

A PILOT PROJECT ON CAPACITY BUILDING ON ELECTRICITY REFORMS IN BANGLADESH, INDIA AND NEPAL (RESA) FINAL CONSUMER SURVEY REPORT - BANGLADESH



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Unnayan Shamannay, with the support of CUTS International, implemented “A Pilot Project on Capacity Building on Electricity Reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA Project)” over two years (2008-2010) in Nepal, Bangladesh, and two states of India – West Bengal and Rajasthan. The project aimed to build the capacity of consumer groups/civil society organisations (CSOs) for undertaking action-oriented research and advocacy involving policymakers and regulatory agencies to bring about pro-consumer changes in the electricity regulatory/policy processes. At the end of the project, a final consumer survey was organised in Bangladesh to examine the level of understanding and awareness of grassroots consumers on the scope for their engagement in the process of electricity reforms.

Most of the respondents were males, 85.2 percent, and only about 14.8 percent were females. About 11 percent of the respondents were uneducated. On the other hand, a vast majority of the respondents were from educational background (primary and high school level). Small proportion of the respondents were having graduate degree and above.

Most of the respondents reported that GIMs were very useful and supported the activity to be continued on regular basis. It opened their eyes to the reform process and they were provided an opportunity to know about the situation prevailing in the electricity sector in Bangladesh. They came to know that electricity service is their right, and, particularly they became aware that quality service is needed but that does not exist. The respondents reported that the GIMs were helpful in resolving the problems that they were experiencing in their everyday life. Majority of the respondents (68.2%) having attended the GIMs and becoming aware of the importance of energy conservation, started using CFL lights and other energy efficient equipments. As high as 81 percent of the respondents reported that the relationships and communication channels with the utility providers have improved.

The level of awareness regarding ongoing electricity reform process increased as compared to the situation when the consumer perception survey was organised at the start of the meeting. At present, 73.1 percent of the respondents informed that they knew about the ongoing reforms process in the electricity sector, which is indeed a significant contribution of this project. Majority of the respondents (79.3%) opined that ordinary bulb consumes more energy *vis-à-vis* energy efficient bulbs, which is a sign of increase in awareness among consumers appreciating the importance of energy conservation.

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations have been suggested:

- RESA project and its activities at the grassroots level should be continued.
- Consumer’s awareness level has enhanced, which has to be better utilised by ensuring their participation in the BERC activities. In this context the support of BERC is required.
- Undertake capacity building activities for both the consumers and officials of electricity sector supervised by BERC.
- Opportunities and financial support should be provided by BERC to create space for the electricity consumers to participate in the public hearings

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Half of the household of the total population of Bangladesh does not have electricity connection. Given this, the government has taken some new initiatives to increase generation; particularly emphasising the involvement of the private sector to generate required amount of investments and technical know how. Already government has declared to establish new generations so that high electricity demand may be reduced vis-à-vis continuing expansion of the economy. Electricity is one of the key instruments for accelerating growth of an economy and attaining social and political advancement. For this reason, per capita consumption of electricity is one of the important indicators to measure socio-economic development.

Historically, South Asian governments have been solely responsible for almost every function in this sector. As a strategy to accelerate development process, governments have been investing hugely in production, transmission, and distribution of electricity. Over the decades, though many commendable achievements have been made particularly in expansion of the grid networks, increase in production capacities, however, far more remains to be done. Increase in per capita consumption of electricity and improving availability and quality of services are among the immediate priorities of the policy makers.

With a view to achieve social objectives, and for some other considerations, the electricity services to certain category of consumers have been provided on highly subsidised rates. Least attention was given to cost-recovery and deficit was partly funded through state finances and by charging a premium on industry. Over the years, the sector has undergone from bad to worse and availability and quality of services has been continuously deteriorating. Cash-starved government owned utilities have not been able to recover their operating cost and the business model was not prudent to attract fresh investments. Poor management and high level of operational losses, which included pilferages, transmission and distribution losses made the sector un-viable and there was no incentive for improvements and private sector participation. Industry and economy have been suffering heavily; as a consequence the entire society has been paying huge cost for such inefficiencies.

Evidently, production and distribution of electricity is a highly cost-intensive activity. Therefore, maintaining a balance between social objectives and commercial viability becomes a challenge. The long-term interests of consumers are being compromised to have some gains in the short term, which at times are motivated politically. The situation has been similar across all South Asian countries.

Realising the growing gap between the demand and supply and governments' inability to fund the entire requirements, electricity sector was liberalised in almost all countries in South Asia and private investments were required. Independent regulatory agencies were set up to facilitate a consistent and enabling regulatory environment. One important responsibility vested with these regulatory agencies was to maintain a balance amongst the

interests of stakeholders (e.g., consumers, producers/sellers) and to ensure development of the sector to attain efficiency and competitiveness.

Another important objective of setting up independent regulatory commissions was to bring in clarity about the roles that various actors would have in the sector. As per the new arrangement, government was supposed to confine itself to set out a broad policy framework and facilitate effective governance in the sector.

The regulatory agencies are mandated to perform day-to-day activities in accordance with the policy objectives formulated by the government. Government is expected to maintain distance with the regulator and not influence their regulatory decisions, except in case of policy matters. The regulatory agencies amongst several others are vested with the responsibility to promote competition, and operational efficiencies, and to make the processes transparent and participatory.

Independent regulatory commissions have been set up in India and Bangladesh. Nepal is on its way to establish an independent regulatory commission, called the Nepal Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) soon. In India, development of electricity sector being a joint responsibility of the Union and States, separate regulatory agencies have been set up at the Centre and State Levels. In Bangladesh, the regulatory commission is not responsible solely for electricity, but its scope is much wider covering the whole energy sector. The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) not formed much ago is still in the process of becoming fully operational.

CUTS had undertaken an initiative in Bangladesh, Nepal and 2 states of India, *i.e.*, West Bengal and Rajasthan, emphasising on building capacity of consumers, CSOs to enable them to understand the issues involved, take-up action research, share experiences, and carry out advocacy with policymakers and regulatory agencies to effect changes in the electricity regulatory/policy processes. In Bangladesh, Unnayan Shamannay has implemented the project with a number of local CSOs as partners.

1.2 Project activities

CUTS International has implemented this project in cooperation with local partner organisation. In Bangladesh, a nodal person was nominated who has coordinated project activities and a project manager was engaged at CUTS-CIER, Jaipur, India who has coordinated the project activities.

The first activity of the project was a one-day launching ceremony. It has organised to discuss the details of project implementation, responsibilities/roles of the partner organisations. Various stakeholders such as policy makers, regulators, distribution company representatives, CSOs, media from across the region including the neighbouring countries, have been invited in the meeting. After the launching ceremony, an important training has been provided to the nodal person. It was focused on policy, regulatory and governance aspects in electricity sector in South Asia, and to share basic knowledge and understanding of electricity systems and regulation and the cross-country experiences. Another activity was a one day inception workshop in each project country with the

participation of local partners, *i.e.*, the second tier partner organisations. In this workshop the project implementation details had been disseminated. One set of questionnaire was circulated at that workshop to assess the understanding of the local partners. Literature review had been undertaken to understand the scenario of the electricity sector in Bangladesh. Moreover, a perception survey was conducted to evaluate the level of understanding and awareness of grassroots consumers on the scope for their engagement in the process of electricity reforms.

The other activities were to

- Form Reference Group (RG). It was ensured quality in the project execution as per stipulated plan. Subject experts, academicians and practitioners, people representatives, government officials, civil society representatives were constituted the RGs. The RG had provided guidance to the implementation of the project at the national level.
- Develop a training manual was from the discussion on the (territory-specific) base paper during the RG-I meeting. It outlined the issues to be covered in these training workshops and the action plan for conducting the trainings at the territorial and grassroots levels. The training manual was given to support the project team in undertaking these trainings and related meetings.
- Organise two territorial trainings in Bangladesh. These were two-day events in which local civil society groups, service providers, regulators, media, peoples' representatives were invited.
- Organise Grassroots Interface Meetings (GIMs). These had been conducted in two phases. The agenda of these training workshops was reached out to the players at local level and make them aware of the role to play in regulatory reforms, and transfer them some of the key advocacy skills. In the first phase, information was disseminated to relevant consumers, such as farmers, commercial users, distribution companies, etc. at grassroots level on the present scenario and efforts were made to register their problems, needs and challenges. A handout in local vernacular was prepared from the 'base paper' to facilitate discussions. In the second phase of these grassroots meetings, possible solutions of their problems were discussed in the presence of local legislators.
- A National Advocacy Seminar was organised in Bangladesh to convey the project findings to policy community and regulators, etc. Its objective was develop a network between and amongst policy community, regulators, civil society representatives, media professional, etc. on the problems and challenges that need to be addressed with regards electricity reforms.

At the end of the project, a final consumer survey was conducted in all project territories including Bangladesh to assess the level of understanding and awareness of grassroots consumers on the scope for their engagement in the process of electricity reforms, as imparted through project meetings and interactions. The respondents were the same people who were involved while undertaking the perception (baseline) survey.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Background

A perception survey (baseline survey) was conducted in the beginning of the project in 13 selected districts – Gaibandha, Nawabganj, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Gazipur, Meherpur, Jessore, Khulna, Barisal, Bhola, Comilla, Khagrachhari, and Cox’s Bazar – to gauge the level of understanding and awareness of consumers on the scope for their engagement in the process of electricity reforms. Total respondents in the survey were 701. A total of 724 respondents were selected for final consumer survey in the selected districts from the participants of the GIMs. However, 23 participants did not take part in the survey.

2.2 Objective of the Survey

The main objective of the final consumer survey was to assess the improvement in the level of consumer awareness on regulatory issues in the power sector.

2.3 Methodology

The survey was conducted on different categories of respondents with a formatted questionnaire which was developed in consultation with the regional (South Asian) and local (national) partners. The questionnaire consisted mostly of quantitative questions along with some scope of gathering qualitative responses.

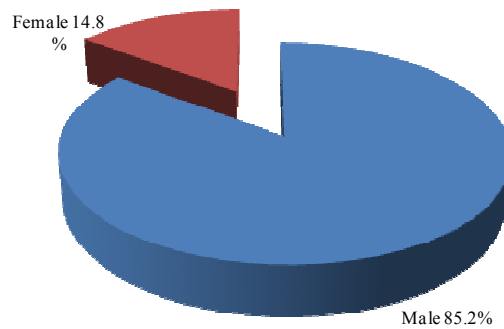
The local partner CSOs took the responsibility of carrying out the final consumer survey. Each of the CSOs employed their own staff to collect the data from the field. The relevant staff members were trained by the CSOs personnel who were trained at the same place by the project coordinator. Regionally the data collection process was coordinated by 4 regional officials of the Consumers’ Association of Bangladesh (CAB) who were also trained and supervised by project co-ordinator at Unnayan Shamannay.

The collected data were analyzed using a common format developed by CUTS for the surveys. The software SPSS was used to process and analyse the data.

III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Gender view is essential in any sector to explore the real scenario of the consumers. Most of the respondents were males, 85.2 percent, and only about 14.8 was female (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Gender of the Respondents



About 11 percent of the respondents were uneducated. On the other hand, a vast majority of the respondents were from educational background (primary and high school level). Small proportion of the respondents were having graduate degree and above (6.4%).

Figure 3.2: Educational Qualification

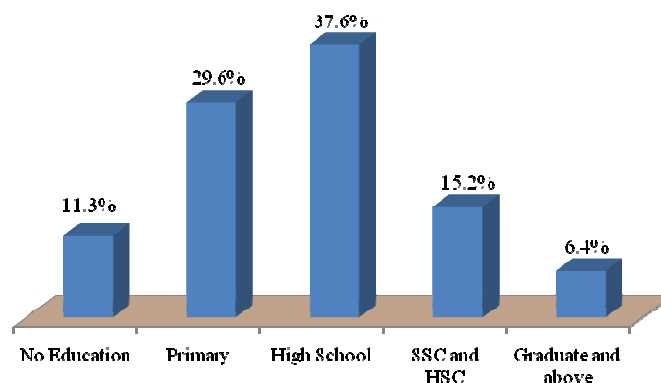
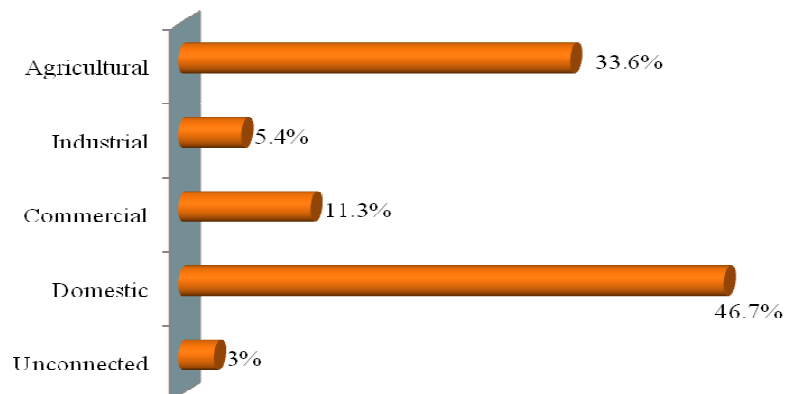


Figure 3.3: Category of Electricity Consumers



The majority of the respondents that were covered in the final consumer survey were consumers having electricity connection i.e. 97 percent. They were classified in four different categories, *i.e.*, domestic consumers, commercial consumers, industrial and agricultural consumers. Domestic and agricultural consumers dominated the group. They consisted of 46.7 and 33.6 percent, of total respondents, respectively. During the consumer baseline survey these two groups were 42 and 40 percent, respectively, which imply an increased proportion of domestic and reduced proportion in agricultural consumers. Conversely, 11.3 percent of the respondents were commercial consumers and 5.4 percent were industrial consumers in the consumer baseline survey, which increased to 11.3 and 5.4 percent, respectively.

IV. GRASSROOTS INTERFACE MEETING

Grassroots Interface Meetings (GIMs) were conducted in two phases at 13 districts as described above. The main focus of GIMs was to reach out the players at the local level and make them aware of the role that they need to play in regulatory reforms, and transfer some of the key advocacy skills to them. During the first phase, information was disseminated to relevant consumers such as farmers, commercial users, distribution companies, etc. at the grassroots level on the present scenario and efforts were made to register their problems, needs and challenges. In the second phase of these grassroots meetings, possible solutions to their problems were discussed in the presence of local legislators with utilities.

The participants of the GIMs Phase I or II, took part in the consumer baseline survey conducted during the start of the project. The respondents of final consumer survey were a total of 724 or 91.9 percent of the respondents of the base line survey (Table 4.1). Rest of the respondents were neighbours or community friends from the same locality.

Table 4.1: Respondents in the Survey

	Number of Respondent	% of Respondents of Baseline Survey
Yes	665	91.9
No	59	8.1
Total	724	100.0

In a question related to whether the respondents have attended both the GIMs and any one of them. A total of 27.2 percent confirmed that they participated in the first phase of the meeting, whereas 21.04 percent took part only in the second phase of such meetings. There were other 199 respondents (27.5 percent) that had participated in both the meeting (first and the second phase) – Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Participants in the GIM Meeting

	Number of Respondents	% of Respondents Participate in the GIM Meeting
GIM-1	197	27.2
GIM-2	155	21.4
Both	199	27.5
None	173	23.9
Total	724	100.0

Attempt was made to understand the factors that motivated the participants to attend the GIM meetings. Nearly 63 percent respondents were of the opinion that they participated in the GIM to find out answers/solutions to the systemic problems that they are facing in the electricity sector in Bangladesh. They found that the GIMs was able to create a platform, where they could voice their concern and also get response from the relevant

officials, which otherwise was missing. Around 23 percent respondents wanted to know and understand more about electricity reforms and regulatory process. Close to 14 percent respondents opined that they wanted to use the opportunity to engage with the electricity officials (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Factors that motivated the consumers to participate in the GIMs

Factors	% of Respondents
Finding solutions to systemic problems	63.2
Awareness about regulatory reforms	23.2
Engagement with officials of electricity company	13.6
Total	100.0

In a question related to usefulness of the GIMs, 34.3 percent of the total 701 respondents found these meetings highly effective, whereas 45.8 percent said that the meetings were effective. There were respondents who found the meetings to be satisfactory (17.0 percent) but surprisingly, 2.9 percent did not find the meetings to be effective.

Table 4.4: Usefulness of GIMs

	% of Respondents
Highly effective	34.3
Effective	45.8
Satisfactory	17.0
Not effective	2.9
Total	100.0

The majority of the respondents of the survey found the session on ‘grievance redressal mechanism’ (53.1%) as the most interesting and beneficial session for them. 37.5 percent respondents found the session on ‘curbing power theft and energy conservation’ as another useful session, followed by the session on ‘awareness on energy reforms and regulation’, which was found useful to 9.3 percent respondents. Thus, it can be analysed that there is a need to further educate and create awareness among consumers to be able to participate effectively in the grievance redressal mechanism. (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Most Interesting Session

	% of Respondents
Grievance redressal mechanism	53.1
Curbing power theft and energy conservation	37.5
Awareness on energy reforms and regulation	9.3
Total	100.0

A good number of participants who attended the GIMs stated that they gained substantial knowledge about electricity sector and its system and they have pronounced these in the meetings, conversation with CSOs and RESA team members. These observations have been reflected in the final survey. Majority of the respondents (63.5%) have informed that they gained knowledge during the GIMs and it was helpful in resolving the problems that

they used to face in their locality. More than 30 percent respondents reported that it was highly rewarding while a small proportion of them (5.7%) mentioned that it was not helpful (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Usefulness of GIMs in resolving problems

	% of Respondents
Highly rewarding	30.7
Helpful	63.5
Not helpful	5.7
Total	100.0

The respondents reported that the GIMs were helpful in resolving the problems that they had to experience in their everyday life. Table 4.7 presents their views on some specific areas of benefits.

Table 4.7: Benefits of participating in the GIMs

	% of Respondents
Help save energy	6.4
Awareness on how to get compensations	1.3
Use energy saving bulbs to reduce the bill	8.6
Take steps to prevent electricity theft	6.6
Discussed about various problems relating to electricity supply	8.2
Known the time of using hydraulic pump	1.1
Made aware of the process to solve problems regarding bills	5.1
Opportunity of direct communication with relevant personnel	0.9
Know the process of getting electricity connection	3.0

At the beginning of the RESA project, local partners were engaged with the grassroots consumers. Firstly, they conducted the consumer baseline survey with support from the local partners and secondly, they also provided their support to organise the GIMs, due to which they were able to closely engage with the consumers. Close to 90 percent of the respondents reported that the local partners provided them support to get redressal to their problems and only 10.3 percent respondents were of the opinion, that the local partners did not provide them effective support.

Table 4.8: Local partners support in seeking redressal to problems

	% of Respondents
Yes	89.7
No	10.3
Total	100.0

The most important question from the point of view of project outcome is whether the respondents have increased their awareness level. This question also counts the objective of this survey. Total of 687 out of 701, which is as much as 98.01 percent, rated the GIMs as very useful and as a result of which they have learnt many things with regard to issues relating to GRM, curbing power theft and energy conservation etc. Only 14 respondents (1.9 percent) opined that they did not gain much experience.

Table 4.9: Awareness level on reforms and regulation

Response	% of Respondents
Yes	98.1
No	1.9
Total	100.0

In continuation of the above question as mentioned, around 68.2 percent respondents have started either using for self or advocating for CFL bulbs as a step to ensure energy conservation. 15.2 percent respondents have expressed that they either helped or motivated in curbing power theft after attending the GIMs. 5.6 percent respondents said that after attending the GIMs, they took relevant steps to register a complaint either for themselves and/or for others in their community and were able to get redressal to their complaints. 9.9 percent respondents took the initiative to help others and roughly 1.1 percent of the respondents were encouraged to participate in public meetings. (Table 4.10)

Table 4.10: Steps to take after attending the meetings

Steps	% of Respondents
Started using CFLs lights and other energy efficient equipments	68.2
Took steps to stop theft of electricity	15.2
Took steps to register a complaint and ensured that the same was redressed	5.6
Helped friends/family members in registering and resolving complaints	9.9
Participated in a public meeting organized by government regulatory body or utility	1.1
Total	100.0

An overwhelming majority (98.4%) of the respondents reported that if GIMs are organized in the near future, they would like to attend the GIMs. Only small percentage of respondents (1.6%) said that they will not attend the GIMs -- (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11: Whether the respondents would attend such meetings in future

	% of Respondents
Yes	98.4
No	1.6
Total	100.0

Finally, 81 percent of the respondents reported that the relationships with the utility providers have improved given their interactions during the GIMs. However, 19 percent of them replied that it has not yet improved to a large extent -- (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: Relationship with the utility officials

Response	% Respondents
Improved	81.0
Not Improved	19.0
Total	100.0

V. REGULATORY REFORMS IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR

Bangladesh has already set an ambitious goal of providing access to affordable and reliable electricity to all citizens by the year 2020. However, half of the households are still beyond electricity coverage and per capita electricity consumption is one of the lowest in the world. Reforms in the electricity sector of Bangladesh had started in 1977 with formation of the Rural Electrification Board (REB). In 1993, reforms officially started in the power sector. In this time a high level inter-ministerial committee on Power Sector Reform in Bangladesh (PSRB) was constituted. The committee came up with three major recommendations: (i) unbundling of the sector according to functional lines, (ii) corporatization of sector entities and (iii) establishment of an independent regulatory commission. Later on, an independent regulatory commission has been established, but consumers are not aware of that; it was reported in the first consumer survey.

The first consumer baseline survey revealed poor level of awareness of the consumers regarding the ongoing electricity reform process in the country. Only 1 percent of the total respondents reported that they aware of the ongoing reform process in the electricity sector. However, post the final consumer survey, close to 73.1 percent of the respondents informed that they were aware of the ongoing reform process in the electricity sector. **This is indeed a significant contribution of the RESA project.** However, around 30 percent of the respondents still did not have a very good understanding and awareness of the ongoing reform process as on date. However, after having attended the GIMs, a large number of respondents have been made aware of the reform process. (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Awareness of the ongoing reform process in the electricity sector

	% of Respondents
Yes	73.1
No	26.9
Total	100.0

As part of the questionnaire, a general perception of targeted respondents was reviewed with regard to their understanding and enhanced awareness on regulatory reforms. In continuation of the above question, 95.6 percent respondents mentioned the correct location of BERC, which is in Dhaka. This question was asked to see, whether the respondents actually know about BERC and its location (Table 5.2). In another question related to key functions of BERC, 38.2 percent of the total respondents opined that tariff determination is one of the key functions of BERC, whereas 17.3 percent rated granting of license and another 7.6 percent rated regulating of sale and purchase of power as the core functions of the commission. There were 36.9 percent respondents, who were of the opinion that all the above three were the key functions of BERC. Thus, the data reveals that a majority of consumers are aware of the existence and key functions of BERC (Table 5.3).

Table 5.2: Location of the BERC Office

BERC Office Located in	% of Respondents
Dhaka	95.6
Rajshahi	2.1
Khulna	1.2
Rangpur	1.1
Total	100.0

Table 5.3 Identify the key functions of BERC

	% of Respondents
To determine the tariff for electricity	38.2
To grant license	17.3
To regulate the sale/purchase of power at the state level	7.6
All	36.9
Total	100.0

On being asked, whether the consumers were aware of the distribution company that provides them the power, close to 71 percent respondents said that distribution company of 'Palli Biddyt Samiti' supplies electricity, while 24.4 percent respondents reported that Bangladesh Power Development Board and 4.0 percent said that West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited (WZPDCL) supplies electricity to them (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Distribution Company that supplies electricity

	% of Respondents
Pally Biddyt Samity	71.3
PDB	24.4
WZPDCL	4.0
None	.3
Total	100.0

Where should the respondent file an application for the redressal of complaint if the complaint is not redressed properly by the local office of the utility? Half of the respondents (55.7%) reported that they will go to CAB district office, 26.0 percent opined that they will go to the Complaint Redressal Forum/Committee and 13.4 percent said that they will go to the BERC office (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5: Filed application for Redressal

Filed application for Redressal of Consumer	% of Respondents
BERC	13.4
CAB district office	55.7
Complaint Redressal Forum/committee	26.0
none of them	4.9
Total	100.0

To whom the respondent file an appeal against the order of the GRO if s/he is not satisfied with the decision passed the Grievance Redressal Forum? The majority of the respondents (54.9%) replied that they will go to CAB district office, 26.4 percent reported that they will go to the BERC office and 14.5 percent respondents will go to the complaint redressal forum/committee, and 4.2 percent of the respondents will not go to none of the above (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Unsatisfied consumer filed an appeal the decision against the order of the authority

File an appeal	% of Respondents
BERC	26.4
CAB district office	54.9
Complaint Redressal Forum/committee	14.5
None of the above	4.2
Total	100.0

The majority of the respondents (79.3%) of the final survey opined that ordinary bulb consumes more energy. Around 17 percent reported that CLF bulbs consume more energy and 3.9 percents said that both equipments consume same energy (Table 5.7). However, 46.4 percent of the respondents said that power theft is a punishable offence and 16.8 percent of the respondents said that power theft is not punishable. Nevertheless, 29.6 percent of the respondents had no comments on that (Table 5.8).

Table 5.7: Which equipments consumes more energy

More Energy Consume	% of Respondents
Ordinary bulb	79.3
CFL bulbs	16.8
Both consume the same energy	3.9
Total	100.0

Table 5.8: Consequence of power theft as per Electricity Act 2003

Is power theft a punishable offence?	% of Respondents
Yes	46.4
No	24.0
No Comment	29.6
Total	100.0

VI. IMPACT OF THE RESA PROJECT

In the last two years, there has been a tremendous enhancement in the level of awareness and overall understanding of respondent targeted consumers, which has been showcased through two perception surveys done at the beginning of the project around two years back and now at the end of the project (as given below in the Table).

Consumer Perception	Awareness level during the Base Line Survey	Awareness level at the Final Consumer Survey	Enhancement in Awareness level
Awareness on Regulatory Reform Process	2%	73.1%	71.1%
Awareness on available GRM	28%	95.1%	67.1%

As far as awareness levels on regulatory reforms are concerned, there has been an impressive increase in the percentage i.e. 73.1 percent respondents having confirmed that they are aware of the reform process, having attended the GIMs. 95.1 percent respondents as compared to last survey's result of only 28 percent are now well versed with the available grievance redressal mechanism and the procedures.

This report reflects that there has been a great improvement with regard to overall capacity and understanding among consumers about the regulatory reform process. Thus, now one can expect that with the times to come, consumers can play a pivotal role in the regulatory reform process provided initiatives such as RESA are continued.

Further, in order to complement the quantitative findings, the final consumer survey has captured some interesting case studies. These stories provide real impact of the RESA project.

CASE 1: Year Hossain Sheikh and Salim Sheikh lives in Arongghata at Daulatpur in Khulna District. Year Hossain is a High School teacher and Salim Sheikh is a day labour and are domestic consumers. After having attended the GIMs, they went from door to door in order to share their experiences with people living in their community, in order to raise awareness of the importance of prevention of power theft, conservation of electricity and so on. Further, they also created:

- a. *Samiti* (a society) to raise awareness among the local electricity consumers about the importance of electricity reforms and regulatory process. *Samiti* members comprise of 28 consumers who participated in the first GIM in Khulna. Some of the activities they have undertaken as yet are:
 - a. Identification for consumers indulging in theft of power
 - b. Raising awareness among consumers on issues, such as curbing of power theft, complaints redressal mechanism, energy conservation, etc.,

- c. Establishing relationship with local electricity officials, and
- d. Submission of complaints to the utility providers.

CASE 2: Champa Khatun is a domestic consumer living in Shahapur in Rajshahi district. She participated in both GIM-I and II. Before participation in the GIMs, she was not aware of the ongoing regulatory reform process in the electricity sector. However, having attended the meeting, she was able to understand the importance of energy conservation and the fact that use of CLF bulbs are better than using ordinary bulbs. Further, she also learnt on how to read meters and be able to understand the meter reading.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has illustrated some evidence about the impact of RESA project on majority of the electricity consumers by raising awareness on reform and regulation process in the electricity sector. However, at the beginning of the project, as is evident from the baseline survey, the level of awareness of the electricity consumers was very poor. At present, electricity consumers know about reforms activities undertaken in the electricity sector, but they have no experiences of participation in the policies and decision making process in this sector. Their capacity has enhanced, however, they need the scope of participation in the policy level activities. The GIMs or similar of type training should be continued to make them for more capable to participation in the process of reforms activities in the electricity sector.

In the light of the final consumer survey findings, the following recommendations can be suggested.

- The RESA project should be continued.
- Consumer's awareness level has enhanced, which has to be better utilised by ensuring their participation in the BERC activities. In this context the support of BERC is required.
- Need capacity building both electricity consumers and all officials of electricity sector together under a training programme supervised by BERC.
- Space should be created for the electricity consumers to participate in the public hearing.
