

**A Pilot Project on Capacity Building on
Electricity Reforms in
Bangladesh, India and Nepal
(RESA PROJECT)**

WEST BENGAL

FINAL CONSUMER SURVEY REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Electricity is the backbone of any civilized society and access to dependable & affordable electricity is an imperative for present day life. The Indian power sector has been going through reforms since quite some time now and many mechanisms & regulations have been put in place in the past few years to improve its efficiency, bring in competition, improve service delivery and consumer participation. However, consumer participation, a key input for a successful reform process has been lacking due to low awareness levels and capacity of consumers and civil society groups. With this backdrop CUTS International had launched the RESA project which was being implemented simultaneously in Bangladesh, Nepal, and West Bengal & Rajasthan in India, over a period of two years (2008- 2010). At the beginning of the project a Consumer baseline survey was conducted to gauge the awareness level and understanding that consumers and grassroots CSOs have on power sector reforms and related issues. The findings revealed that there was widespread ignorance on these issues. To this end, the project trained representatives of grassroots CSOs on basic electricity issues, regulatory reforms and consumer issues involved. At the end of the project a final consumer survey was done to assess the impact the project had towards building capacity of consumers.

The present document is kind of an assessment paper. This paper briefly explains the findings of the Final Consumer Survey. It is divided into 5 parts, viz. brief introduction of the activity and its main objectives, the methodology of the survey, findings of the survey, success stories and finally the way forward.

Section: I

INTRODUCTION

Brief about the activity

CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment and Economic Regulation (CUTS C-CIER) along with its project partners are undertaking a project, titled 'A pilot project on capacity building on electricity reforms in Bangladesh, Nepal and India (Rajasthan and West Bengal) - <http://www.cuts-ccier.org/RESA/index.htm>.

The project aims at building the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to take-up action oriented research, carryout advocacy with policymakers and regulatory agencies to effect changes in the electricity regulatory/policy processes, etc. The project is being supported by Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

In West Bengal, the project is implemented by CUTS Calcutta Resource Center (CUTS CRC), in collaboration with 10 local CSOs at the local level. The local CSOs are located in 10 different districts of the State, which provides a wide geographical coverage to the whole project. At the beginning of the project a consumer baseline survey was conducted in 10 districts of West Bengal, with the aim to understand the perception of the consumer's *vis-à-vis* regulatory reforms.

Towards the end of the project, a final consumer survey was conducted to assess the project impact in creating awareness and enhancing capacity of CSOs & consumers and also to chart out the next steps.

Objective of the survey

The main objective of the final consumer survey was to gauge the level of understanding and awareness of consumers/users on the scope for their engagement in the process of electricity reforms, as imparted through project meetings and interactions. The other objective of this activity was to document few success stories about the steps taken by the consumer in resolving problems, creating awareness, curbing power theft, etc.

Section: II

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS

The aim was to target respondents who were covered during the Consumer Baseline Survey, GIM/Sub GIM phase I and II. The districts covered were North Dinazpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Purulia, Nadia, Howrah, Hooghly, North 24 Parganas, Midnapur and Kolkata. The survey was conducted with different categories of respondents (domestic, non-domestic, agriculture and industrial) using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted mostly of quantitative questions along with some scope of gathering qualitative responses.

The survey was supervised by the Nodal Person who periodically met the survey teams and checked the filled-in questionnaires. Only upon the satisfaction of the Nodal Person the filled-in questionnaires were finalised. The local partner (who underwent training at the territorial level) undertook the responsibility of carrying out the final consumer survey. Each of the CSOs employed one or more of their team members to collect the data from the field.

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

Section: III

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

The final consumer survey targeted the same co who were covered during the final consumer survey who were either present in the GIM-I or GIM-II or who attended both the phases. This included both male and female respondents. Among the respondent 85% were male and rests of the respondent i.e. 15% were female.

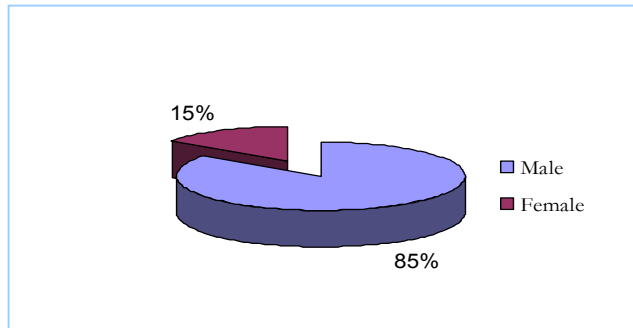


Figure 1 : Gender of the Respondents

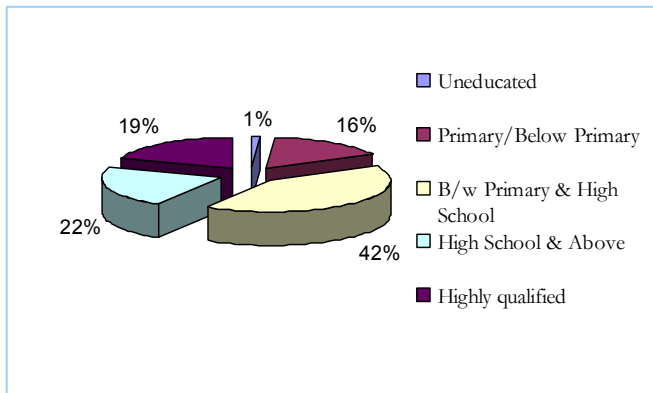


Figure 2: Educational Qualification

Similarly with regard to educational qualification of the respondents, as indicated in figure 2, out of total 601 respondents, 22 percent were educated up to the level of high school and above, whereas 16 percent respondents were from primary and below primary level. 19 percent were having degree level qualification but there were another 01 percent, who were uneducated.

The sample was also selected so as to include different categories of electricity consumers. 69% of the total respondents were domestic consumers, 18% respondents were agricultural, 9% were commercial, 3% were industrial and the rest 1% were others.

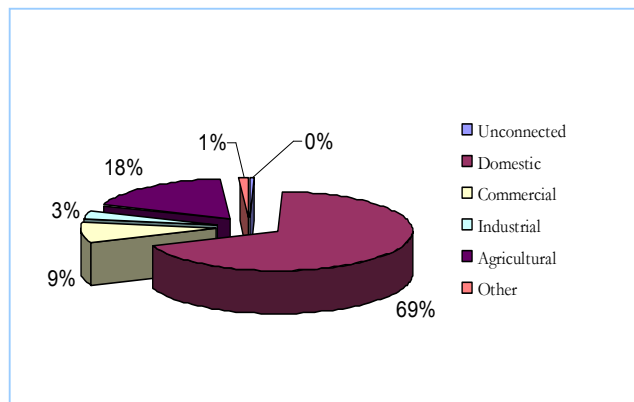


Figure 3: Category of Electricity Consumers

GRASSROOTS INTERFACE MEETING (GIMS)

GIMs were conducted as part of the RESA initiative. The idea was to reach out to the players at the local level, and enable them to appreciate the role that they need to play in regulatory reforms and facilitating the transition towards a more

transparent & efficient electricity sector. It was also envisaged to help raise consumer awareness on issues related to electricity. The final consumer survey tried to capture how and whether the GIMs and other grassroots activities as part of the project helped increase awareness and build capacity of consumers on issues relevant to regulatory reforms in electricity sector. The tables below shows the mix of consumers interviewed during the final consumer survey:

Table 2:		
Participated in GIMs	Number of respondents	Percentage
GIM-I	225	37.44
GIM-II	178	29.62
Both	198	32.95
Total	601	100.00

Table 1:		
Participated in Consumer Base Line Survey	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	343	57.07
No	258	42.93
Total	601	100

Table 1 show that 57.07% of the respondents were chosen from those who were surveyed during the consumer base line survey. The remaining 42.93% were not included in the base line survey, but were participants for either or both of the GIMs. As shown in Table 2, 67.05% of the total number of respondents participated either in GIM-I or GIM-II (37.44% in GIM-I & 29.62% in GIM-II) and remaining 32.95% of the respondents were present at both the GIMs. Table 3 provides the principal reasons as opined by the consumers as to why they participated in the GIMs and Table 4 gives the responses of the respondents regarding the usefulness of the GIMs.

Table 3		
Factor that motivated to participate in GIMs	Number of respondents	Percentage
Opportunity to find solution to their systemic problems	441	73.38
Anxiety to build awareness	116	19.30
Opportunity to engage	21	3.49
Other	23	3.83
Total	601	100

The factors, which motivated respondents to participate in these meetings yielded results, for example, 73.38 percent respondents mentioned that they participated in order to find solutions to their systemic problems, which otherwise they were not able to get access to. Further, 1.70 percent respondents opined that they wanted to build their own capacity and were curious to know more about reform process by participating in the GIMs. Close

to 3.49 percent respondents participated with the purpose of engaging with the officials and 3.83 percent of the respondents participated for other reasons. These are the factors that motivated consumers to attend the grassroots meetings.

In a question related to usefulness of the GIMs (Table 4), 23.79 percent of the total 601 respondents found the meetings to be very useful, whereas 56.57 percent found the meetings to be useful as compared to 15.64 percent respondents that found the meeting to be satisfactory. But out of a total of 601 respondents, 24 respondents (3.99%) did not find the meeting to be useful, as compared to the other respondents.

Usefulness of GIMs	Number of respondents	Percentage
Very Useful	143	23.79
Useful	340	56.57
Satisfactory	94	15.64
Not Useful	24	3.99
Total	601	100

Respondents were also asked to point out which session of the GIMs they found to be most interesting and useful (Figure 4). Out of the total respondents, almost 51 percent attributed grievance redressal mechanism (GRM) as the most interesting and beneficial session for them. Out of the remaining respondents, 31.28 percent opined power theft as another useful session and 18.14 percent rated energy reforms/conservation as a useful session.

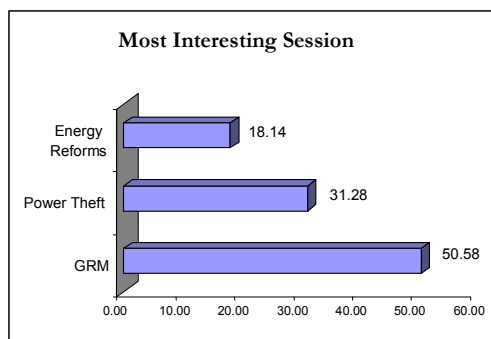


Figure 4: Most Interesting Session

Experience Gained	Number	% age
Extremely Helpful	135	22.46
Helpful	434	72.21
Not Helpful	32	5.32
Total	601	100

In another question related to the experience gained by the participant through the meetings (Table 6), a total of 601 respondents, 135 respondents (22.46 percent) found the meetings to be extremely helpful, whereas a good number of 434 respondents (72.21 percent) found the meetings to be helpful and informative. However, there were close to 32 respondents (5.32 percent), who rated the meetings were not helpful.

One of the principal objectives of the project was to build capacity of the grassroots civil society organisations so as to enable them to take up local level consumer advocacy and action. When respondents were asked whether or not the local/district level CSOs extended their support to consumers on issues pertaining to electricity, more than 50% (Table 7) said that local partners have helped them in their day to day issues pertaining to electricity.

Local Partner Support	Number	%age
Yes	308	51.25
No	293	48.75
Total	601	100

On the question of awareness of consumers, the final consumer survey tried to capture whether reach out exercises like the GIMs have enhanced consumer awareness and capacity on electricity sector issues, their roles and responsibilities, energy conservation, complaint registration, etc. the following findings highlight some of those perceptions as captured by the survey. Most of the participants agreed that (92.35%) their awareness level on reforms and regulation has increase after attending the GIMs. Only 7.65% opined in the negative (Table 8).

Table 8		
Awareness Level Increase	Number	% age
Yes	555	92.35
No	46	7.65
Total	601	100

Table 9		
Step Taken	Number	% age
Started using CFLs lights and other energy efficient equipments	547	91.01
Took steps to stop theft of electricity	182	30.28
Registration of Complaints	83	13.81
Helped friends/family members in registering and resolving complaints	228	37.94
Participated in a public meeting organized by government regulatory body or utility	0	0.00
Other	6	1.00

In continuation of the above question as mentioned, around 91.01 percent respondents have started either using for self or advocating for CFL bulbs as a step to ensure energy conservation. 30.28 percent respondents have expressed that they either helped or motivated in curbing power theft after attending the GIMs. 13.81 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. 37.94 percent respondents took the initiative to help others. However, none of the respondents took the initiative to participate in meetings. Thus, there is a need to continue engaging with the consumers and build their awareness/confidence to take part in meetings and be able to express their opinion/problems.

Table 10		
Participate in GIMs	Number	% age
Yes	596	99.17
No	5	0.83
Total	601	100

An overwhelming majority (99.17 percent) 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 (0.83 percent) said that they will not like to attend the GIMs -- (Table 10).

Table 11		
Improved relationship	Number	% age
Yes	321	53.41
No	280	46.59
total	601	100

The survey also attempted to understand whether the interaction between consumers & utility officials during the project activities have helped in improving relationships. 53% of the respondents were of the opinion that such meetings have helped in improving the relations between consumers and the utilities (Table 11). They added that owing to the interactions they had during such meetings, it has become easier for them to approach and further engage with the relevant officials, which otherwise was difficult.

REGULATORY REFORMS IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR

In India regulatory reforms was started by adoption of the Regulatory Commission Act in 1998. In West Bengal the reform process started in 1999 with the formation of the West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission was put in place. But even after 10 years general consumers were not at all aware about the reform process. This ignorance was reflected in the findings of our base line survey which showed that only 2 % people were aware the regulatory reforms.

Table 12		
Key function of WBERC	Number	%age
Tariff Determine	200	33.28
Grant License	54	8.99
To regulate the sale/purchase of power at the state level	44	7.32
All	255	42.43
Do Not Know	48	7.99
Total	601	100

The final Consumer Survey tried to take stock of whether the scenario had changed after the RESA project activities in the specific territories. The findings are encouraging. 36.61% of the respondents in the RESA territories of West Bengal are now aware of the ongoing reform process (Table 17). The consumers are now aware that West Bengal State Electricity Board has been unbundled and the sector is catered to by three separate companies. They also know that the New Electricity Act 2003 has been enacted and that the regulatory commission has prepared regulations to ensure efficient performance of the sector and also to cater to consumer needs. The survey found that 87.85% of the respondents are aware about the location of the WBERC office.

In comparison to a figure of 8% during the consumer base line survey, 42.43 % of the total respondents correctly identified the functions of the regulatory commission. 33.28 percent of the total respondents opined that tariff determination is one of the key functions of WBERC, whereas 8.99 percent rated granting of license and another 7.32 percent rated regulating of sale and purchase of power as the core functions of the commission. There were 32.43 percent respondents, who were of the opinion that all the above three were the key functions of WBERC. Thus, the data reveals that a majority of consumers are aware of the existence and key functions of WBERC.

Table 13

Dist Co . Name	Number	% age
DPSC	4	0.67
WBSEDCL	531	88.35
CESC	53	8.82
DPL	2	0.33
Do Not Know	11	1.83
Total	601	100.00

On being asked, whether the consumers were aware of the distribution company that provides them the power, close to 88.35 percent respondents mentioned that WBSEDCL supplies electricity to them .(Table 13)

Table 14		
Where to file first Complaint	Number	% age
WBERC	68	11.31
Ombudsman	54	8.99
CGRO	449	74.71
None	16	2.66
Do Not Know	14	2.33

On the issue of Grievance Redressal Mechanism, 74.71% correctly pointed out that for any complaint to get redressed, complaint should be registered at Circle Grievance Redressal Office - CGRO (Table 14)

On being asked about the next step to take if one is not satisfied with the decision of CGRO 73.71 % of respondents correctly answered and pointed out that they have to submit a written complaint/appeal to the ombudsman against the decision of the CGRO. (Table 15)

Table 15		
Where to file complaint if not satisfied with CGRO Decision	Number	% age
WBERC	77	12.81
Ombudsman	443	73.71
CGRO	26	4.33
None	28	4.66
Do Not Know	27	4.49
Total	601	100.00

Table 16		
More Energy Consumed	Number	% age
Ordinary Bulb	559	93.01
CFL	40	6.66
Both consume the same energy	2	0.33
Total	601	100

On the issue of energy conservation, 99% of respondents correctly pointed out that CFL is more energy efficient than ordinary incandescent bulb, though a negligible percent

(.33%) of the total respondent opined there view that both the elements consume same amount of energy. (Table16).

Table 17		
Aware about E. Act, 2003	Number	% age
Yes	495	82.36
No	106	17.64
Total	601	100

Effectiveness of the GIM would be reflected in the analysis. In a very general question to gauge the perception of consumers, 93.01% respondents have expressed that through ordinary bulb, more energy is consumed, whereas there are 6.66% respondents , who have said that CFL bulbs consumes more energy, though 0.33% of the respondents also told that both consume same energy (Table 16). Table 17 shows responses received on awareness level of respondents on Electricity Act 2003. 82.36 of them said that they are aware of its existence.

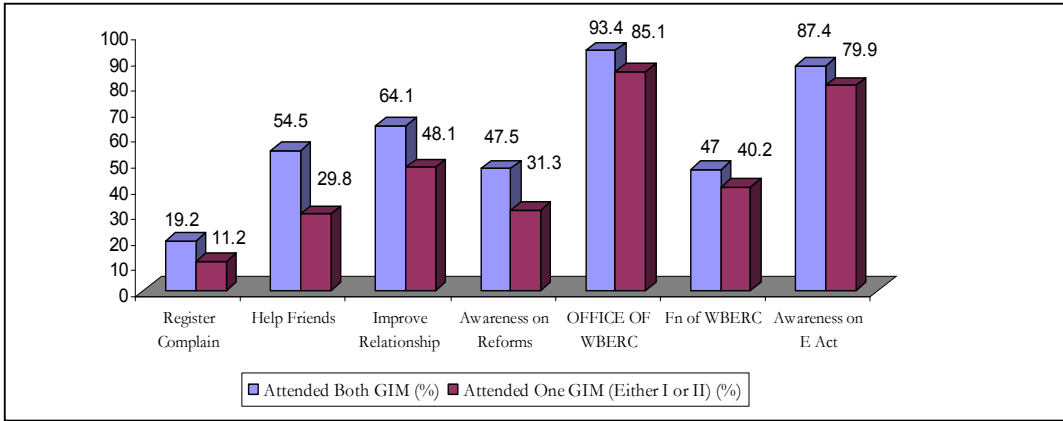
CHANGE IN CONSUMER PERCEPTION

In the last two years, there has been an encouraging enhancement in terms of the level of awareness and overall understanding of consumers in the RESA territories, as already highlighted in the earlier part of the document. The table below gives a comparative picture of some of the parameters pre (during Base Line Survey) & post (Final Consumer Survey) the RESA activities amongst the 650- 700 consumers that were targeted. It gives a comprehensive comparison between the picture that was there around two years back and that of now, at the end of the project.

Table 17		
Consumer Perception on:	Awareness level during Base Line Survey	Awareness level at the time of Final Consumer Survey
Awareness on Regulatory Reform Process	9%	36.61%
Awareness on existence and role of Regulatory Commission	2%	42.43%

The above difference clearly depicts the improvement in the level of understanding of consumers after the completion of project activities. 36.61% percent of the consumers surveyed confirmed that they are now aware of the reforms in comparison to only 9% as found during the base line survey. Only 2% people were aware about the role & functions of the Electricity Regulatory Commission but after the conclusion of the grassroots activities as part of the RESA project, 42.43% reported that they are aware of the existence and role of the regulatory commission.

The graph below gives a comprehensive idea about how the project activities and specifically GIMs, have helped and influenced consumers to take action on different aspects pertaining to the electricity sector.



SECTION: IV

SUCCESS STORIES AND THE IMPACT OF RESA PROJECT

It can be safely claimed that the project has been able to effect an encouraging and perceptible improvement in the overall capacities of consumers regarding power sector reforms and related issues. It may be envisaged that with such trends, consumers can play a very pivotal role in the regulatory reform process in the times to come, provided such programmes continue in future.

Some of the proactive steps taken by consumers and local partners towards redressal of grievances after attending the GIM have been captured here. These actions, as opined by them, was principally spurred and facilitated by what they learnt during the first phase of the GIMs.

1. Kousik Mondal was one of the participants at the GIM-I at Duttaphulia, Nadia. He had a problem in the form of having a meter with broken seal. Right after attending the GIM, he approached the group electricity office to register his complain regarding the same. As reported by him, the officials initially refused to receive his written complaint. However, when he mentioned that he would approach the higher authorities, viz. the GRO, his complaint was registered by the station manager. Thereafter his complaint was dealt with promptly and a registered electrician was sent to his house to re-seal the meter within three days form the date of the complaint.
2. Md. Asraf Hossein participated in the first phase of the GIMs organised at Baharampur, Murshibad. He helped his friend register a complaint at the local group electricity supply office. His friend Md. Mahidur meter was damaged and following that, the utility sent a bill amounting to Rs. 480/-, which was unusually high in comparison to average billing amount i.e. Rs. 75/-. On his friend's advice he approached the local supply office and tried lodging a complaint with them. In this case again the supply office initially refused to officially accept his complaint and did so only when told that the consumer will approach the GRO otherwise. Following that, a new meter was installed at his premises by the supply office within a month.
3. Anil Khamrui, Panchyat Pradhan of Harishpur Gram Panchayat, Howrah district, had participated at one of the block level GIMs during Phase I. Having attended the meeting, Khamrui called for a Gram Sabha meeting to share his experience and knowledge with other members of his village. On a different occasion, when the transformer located in the village broke down, Khamrui took the relevant step and registered a written complaint with the local station manager. Because of the initiative taken by Khamrui, a new transformer was installed within 72 hours of registering of the complaint. He was happy to note that because of the experience gained during the RESA meetings he was able to take the relevant step and ensure fast redressal of his complaint which was rather uncommon in their locality.
4. Hanif Alam, who is a permanent resident of Hotal Liluabari village of Islampur, in the district of Uttar Dinajpur, had participated in both the GIMs organised by Islampur Ramkrishnapally Rural Welfare Society at Islampur. He said that after learning about the benefits of energy saving equipments from the GIMs, he had changed over to CFL in place of incandescent bulb and now he is witnessing a

remarkable change in his electricity bill. Following that he encouraged his neighbours and friends to do the same and claimed that around 20 household followed his advice to switch over to CFL. He added that he has also helped friends to approach the right people in the utility office to have their meter related problems attended to.

5. Kulgachi is one of the less developed villages in the Nadia district where the economy is predominantly dependent on agricultural activities. Number of domestic consumers in the area is not very significant. The most common connection is agricultural. The villagers however faced constant problems irrigating their fields since the transformer installed would go down very frequently and that would mean dysfunctional agricultural pumps for many days until repair was undertaken, which usually took rather long time periods.

Given thus, CUTS along with Sreema Mahila Samity organised grassroots interface meetings in the area. Feroz Mondal, with two other residents of Kulgachi village had come for one such meeting. Taking advantage of the fact that the senior station superintendent of WBSEDCL, Dilip Kumar Pal was present at the meeting, they approached him and told him about the irregularity in service that they are facing. Pal advised the villagers to file a written complaint following the steps discussed during the grassroots meeting and hand over a copy of the same to him. Villagers of Kulgachi did exactly what CUTS and Pal had told them. Following this the transformer got repaired within seven days of lodging the complaint.

6. Azad Hossain, a permanent resident of Galimpur Village, Motiharpur Gram Panchayat, of Chanchal Block-I, had a long standing issue with regards to the industrial connection that he had applied for his husking mill. He had first approached the Chanchal Group Electricity Supply for his connection and deposited an amount of Rs.155,893/- as quotation on 16.12.2008, as per inspection and estimates submitted by the staff of the local office. His connection needed extension of HT line and installation of a 25 KVA transformer. The local supply office issued a work order on 30.01.09 and an erection order on 10.02.09. However no work was started.

The RESA activities had already started in the Chanchal Block of Malda by that time. The first phase of the Grassroots Interface Meetings was organised on 30.11.08 by Chanchal Janakalyan Samity, the RESA district partner for Malda. Azad Hossain came to know of the activities under the project through the Samity and got in touch with them and explained his case. They suggested him to talk to the station manager and he accordingly did that. He was however informed that no transformer was available at that point in time. His case therefore, remained pending.

The next set of developments emerged when the local station manager received an objection from local people on 24. 09. 09, to the effect that the land designated by Azad for the transformer, was not his own. The station manager accordingly informed Azad through a letter issued on 15.10.09. The Assistant Engineer (A.E) asked him to bring a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the *Pradhan* of Motiharpur Gram Panchayat. The Pradhan however declined saying that this was a responsibility of the Block Land and Land Revenue Office (BLRO), Chanchal I. Azad then took up the case and had the land plot under discussion surveyed by an *Amin* registered with the BLRO office and submitted the Survey Report on 29.10. 09. The report clearly established the fact that the land plot was indeed owned by him.

Unfortunately the prompt action from his side failed to encourage a similar response from the officials of the Chanchal Group Electricity Supply Office. Azad then approached Chanchal Janakalyan Samity again and asked for their help & support. With their assistance and information provided by them, Azad lodged a formal complaint to the Circle Grievance Redressal Officer (CGRO), Malda Distribution Circle Office of the West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd. (WBSEDCL), Rathbari, Malda on 09-11-2009. He cited the episodes of continuous and intentional harassment that he has faced and also the huge financial loss he had to shoulder since he had loaned a considerable amount of money (to the tune of Rs 300,000) for starting the husking mill which could not take off due to non-availability of electric connection. He demanded compensation for this loss of his. Not wanting to take his chances he asked for the contacts of relevant officials from Chanchal Janakalyan Samity and also sent copies of this complaint to the Chairman, WBSEDCL., Salt lake City, Kolkata, the Zonal Manager, WBSEDCL, Berhampur Zonal Distribution Office, Murshidabad; the Circle Manager WBSEDCL, Malda Distribution Circle and the Divisional Manager, WBSEDCL, Malda Distribution Circle, with relevant documents.

This led to a prompt action from the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Cell of WBSEDCL at the headquarters, Kolkata. The Additional Chief Engineer, CRM Cell, WBSEDCL, in his letter dated 16.11.09, instructed the Additional Chief Engineer and Zonal Manager, Berhampur Distribution Zone, WBSEDCL to investigate the matter promptly and solve the issue at the earliest. A hearing was called by the CGRO, Malda (D) Circle on 01-12-2009, where he openly criticized the indifferent attitudes of A.E. Chanchal Sub-Division and instructed him to adopt proper measures for prompt connection of the husking mill and assured Mr. Azad Hossain to send his demand for financial compensation to the higher authority (Ombudsman). Following this, the local utility staff took the steps to provide service connection on 14.12.09 and found that his connection wiring was incomplete. Azad was requested to complete the wiring and submit a test report, which he promptly did by 16.12.09. Finally his connection was effected on 18.12.09.

The hearing at the Ombudsman's office was held on 29.03.10 with both Azad and WBSEDCL officials participating. The Ombudsman, P. K. Chakrabarti, passed an order that there was a clear case of delay and non-adherence to WBERC regulations on part of the licensee and directed that WBSEDCL should pay an amount of Rs. 77,500/- @Rs 500 per day for a total delay of 155 days in providing Azad with the electricity connection.

7. Ratnadi, a small village in the Joypur Block of Purulia was provided electricity connection in 2007. During the month of July, 2008 the transformer was damaged for unknown reasons and as a result, the village did not have access to electricity. The villagers lodged their complaint at the local electric supply office but no action was taken by the local office for nearly eight to ten months.

Santosh Mahato, a resident of the nearby village named Kanthaltar attended one of the grassroots interface meeting organised by CUTS and Purulia District Agrabami Mahila O Shishu Mangal Samity under the RESA project. Having attended the meeting, he interacted with the villagers of the Ratnadi village and educated them about the grievance redressal mechanism and encouraged them to file their

complaint. Villagers of Ratnadi accordingly submitted their complaint to the CGRO at the district level and got their old transformer replaced by a new one within two months.

Miscellaneous outcome:

Other than the case studies mentioned above, a large number of consumers in various districts of WB, have become conscious about their responsibility/role of energy conservation and have shifted to using CFL lamps instead of incandescent lamps. The above mentioned case studies clearly indicate that most of the district partners under the RESA project have emerged as capable organisations to handle issues of consumer protection and guidance, as is evident from the case. Their sincere involvement in the RESA project has paid off and they have been able to guide consumers to effective redressal. This aptly demonstrates that consumers and civil society when appropriately capacitated and informed can ensure that consumers' get what they pay for. The RESA initiative has evidently made a mark and in all possibilities, will continue to do so.

Section: V

WAY FORWARD

RESA has been a project that has shown a lot of promise and encouraging response. It has effectively reached out to the grassroots consumers on an issue that was hitherto touted as “too technical” for them. It was the first initiative that allowed grassroots CSOs to work on power sector related issues. The project has effectively put in place ten civil society organisations at the grassroots who are now capacitated on power sector issues and hence are in a position to undertake consumer assistance & advocacy related activities. The unanimous demand from the consumers at the grassroots for more of such reach out initiatives conclusively indicates that project has immense potential for replication and scaling up further.

Almost all the consumers that participated in the GIMs opined that such awareness meetings need to be organised at all possible levels - district, block & Panchayat on more regular basis. They also added that some kind of an assistance cell at the grassroots that could guide consumers on a more long term basis would be needed to continue what RESA has started. In a nut shell there is a palpable need and potential for the initiative to continue and spread. The challenge will be to find ways to institutionalise the platform created by RESA for consumer advocacy and assistance so that the efforts continue much beyond the scope of the project.

Appendix - Questionnaire

A PILOT PROJECT ON CAPACITY BUILDING ON ELECTRICITY REFORMS IN BANGLADESH, INDIA AND NEPAL (RESA PROJECT)

FINAL CONSUMER SURVEY

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNDERTAKING THE SURVEY

WEST BENGAL



DECLARATION

The main objective of this consumer survey is to assess the improvement in the level of consumer awareness on regulatory issues in the power sector. The information provided by consumers would be used for research purposes only. View/opinions expressed by a respondent would not be challenged by any officer/authority at any stage. Consumers are therefore requested to share their views in a frank manner.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENTS

Consumer's Name	
Consumer's address and contact details (please mention phone and email id, if available)	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> Phone Email: </div>
Gender of the respondent	1. Male <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Education Status of the respondent	1. Uneducated <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Educated but primary or below <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Between primary and high school <input type="checkbox"/> 4. High school or above <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Highly qualified (Degree, Diploma, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/>
Category of the respondent (please tick only one)	1. Unconnected/no connection <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Domestic/household <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Other (Pl specify)_____

Each question below has various options. We request you to provide your response by selecting the most appropriate option. Please select **only one** response by putting a **[X]**.

SECTION 1: GRASSROOTS INTERFACE MEETINGS

1. Did you participate in the consumer baseline survey conducted at the start of the project?
 - a) Yes []
 - b) No []

2. Which of the following meetings did you attend?
 - a) GIM – Phase I []
 - b) GIM – Phase II []
 - c) Both []
 - d) None of the above []

If answer is d, then proceed to Section II

3. What factors motivated you to participate in the meeting?
 - a) Finding answers to systemic problems related to electricity sector []
 - b) Knowing more about electricity reforms and regulatory process []
 - c) Using the opportunity to engage with officials from utility companies []
 - d) Any other (please specify) []

 4. How useful were the GIM/sub GIM you attended in your district?
 - a) Very Useful []
 - b) Useful []
 - c) Satisfactory []
 - d) Not Useful []

 - 5 (I) Which session did you find most interesting and useful? Why?
 - a) Grievance redressal mechanism []
 - b) Curbing power theft and energy conservation []
 - c) Awareness on energy reforms and regulation []
- 5(II) Please explain your answer.
- 6(I) Was the experience gained during the meeting helpful in resolving the problems that you were facing?
 - a) Extremely helpful []
 - b) Helpful []
 - c) Not helpful []

6(II) Please explain your answer.

7. (I) Did the local partner support you in seeking redressal to problems shared during the GIM?

- a) Yes
- b) No

7(II) If yes or no, please illustrate in detail.

8. Did your awareness level on reforms and regulation has increase after the meetings?

- a) Yes
- b) No

9. What steps did you take after attending the meetings? (Please tick all relevant)

- a) Started using CFLs lights and other energy efficient equipments
- b) Took steps to stop theft of electricity
- c) Took steps to register a complaint and ensured that the same was redressed
- d) Helped your friends/family members in registering and resolving complaints
- e) Participated in a public meeting organised by govt, regulatory body or utility
- f) Any other (Pl specify) _____

10(I) Would you like to attend such meetings in future?

- a) Yes
- b) No

10 (II) Please explain your answer.

11 (I) Has your relationship with the utility officers improved given the interactions during the meetings?

- a) Yes
- b) No

11(II) Please explain your answer.

SECTION 2: REGULATORY REFORMS IN ELECTRICITY SECTOR

1. Are you aware of the ongoing reform process in the electricity sector?

- a) Yes []
- b) No []

If Yes, please describe the reforms being undertaken by the Government?

2. In which city is the office of West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission (WBERC) situated?

- a) Kolkata []
- b) Malda []
- c) Howrah []
- d) Siliguri []

3. Out of the functions mentioned below, identify the key functions of WBERC?

- a) to determine the tariff for electricity []
- b) to grant license []
- c) to regulate the sale/purchase of power at the state level []
- d) all the above []

4. Which distribution company supplies electricity in your area?

- a) Dishergarh Power Supply Corporation (DPSC). []
- b) West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd.(WBSEDCL) []
- c) Calcutta Electricity Supply Corporation Ltd (CESC) []
- d) Durgapur Project Ltd.(DPL) []

5. If a consumer's complaint is not redressed properly by the local office of the utility, then according to you, where should he/she file an application for the redressal of his complaint?

- a) West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission []
- b) Electricity Ombudsman []
- c) Complaint Redressal Forum/Officer (CGRO) []
- d) None of the above []

6. If a consumer is not satisfied with the decision of the Complaint Redressal Forum, to which authority should he/she file an appeal?

- a) West Bengal Electricity Regulatory Commission []
- b) Electricity Ombudsman []
- c) Complaint Redressal Forum []
- d) None of the above []

7. According to you, which of the following equipments consumes more energy?

- a) Ordinary bulb []
- b) CFL bulbs []
- c) Both consume same energy []

8. Are you aware that as per the Electricity Act, 2003, theft of power is a non-bailable offence?

- a) Yes []
- b) No []

Name of the interviewer

Organisation (Name, Address and contact details)

Date _____

Signature _____