. The Co-ordinator shall have overall responsibility for management of the CWG and ensure that the CWG operates within these guidelines. Other executive committee members may include a Secretary, Treasurer and Chairpersons of Committees. The Secretary shall perform administrative duties and will also deputise the Coordinator whenever the latter is not available.

The CWG executive shall be responsible for strategic planning for the CWG and publicising CWGs presence through appropriate awareness materials e.g. brochures, posters, sign posts and sensitisation activities.

#### **4.1 Committees of the CWG**

For co-ordinated engagement with the communities, where possible, CWGs may have committees responsible for the following:

- Community Sensitisation;
- Complaints Handling; and
- Any other committee required to enhance effectiveness.

Each of the committees will be responsible for consumer interests in their respective area and shall report to the Coordinator on a regular basis at least once a month.

#### **4.2 Termination of Membership**

Termination of membership to the CWG may be on account of the following:

- Death of a member;
- Misappropriation of CWG funds;
- If one assumes elective political office;
- Missing three consecutive CWG meetings without valid reasons; and
- Any other reasons that are deemed by the regulator to be likely to compromise/undermine the operations of the CWG.

#### **4.3 Capacity Building**

The ERB will carry out all capacity building activities as required at least once a year.

## **5. WORKPLANS AND BUDGETS**

### **5.1 Quarterly Workplans**

All CWGs are required to submit quarterly work plans with accompanying budgets before a quarter commences, e.g. a month before the end of the current quarter. The workplans and budgets shall be submitted to the Energy Regulation Board. The CWG's workplans must be based on the general workplans prepared by the ERB for any particular year or on information provided by the regulator. ERB shall guide CWGs in the preparation of Quarterly workplans for CWGs within the approved budget.

Submitted workplans and budgets will be subject to review and approval by the ERB. To reduce on the number of rejected activities and to prevent unnecessary delays in accessing the funds, Quarterly workplans and budgets should be discussed with the ERB. Reference shall always be made to the approved focus areas by the regulator from time to time.

Planned activities may be structured in such a way as to obtain maximum consumer feedback and may include the following:

- Phone-in local radio programmes on identified issues;
- Community forums in problem-prone areas (possibly include representatives from providers) such as Radio Listening Groups, Public Meetings, etc;

- Dissemination of information on topical issues that affect consumers from the Regulators e.g. changes in tariff, new technology (pre-paid meters) etc; and
- Customer Surveys where required by the various regulators;

In addition, CWGs may prepare annual workplans and make suggestions for improvement that may be presented at annual CWGs meetings to be convened by the Regulator each year ended. The workplans shall conform to the focal areas identified by the ERB for each particular year.

#### **6.0 CWG FOCAL PERSONS**

Each CWG will be assigned an officer to act as focal person to oversee all the CWG activities. The CWG shall maintain regular contact with the focal person so assigned. That officer shall be the focal person for that particular CWG. The CWG focal persons will seek ways of building knowledge and understanding of the CWG they oversee and act as the reference point for all issues related to the CWG.

The focal person may call a meeting to address any matters affecting the operations of the CWGs.

#### **7.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

A number of reports will need to be prepared and submitted at different levels for purposes of monitoring and evaluation.



## **7.1 Quarterly Reports**

Each CWG must submit a report for the ended quarter within the first week of the subsequent quarter to the Focal Person and shall request for release of funds for the subsequent quarter. The workplan and budget shall be submitted a month before the quarter for which funds are being requested. Work plans must be prepared in the format provided in Annex 2. Work plans must only include realistic activity costs with the necessary breakdown. Funds spent for a given quarter must be retired within two weeks after the quarter. If there are any adverse findings relating to non-performance or fraud, those shall be made known to management immediately.

## **7.2 Monthly Reports**

For routine monthly reporting, CWG's shall send their reports to the Focal Person promptly. The reports will include complaints received and resolved in that particular month and awareness activities undertaken. This shall be the main monitoring tool for CWGs performance, to ensure that CWGs do not only become active towards the end of the quarter. Focal persons shall note any weaknesses observed at the earliest opportunity. Underperforming CWGs may be advised of their failings in writing when consistent poor performance is observed for a period of three months.

## 8.0 FUNDING

CWGs will solely be funded by the ERB. The ERB shall ensure to release funds promptly. The procedures regarding funding are as outlined below:

**8.1 Disbursement of CWG Funds:** Funds will be disbursed to CWGs taking into account the following:

- Submitted CWG work plans and budgets scrutinised by the respective focal person; and
- Focal persons must have endorsed the outlined activities in line with the proposed budget.

## 8.2 CWGs Accounts

In order to access and administer funds from the regulator, CWGs shall endeavour to do the following:

- Open and maintain a bank account meant specifically for receipt of operational funds;
- Appoint a treasurer to manage the funds. The Coordinator/Chairperson must by no means serve as treasurer for reasons of transparency;
- Withdrawing of funds must have the authorisation of at least two signatories (the Coordinator, Secretary or any other CWG member **except the Treasurer**) or at most by three signatories;
- Funds will be retired by the CWG coordinator at the end of each quarter (within two weeks after the quarter). Retired funds must be

countersigned for by the specified signatories and well tabulated with accompanying receipts as per the reporting format given in **Annex 3**. Full retirement must be done before funds for subsequent quarter can be released; and

- Funds shall only be used for purposes for which they are intended or budgeted. Variation to budgets must have the express consent of the ERB.

### **8.3 Accounting for Funds**

To enhance transparency and accountability, the following shall be strictly followed:

- Focal persons shall verify retired funds against the proposed budget and workplan submitted for the quarter;
- Any queries arising will first be handled between the respective CWG and focal person. Should there be any doubt on how to resolve the queries, the ERB shall be informed. Written notification will be made to the ERB.

### **8.4 Allowances**

No allowances shall be paid out to CWGs because membership is voluntary. However, an incentive may be provided as determined by the ERB and so paid out as transport reimbursement. This incentive shall be part of the quarterly planning budget submitted by the CWG. The incentive is meant to cover

travel costs incurred while attending to CWG business. No other transport refunds or allowances shall be paid to members as the incentive should cover transport costs incurred in the course of CWG business for a given quarter. Incentives shall only be paid out to active CWG members.

### **8.5 Mismanagement**

In the event of any of the disbursed funds being misappropriated, corrective action shall be taken immediately. Focal persons shall particularly ensure that fake receipts are disallowed. All consequent action and resolutions will be communicated in writing to the CWG. Where serious fraud is suspected, accounts or audit personnel may be engaged to probe the suspicion. Depending on the extent of the suspected fraud, members of the CWG executive or the entire committee may be removed and/or reported to law enforcement agencies.

### **9.0 LOGISTICS**

The following logistics will be provided to the CWGs:

- Identification badges bearing names, NRC number and passport sized photo shall be made available. The badges will bear the ERB logo;
- Office space will be secured where possible as a meeting place for the CWGs in a location to be approved by the ERB;

- Mobile phones and/or talk time may be provided to the CWG Coordinator for ease of communication. Other communication facilities may be made available to address particular needs. Those may include;
- At least one digital camera will be availed to each CWG for pictorial evidence of reported complaints;
- All publicity materials produced by the ERB and made available to the CWGs for dissemination;
- Hiring of drama groups or artists for purposes of consumer education shall be agreed upon during planning and budgeting process;

Assets bought shall be the property of the ERB and shall be given to the CWG for use but remains the property of the ERB.

## ANNEX 1: ADVERT FOR APPLICATION TO CWG



### ENERGY REGULATION BOARD

#### Call for Applications

#### (X Consumer Watch Group)

The Energy Regulation Board (ERB) is the regulator for the energy sector in Zambia. ERB was established under the Energy Regulation Act of 1995, Chapter 436 of the Laws of Zambia, and has the responsibility to ensure that service providers earn a reasonable rate of return on their investments that is necessary to provide a quality service at affordable prices to the consumers.

One of the key responsibilities of the ERB is to ensure that consumers are protected and service standards are upheld by those providing the service. To effectively meet this objective, the ERB intends to establish a Consumer Watch Group (CWG) in **LOCATION** to monitor the performance of the service providers and handle previously unresolved complaints from consumers on the quality of service being provided and other related issues. Although members of the Consumer Watch Group will provide a voluntary service, the ERB will provide the necessary logistics to facilitate their work.

**The ERB is therefore, inviting applications for VOLUNTEERS to become members of the CWG in LOCATION.**

Interested persons should have the interest of consumers at heart and a desire to work on a **voluntary basis**. If you are aged 21 years old and above and have the following qualities and attributes, please apply for membership to the CWG to the undersigned:

1. Resident in LOCATION and a consumer of communications services such as fixed line, mobile phone, internet service; Energy services such as fuel, electricity, coal, gas, kerosene, solar; and Water and Sanitation services.
2. Willing to work on a voluntary basis;
3. An interest in community service;
4. No criminal record;
5. Willing to undergo training in the operations of CWGs; and
6. General knowledge of telecommunications, energy and water issues will be an added advantage.

**Apply to:**

The Executive Director  
Energy Regulation Board  
P.O. Box 37631  
LUSAKA

Tel: +260 211 236002  
Email: [erb@erb.org.zm](mailto:erb@erb.org.zm)

\*Clearly mark your envelope “**LOCATION Consumer Watch Group**” and include land/mobile telephone contact numbers. Faxed and e-mailed applications are accepted.

***\*APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN Deadline.***

## ANNEX 2: WORKPLAN AND BUDGET

| MUFULIRA WATER WATCH GROUP ACTIVITY PLAN AND BUDGET - JANUARY TO MARCH 2010 |                |  |   |   |
|---|----------------|--|---|---|
| Date  | Area           | Activity   | Cost' K   | Comment/Status of Activity  |
| 20/01/10  | Kansuswa       | <b>Sensitization</b><br>Hire of Megaphone<br>Transport<br>Allowances<br>Stationery<br>Communication<br>Postage<br>Office rental<br><br><b>TOTAL</b>          | <br>50,000<br>90,000<br>420,000<br>90,000<br>120,000<br>50,000<br>250,000<br><br><b>1,070,000</b>   | <br>Hire of mega phone<br>Transport cost for members<br>Monthly Allowances for 6 members<br>Office use for WWG activities<br>Monthly cost for 6 members<br>Office use for WWG activities<br>Monthly rentals |
| 27/01/10  | CEMP           | <b>Review Meeting</b>  | -   | Review performance of last year   |
| 03/03/10  | Kitwe          | <b>Radio Programme</b><br><br><b>TOTAL</b>   | <br><br><b>200,000</b>  | <br><br>Cost for radio programme  |
| 10/03/10  | CEMP           | <b>Review Meeting</b>  |   | Review meeting  |
| 24/03/10  | Butondo T/Ship | <b>Sensitization</b><br>Transport<br>Allowances<br>Communication<br>Office rental<br>PA System Hire<br>Drama Group Hiring<br>Hire of Van<br><br><b>TOTAL</b> | <br>90,000<br>420,000<br>120,000<br>250,000<br>100,000<br>100,000<br>40,000<br><br><b>1,120,000</b> | <br>Ferrying PA System etc<br>Monthly Allowances foe 6 members<br>Faxes, cellphone, e-mails etc.<br>Monthly Rentals<br>Hire of PA system<br>Cost for Hire of drama Group<br>Ferrying Drama group members    |
| 31/03/10  | NWSC           | <b>Familiarization Tour</b><br><br>Transport etc   | <br><br><b>100,000</b>  | <br><br>Sewerage treatment Plant  |
|   |                | <b>GRAND TOTAL</b>   | <b>2,490,000</b>  |   |



### ANNEX 3: ACCOUNTING FOR FUNDS

Each receipt must be given a reference number as per date sequence and related activity. Retirements must therefore be given in the following format:

| ACTIVITY |                          |              |        |
|----------|--------------------------|--------------|--------|
| Date     | Receipt Reference Number | Receipt item | Amount |
|          |                          |              |        |
|          |                          |              |        |
|          |                          |              |        |
|          |                          | <b>TOTAL</b> |        |

**Example:**

| ACTIVITY | Sensitisation in Kabushi, 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2010   |                  |                  |
|----------|---|------------------|------------------|
| Date     | Receipt Reference Number                              | Receipt item     | Amount           |
| 24.06.10 | J01   | Hiring PA System | 300,000          |
| 27.06.10 | J02   | Painting banner  | 50,000           |
|          |   |                  |                  |
| ACTIVITY | Community meeting in Masaiti, 15 <sup>th</sup> August |                  |                  |
| 04.08.10 | A01   | Radio coverage   | 550,000          |
| 10.08.10 | A02   | Hiring of venue  | 200,000          |
|          |   | <b>TOTAL</b>     | <b>1,100,000</b> |

## ANNEX 4: REPORTING FORMAT

Submitted reports must have the following general format but this should not be a limitation:

### 1.0 Summary of activities

#### 2.0 General activities

These are activities that cut across all sectors such as sensitisations, radio programmes etc. The report should provide details of the topics covered, target communities, feedback and so forth. An annex should be provided of the summary workplan versus achievement/status of activity and the summarised proposed budget versus actual expenditure e.g.

| Activity                 | Status   | Budget  | Expenditure | Comment                            |
|--------------------------|----------|---------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Sensitisation in Kabushi | Done     | 350,000 | 410,000     | provided transport for drama group |
| Radio Program            | Not done | 550,000 | 550,000     | Rescheduled airing date            |

### 3.0 Complaints handled

#### 3.1

| SECTOR                | NO. of Complaints Received | No. of Complaints Resolved | % of Resolution | No. of Complaints Referred to Regulator |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Electricity           |                            |                            |                 |   |
| Petroleum             |                            |                            |                 |   |
| Other Forms of Energy |                            |                            |                 |   |

Complaints handled must be presented per sector and highlight/summarise major cases and/or unresolved complaints forwarded to the Regulator. An Annex should be included of the detailed documented complaints.

**4.0 Observations/Recommendations**

The CWG can present its observations on operations, consumer or provider behaviour and recommend actions to the Regulatory Alliance.

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| <b>4. ASSET HANDOVER RECORD</b>  |                           |
| I ..... have this ..... received/handed over<br>..... on behalf of ..... CWG in the presence of<br>..... |                           |
| <b>RECEIVER</b>  | <b>ERB REPRESENTATIVE</b> |
| SIGNED   | SIGNED                    |
| .....  | .....                     |
| WITNESS  |                           |
| NAME: .....  |                           |
| SIGN: .....  |                           |