

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

NEPAL

Synthesis Report

Grassroots Interface Meeting I (GIM I)

November 2008 – January 2009



South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment
A partnership for capacity building in the context of liberalisation and globalisation

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1. Background

CUTS Centre for Competition, Investment & Economic Regulation (CUTS C-CIER) in collaboration with partner organisations in Bangladesh, India and Nepal has implemented ‘A pilot project on capacity building on electricity reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal (RESA Project)’. This project is being supported by Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (SAWTEE) along with partner community-based organisations (CBOs) at the local level is implementing the project in Nepal. The partner CBOs are located in 10 different districts of the country namely Ilam, Sunsari, Morang, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Parsa, Rupandehi, Palpa, Banke and Dailekh (Refer to Annexure I -- Location of partner CBOs).

Grassroots interface meetings (GIMs) are designed as part of the project activities under the project to reach out to the electricity consumers at the grassroots level. The meetings are to be conducted in two phases in each of the project territories. A total of nine first phase GIMs were organised in the project districts.

2. Objectives

The objective of the first phase of the GIM is to make the consumers aware of the role that they need to play in the electricity regulatory reforms. The meetings aimed at transferring key advocacy skills to the consumers and other related stakeholders such as the legislatives from the concerned areas. As a result, it is expected that the consumers would be empowered to intervene effectively in the electricity reform process and be able to raise their voice for the redressal of their electricity related problems.

Given that the quality of electricity service is poor and consumers are facing large number of problems related to the electricity service delivery, the meetings also provided the platform to put forth their systematic problems in front of the utility officials. The meeting helped in identifying common consumer problems prevailing at the local level so as to bring them to the authorities at the central level.

3. Participants

Participants in each of the meeting included electricity consumers from different categories, personnel from the electricity utility, representatives from polity, journalists and representatives from various governmental and non-governmental organisations.

4. Scope

The meetings focused on the three important issues i.e. electricity reform process and the role of consumers; complaint redressal mechanism; and role of consumers in energy conservation and reduction of power theft.

5. Format of the GIM

The half days meetings were divided into an inaugural session, three technical sessions and a closing session. The inaugural session was of half an hour duration. The first two technical sessions were of 45 minutes each. The last technical session was of one hour and ten minutes

duration. Time was also allotted for the floor discussion in each of the technical sessions. Similarly, the closing session was allotted 20 minutes (Refer to Annexure II for the agenda).

6. Resource persons

A total of three experts were involved in the GIMs for undertaking three different sessions in each of the meetings (Refer to Annexure III -- List of Resource persons). In each of the meetings, SAWTEE officials served as the resource person in the first technical session. In the second technical session, Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Chief of the respective districts actively participated in the deliberations. While in the third technical session, personnel from the local CBO acted as the resource person.

7. Proceedings and discussions

7.1 GIM Ilam

<i>Local coordination by:</i>	<i>Ilam chamber of commerce and industry, Ilam</i>
<i>Participants:</i>	<i>55 Participants</i>
<i>Participation from SAWTEE:</i>	<i>Asish Subedi, Programme Associate</i>
<i>Date and venue:</i>	<i>29 Nov 2008, Chamber Hall, Ilam</i>

7.1.1 Inaugural session

Yuddha Prasad Vaidhya, Founding President, Ilam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, inaugurated the programme.

Himalaya Karmacharya, President, Ilam Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the start of the meeting, welcomed the guest speakers and the participants. He pointed out various electricity related problems that are being faced by consumers. Karmacharya emphasised the importance and the need of a proactive role to be played by consumers and civil society organisations in order to hold the authorities accountable and improve the service. He added that organising GIMs would certainly help in achieving the goal.

Asish Subedi, Programme Associate, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics & Environment (SAWTEE) followed Karmacharya in elaborating the RESA project and its activities in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Sharing the findings of the baseline consumer survey conducted during April-May 2008, he suggested the participants to keep themselves abreast of the electricity sector and the associated reform agendas. He also highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIMs. Finally, he thanked the participants for taking keen interest in the meeting

Vaidhya acknowledged the efforts of CUTS and SAWTEE in organising the GIMs. He said that it was a good opportunity for the consumers to put forth their problems to the NEA Chief. He further added that the active participation of various stakeholders would definitely help in identifying and resolving problems of electricity consumers in the district.

7.1.2 Session I: Electricity Reform Process and Role of Consumers

Asish Subedi started the session by highlighting the major electricity related problems in the nation. He shed light on the historical evolution of electricity reform process in Nepal through different legislative and institutional measures. He highlighted the current institutional set up that governs the power sector in the country. **Subedi** further elaborated that consumers can play

important role to accelerate the reform process and make the reform outcomes more beneficial. He also highlighted the possible benefits of the reform process to the consumers and why the consumers should participate in ensuring effective implementation of reforms in the electricity sector in Nepal.

Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation. Following were the key points that emerged out of the discussion:

- Need for consumer education and awareness on electricity issues
- Need for accelerated power sector reform process

7.1.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Rajkumar Raman, Chief, NEA Ilam Distribution Centre, started the session by giving general information on the NEA, Ilam Distribution Centre. He shed light on the distribution system and other technical aspects of the centre. He explained the major functions of the Ilam distribution centre and other service centres in different parts of the district. Furthermore, he explained the nature of complaints and grievances of the local electricity consumers. He also explained the mechanism and procedure to handle such grievances and complaints.



Raman during his presentation

Towards the end he put forth some of the expectations of the NEA from its consumers which included requests for the timely payments of the electricity bills, use of energy efficient devices like Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL). He also requested consumer for avoiding and discouraging power theft.

Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation. Following are the main points of discussion:

- Need for timely billing and bill counters at the grassroots level
- Need for controlling frequent voltage fluctuation
- Need for affordable electricity tariff rates

7.1.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Himalaya Karmacharya explained the role that consumers can play in energy conservation and in reducing power theft. He started the presentation highlighting the importance of energy conservation in the context of Nepal. He explained the use of energy efficient devices such as CFL and electronic choke that can reduce electricity consumption significantly. He also explained the environmental benefits likely to result from energy conservation. Furthermore, Karmacharya also stated power theft as a serious social crime. He made it clear to the participants that the economic burden of the power theft to the utility is ultimately shifted onto the consumer. Hence, he asked the consumers to play a proactive role in curbing the power theft in their locality. He also highlighted the legal punishments associated with the pilferage.

Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation. Following are the main points of discussion:

- Cost effectiveness of CFL bulb and its availability in the local market
- Power theft and need for collective efforts to stop it

7.1.5 Closing session

The prominent personalities present in the programme spoke on the various issues in electricity service delivery that are important to the consumers. They asked the organisers to frequently organise such programmes that can help consumers raise their problems.

7.1.6 Major consumer problems

- Voltage fluctuation
- Electricity tariff too high for consumers of low economic standard
- Bill counter to be established at grassroots level
- Disconnection of service without prior notice
- Low level of electrification in the rural areas
- Irregularity of the meter reader
- Low level of interaction between the NEA and the consumers
- Demand exceeding the transformer capacity
- Low level of redressal of consumer concerns

7.2 GIM Morang

Local coordination by:

Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Morang

Participants:

75 Participants

Participation from SAWTEE:

Asish Subedi, Programme Associate

Date and venue:

2 Dec 2008, Morang Merchant Association Hall, Biratnagar, Morang

7.2.1 Inaugural session

Honourable Lalbabu Pandit and Honourable Motilal Dugad, Members, Constituent Assembly jointly inaugurated the programme by lighting a traditional oil lamp.

Inauguration followed the welcome speech by **Ramesh Chandra Poudel, Member, Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights Nepal, Morang**. **Asish Subedi** highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

7.2.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Asish Subedi acted as the resource person for the session. Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Current state of acute power failure resulted due to government's unclear and inappropriate policy instruments

- Government's inability to fund the new generation projects and inability to create an investment friendly environment for the private sector
- Possibility of power generation through public private partnership
- Unbundling the NEA and bringing its monopoly to an end
- Need for consumer awareness to have checks and balances in the sector

7.2.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Sachchidananda Yadav, Chief, NEA Biratnagar Distribution Centre enriched the deliberation during the session.

Consumers put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Need for uninterrupted power supply in places like hospitals
- Electricity tariff too high as compared to the income of the people
- Weak mechanism of consumer complaints and grievances handling in the NEA despite the prevalence of numerous problems
- Need for subsidy in the connection charge and the meter to the low income groups
- Need for mobile meter to the agricultural consumers

7.2.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Ramesh Chandra Poudel explained the role that consumers can play in conserving energy and reducing the power theft in this session.



Ramesh Chandra Poudel during his presentation

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Need for raising awareness about energy efficient appliances
- Need for controlling the power theft

7.2.5 Closing session

Prominent personalities present in the programme put forth their views during this session. **Honourable Lalbabau Pandit** said that there is a need for timely reforms in the power sector of Nepal. **Honourable Motilal Dugad** stressed the need for private sector involvement in the power generation. They expressed their commitment to raise the issues of electricity consumers in the assembly. Speaking during the session were **Mahesh Juju, President, Morang Merchant Association, Meena Joshi, President, Nepal Red Cross Society, Morang and Navin Poudel, District Member, Unified Communist Party of Nepal, Maoist**. Speakers stressed the need for organising such meetings that can outline the problems and issues that are important to the general people.

7.2.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply (load-shedding)
- High rate of tariff
- Low level of consumer participation in the electricity sector decision-making level
- Power theft; involvement of locals and NEA personnel
- Power cut without notice
- Perilous state of electricity poles
- Low voltage with fluctuation
- No compensation for the loss of appliances due to voltage fluctuation
- Poor response to the consumers from the NEA and delay in solving consumer problems
- Irregularity of the meter reader
- Bill payment counters at far off places
- Electricity line sharing pole with telephone and cable line
- NEA staff asking for 'tea expenses' when called by the locals
- Billing procedure and information given in the bill difficult for the consumers to understand
- Lack of consumer education

7.3 GIM Sunsari

Local coordination by:

Consumer forum Nepal, Sunsari

Participants:

45 Participants

Participation from SAWTEE:

Asish Subedi, Programme Associate

Date and venue:

29 Nov 2008, Chamber Hall, Ilam

7.3.1 Inaugural session

Dr. Purnachandra Karmacharya, Vice Chancellor, B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Science inaugurated the programme by lighting a traditional oil lamp.

Bhawani Dhakal, Chairman, Consumer forum Nepal, Sunsari delivered the welcome speech while **Asish Subedi** highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

Speaking as the Chair, **Dr. Karmacharya** asked the consumers to refrain from wasting energy.

7.3.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Asish Subedi acted as the resource person for the session. Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Inconsistent legal provisions creating hindrances in the electricity reform process
- Need for accelerated power sector reform process with active involvement of the people
- Tendency of illegal licence holding seen as the organised crime
- Low level of security and prolonged political unrest seen as the hindrances to attract private investment in the power sector

7.3.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Shyam Kumar Yadav, Chief, NEA Itahari Branch; Ram Pokharel, Chief, NEA Dharan Branch and Roshan Agrawal, Chief, NEA Dhankuta Branch jointly made presentation in this session.

Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation. Following are the main points of discussion:

- Frequent defects seen in the meter
- Need for controlling frequent voltage fluctuation
- Power theft prevailing in the place
- Shortage of power



L-R: Agrawal, Yadav, Pokharel and Dhakal

7.3.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Bhawani Dhakal served as the resource person for this session. Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Power theft and need for collective efforts to stop it
- Need for strong implementation of electricity theft control act
- Need for a campaign to encourage energy efficient devices like CFL

7.3.5 Closing session

The prominent personalities present in the programme spoke on the various issues in electricity service delivery in this session.

7.3.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply with Voltage fluctuation
- Electricity tariff too high for consumers of low economic standard
- NEA not seen serious in solving consumer problems
- Line cut off without prior notice
- Unfriendly behaviors of NEA officials and staffs
- Frequent problems seen in the meter
- NEA biased in distributing new lines to certain influential people only
- Electricity lines being touched by the trees and branches posing serious security threat
- Low level of programmes for consumer awareness
- People not aware of their rights and duties
- Pathetic condition of the electricity poles
- Unsafe and ugly looking network of electricity wires
- Irregularity of the meter reader
- Time consuming and tiresome bill payment system

7.4 GIM Palpa

Local coordination by:

Community Radio Madan Pokhara, Palpa

Participants:

50 Participants

Participation from SAWTEE:

Asish Subedi, Programme Associate

Date and venue:

5 Dec 2008, Tansen Municipality Hall, Tansen, Palpa

7.4.1 Inaugural session

The meeting was formally inaugurated by **Basudev Aryal, President, Palpa District Civil Society** by lighting a traditional oil lamp.

Gunakar Aryal, Station Manager, Community Radio Madan Pokhara, Palpa delivered the welcome speech. **Asish Subedi** highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

7.4.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Asish Subedi acted as the resource person for the session. Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Legal and institutional framework that govern Nepali power sector
- Power crisis and government's failure to foresee the situation
- Consumers role to effectively intervene for the tangible reform in the sector

7.4.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Surendra Kumar Agrahari, Chief, NEA Palpa Distribution Centre made presentation in this session.

Consumers put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Prevalence of numerous electricity related problems
- NEA's incapability to discharge its duty
- Consumers not aware of their legal rights
- Electricity tariff too high as compared to the income of the people



Agrahari, second from the left, making note of consumer concerns

7.4.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Radha Poudyal, Journalist, Radio Madan Pokhara served as the resource person in this session.

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Need for raising awareness about energy efficient appliances
- Need for joint effort from the people and administration for controlling the power theft

7.4.5 Closing session

Local prominent personalities present in the programme spoke on the different aspects of the programme and stressed the need for organising such programmes on a regular basis.

7.4.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply
- High rate of tariff
- Cases of cattle being electrocuted by the transmission line
- Power theft; involvement of locals and NEA personnel
- Power cut without notice
- Perilous state of electricity poles
- Low voltage with fluctuation causing damage to appliances
- No compensation for the loss of appliances due to voltage fluctuation
- Irregularity of meter reader
- Field workers of NEA not serious to discharge their duties
- Fee counters at far off places

7.5 GIM Rupandehi

Local coordination by:

Participants:

Participation from SAWTEE:

Date and venue:

Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Rupandehi

55 Participants

Asish Subedi, Programme Associate

6 Dec 2008, Municipality Hall, Butwal, Rupandehi

7.5.1 Inaugural session

Krishna Prasad Jaisi, Chief Executive Officer, Butwal Municipality, inaugurated the programme by lighting a candle.

Narbu Lama, President, Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Rupandehi at the start welcomed the guest speakers and the participants.

Asish Subedi highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.



L-R: Bhattarai, Subedi and Jaisi

Jaisi thanked the organisers for organising the meeting on such a relevant and important theme. He said that the active participation of various stakeholders would definitely help in identifying and resolving problems of electricity consumers in the district.

7.5.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Asish Subedi made his presentation on the topic. Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Unclear and inappropriate policy instruments to harness available hydro power potential
- Need for public private partnership in power generation
- Consumers unaware about the reform process

7.5.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Bhanu Bhakta Bhattarai, Chief, NEA Butwal Distribution Centre made his presentation on the topic.

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Inadequate power supply to households and industrial sector
- Consumers not informed about the power cuts in advance
- Safety hazards to the people from the slanting electricity wires
- Urban centric NEA service centres, especially bill counters, posing problems to consumers in the rural areas

7.5.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Narbu Lama explained the role that consumers can play in energy conservation and reducing power theft in this session.

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Huge wastage of power in the NEA and other government offices
- Need for proactive consumer role to curb the power theft

7.5.5 Closing session

The programme was formally brought to an end with the concluding remarks from the prominent personalities present in the programme. **Binod Gautam and Kesharmani Aryal, Senior Advocates** and the rapporteurs of the programme commented on the programme. **Bishnu Khanal, Senior Officer, Butwal Municipality, Subash Sitaula, Chief, Industrial estate management limited and representatives of three political parties** pointed the programme as a timely endeavour to sort out problems of electricity consumers. They asked the organisers to frequently organise such programmes that can help consumers ease their problems.

7.5.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply
- No adequate measures taken by local NEA personal to reduce power theft
- No advanced notice for power cuts
- Low voltage with unacceptable fluctuations

- Irregularities during getting new connection and changing meter
- Bill payment counters at far off places
- Delays in solving consumer problems
- Poor infrastructure used for distribution of electricity
- Billing procedure and information given in the bill difficult for the consumers to understand
- Lack of events/programmes for consumer education

7.6 GIM Banke

Local coordination by: Banke UNESCO club, Banke
Participants: 55 Participants
Participation from SAWTEE: Asish Subedi, Programme Associate
Date and venue: 8 Dec 2008, Hotel Vinayak, Nepalgunj, Banke

7.6.1 Inaugural session

The programme was inaugurated by **Chandra Prasad Timilsena, Section Officer, General Administration Office, Banke** by lighting a candle.

Ravi Tuladhar, Acting President, Banke UNESCO club welcomed the guest speakers and the participants.

Asish Subedi highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

Timilsena wished for the success of the meeting and thanked the organisers for organising discussion on such a relevant and important theme.

7.6.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Asish Subedi made his presentation on the topic in this session. Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Possibilities for harnessing Nepal's water resource to generate electricity vis-à-vis undergoing power sector reform process in Nepal
- Need for consumer education to effectively intervene in the reform process



Women participants actively taking part in the discussion

7.6.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Anirudra Prasad Yadav, Chief, NEA Nepalgunj Distribution Centre and Birendra Kumar Jha, Senior Engineer, Nepalgunj Distribution Centre jointly made presentation on the topic.

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Poor service quality of NEA
- Perilous situation of electricity poles and haphazardly kept wires

7.6.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

In this session, **Basudev Lamichane, Executive Member, Banke UNESCO club** served as the resource person to explain the role that consumers can play in energy conservation and reducing power theft.

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Ineffectiveness of NEA and Police administration to curb power theft
- Need for proactive consumer role to curb the power theft
- Need for consumer awareness to make them use energy efficient appliances like CFL bulb.

7.6.5 Closing session

The prominent personalities present in the programme put their views regarding various aspects of the programme. Speakers include representatives from political parties and local intellectuals.

7.6.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply (Load-shedding)
- Irregularities during getting new connection and changing meter
- Irregularity of meter reader
- Billing procedure and information given in the bill difficult for the consumers to understand
- NEA personnel not serious in solving consumer grievances
- No adequate measures taken by local NEA personal to reduce power theft
- No advanced notice for power cuts
- Low voltage with unacceptable fluctuations
- Delays in solving consumer problems
- Lack of events/programmes for consumer education

7.7 GIM Dailekh

<i>Local coordination by:</i>	<i>Forum for community sector support programme, Dailekh</i>
<i>Participants:</i>	<i>70 Participants</i>
<i>Participation from SAWTEE:</i>	<i>Kapil Gautam, Programme Officer</i>
<i>Date and venue:</i>	<i>9 Dec 2008, District Development Committee Hall, Dailekh Bazaar, Dailekh</i>

7.7.1 Inaugural session

The meeting was formally inaugurated by **Dil Bahadur Sahi, Local Development Officer, District Development Office, Dailekh** by lighting a traditional oil lamp.

Bishnu Gautam, President, Forum for community sector support programme, Dailekh delivered the welcome speech. **Kapil Gautam, Programme Officer, SAWTEE** highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

7.7.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Kapil Gautam explained Nepal's electricity reform process and role of consumers in the process in this session. Participants put forth their queries and suggestions after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Issues related to unbundling of NEA
- Need for including consumer concerns in the proposed law
- Need for proactive consumer participation in the reform process

7.7.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Hari Prasad Regmi, Officiating Chief, NEA Dailekh Distribution Centre presented his paper in this session.

Consumers put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Consumers' suffering due to low quality of service
- NEA not being capable to discharge its functions
- High rate of electricity tariff
- Bill counters at far off places
- Unavailability of electricity service in a large area of the district



Regmi during his presentation

7.7.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Basant Shrestha, Secretary, Forum for community sector support programme served as the resource person in this session.

Participants put forth following problems, suggestions and queries during the session.

- Availability of different types of bulbs in the market including CFL and their efficiency and cost effectiveness
- Need for raising awareness about energy efficient appliances
- Need for joint effort from the people and administration for controlling the power theft

7.7.5 Closing session

Prominent personalities present in the programme spoke on the different aspects of the programme. Speakers include representatives from major political parties, Police administration and Non-governmental organisations. They stressed the need for organising such programmes on a regular basis.

7.7.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply and power cut without notice
- Field workers of NEA not serious to discharge their duties
- Fee counters at far off places
- High rate of tariff
- Power theft; involvement of locals and NEA personnel
- Perilous state of electricity poles
- Low voltage with fluctuation causing damage to appliances
- No compensation for the loss of appliances due to voltage fluctuation
- Irregularity of meter reader

7.8 GIM Parsa

Local coordination by:

Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Parsa

Participants:

40 Participants

Participation from SAWTEE:

Asish Subedi, Programme Associate

Date and venue:

20 Dec 2008, Birgunj

7.8.1 Inaugural session

Rajeshwor Tiwari, President, Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Parsa inaugurated the programme by lighting a traditional oil lamp.

Ajay Adhikari, General secretary, Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Parsa delivered the welcome speech. **Asish Subedi** highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

7.8.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Asish Subedi made presentation on the theme.

Participants put forth following queries and suggestions during the discussion.

- Repercussions of prolonged outage to the economy and need for timely reforms in the sector
- Hindering factors to the development of Nepal's power sector
- Need for accelerated pace of electricity reform process with active involvement of the people

7.8.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Despite giving his word to participate in the meeting, **NEA Birgunj Distribution Chief** informed about his inability to attend the meeting, mentioning his personal problem. It is supposed that it was his unwillingness to face the public amidst the power famine that has compelled NEA to extend load-shedding to as long as 16 hours.



Participants putting forth their problems

Rajeshwor Tiwari facilitated the session. He explained the complaint redressal mechanism and asked the participants to put forth their problems. He further assured the participants that **Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Parsa** shall pass on the problems to the concerned authority at NEA.

Participants actively participated in the discussion and put forth their problems and queries. Following are the main points of discussion:

- Given the absence of NEA Chief, NEA's low level of accountability to its consumers
- Persistent and ever increasing load-shedding
- Need for enhancement of NEA's service quality

Local organisers later handed over the proceedings and consumer problems to the NEA. NEA Chief stressed NEA's commitment to solve the consumer grievances and problems.

7.8.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Ajay Adhikari served as the resource person for this session.

Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Energy efficient devices and their use
- Peoples' role in saving power
- Power theft and need for collective efforts to stop it

7.8.5 Closing session

The prominent personalities present in the programme spoke on the various issues in electricity service delivery in this session.

7.8.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply
- Line cut off without prior notice
- Voltage fluctuation, loss of appliances and no compensation
- NEA not seen serious in solving consumer problems
- Unfriendly behaviors of NEA officials and staffs
- Low level of programmes for consumer awareness
- Unsafe and ugly looking network of electricity wires
- Time consuming and tiresome bill payment system

7.9 GIM Kathmandu and Lalitpur

Local coordination by:

Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Kathmandu and Consumer forum Nepal, Lalitpur

Participants:

95 Participants (Kathmandu and Lalitpur combined)

Participation from SAWTEE:

Dr. Dhrubesh C Regmi, Programme Director and Asish Subedi, Programme Associate

Date and venue:

10 Jan 2009, Swayambhu, Kathmandu

7.9.1 Inaugural session

Prof. Dr. Madhav Prasad Sharma, President, Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal inaugurated the programme by lighting a traditional oil lamp.

Jyoti Baniya, General secretary, Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal delivered the welcome speech. **Dr. Dhrubesh C Regmi, Programme Director, SAWTEE** highlighted the objectives and the relevance of organising the GIM.

Speaking as the special guest **Amrit Kumar Bohara, Senior Leader and Central Committee Member, Communist Party of Nepal, Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN UML)** made his commitment to take consumer concerns and interests to the party. CPN UML currently heads the Ministry of Water Resources which is the apex body that governs Nepal's power sector.

Speaking as the Chair, **Prof. Dr. Sharma** stressed the need for proactive consumer role to protect consumer rights and interests.

7.9.2 Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers

Dr. Dhrubesh Regmi made presentation on the theme in this session. **Ishwor Chandra Pradhan, Central Member, Consumer Forum Nepal** and **Ranjan Krishna Aryal, Former Member, Nepal Law Reform Commission** commented on the presentation.



Dr. Regmi during his presentation

Participants put forth following queries and suggestions during the discussion.

- Causes of sluggish state of Nepal's power sector reform and current state of power crisis
- Need for accelerated pace of electricity reform process with active involvement of the people

7.9.3 Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism

Sher Singh Bhat, Chief, Load Dispatch Centre, NEA and **Om Dahal, Engineer, Distribution and Consumer Service Division, NEA** made presentations on the topic. **Jyoti Baniya** commented on the presentation.

Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation. Following are the main points of discussion:

- Persistent and ever increasing load-shedding
- Malpractices and irregularities prevailing in NEA
- NEA's inability to effectively tackle consumer grievances
- Need for enhancement of NEA's service quality

7.9.4 Session III: Energy conservation and reduction of power theft: role of consumers

Rama Kant Gauro Tharu, Immediate past member, Infrastructure sector, National Planning Commission served as the resource person for this session. **Dilli Prasad Ghimire, Chairperson, National Association of Community Electricity Users-Nepal** and **Kumar Ojha, Invitee Board Member, NEA** commented on the paper.

Participants put forth their problems and queries after the presentation.

Following are the main points of discussion:

- Energy efficient devices and their use
- Government initiatives in promoting energy efficient devices
- Power theft and need for collective efforts to stop it

7.9.5 Closing session

The prominent personalities present in the programme spoke on the various issues in electricity service delivery in this session.

7.9.6 Major consumer problems

- Inadequate power supply
- Line cut off without prior notice
- Voltage fluctuation, loss of appliances and no compensation
- NEA not seen serious in solving consumer problems
- Unfriendly behaviors of NEA officials and staffs
- Frequent problems seen in the meter
- Low level of programmes for consumer awareness
- People not aware of their rights and duties
- Unsafe and ugly looking network of electricity wires
- Irregularity of the meter reader
- Time consuming and tiresome bill payment system

8. Summary of participants' feedback

At the end of the programme, participants were requested to fill up a structured questionnaire to understand their views about the programme. Among a total of 540 consumers that participated in the GIMs, 387 (66 per cent) participants filled up the form.

The feedback has been summarised as follows:

Usefulness of the interaction programme: A majority (52 per cent) found the interaction useful. Similarly, 44 per cent found the programme just useful to them while four per cent of participants found the programme not very useful to them.

Relevance of the contents/topics of the interaction programme: 48 per cent of the participants found the contents/topics very relevant, 49 found it relevant while three per cent found it not so relevant.

Usefulness of interaction among the participants: When asked if the interaction and discussion among participants was satisfactory and beneficial, 42 per cent found the interaction and discussion very useful. Similarly, a majority 50 per cent found it important to some extent while eight per cent did not find the interaction and discussions among the participants very much useful to them.

Effectiveness in strengthening the consumer movement for electricity reforms in Nepal: 19 per cent of the participants were of the view that the programme will be very effective in strengthening the consumer movement for electricity reforms in Nepal. Fifty-six percent of the participants thought that the programme will be effective only to strengthen the consumer movement for electricity reforms in Nepal while 25 per cent were of the view that the programme will not be that much effective to do so.

9. Common problems of electricity consumers in Nepal

The common problems of electricity consumers in Nepal are as follows:

- Inadequacy of power supply (load-shedding) with frequent cut off without notice
- Poor quality of supply with frequent voltage fluctuation
- Loss of electrical appliances and weak level of enforcement of compensation provisions
- High tariff rate
- Poor quality of metering and billing
- Bill counters at far off places
- Prevalence of high level of power theft and inability of the authorities to curb the same
- NEA's inability to effectively handle consumers' grievances and complaints
- NEA's inability to effectively discharge its duty
- Threat to consumer safety due to perilous poles and wires
- Haphazardly placed wire network
- Low level of electrification limiting people's access to the electricity service
- Lack of events/programmes for consumer education

10. Highlights

Following are the highlights of the programme:

- A platform to identify the common problems of the electricity consumers
- A good forum for face to face interaction between the consumers and the service provider
- A forum to aware the public about the most important issue in the country i.e. power sector reform
- Adequate and active participation of the locals as different category of consumers
- A chance of interaction with the grassroots consumers, opinion leaders and the personnel from the utilities
- Adequate women participation
- Good media coverage
- Well organised and systematic format of the programme

11. Lowlights

Following are the lowlights of the programme:

- Given the curiosity of consumers, the time for floor discussion was inadequate
- Some of the participants putting forth their personal problems
- Given the extension of the meetings from five to nine, budgetary arrangement from other headings was done

Annexure

Annexure II: Agenda

Grassroots Interface Meeting – Phase I

Time	Sessions
10:00 – 10:30	Registration
10:30 – 11:00	Inaugural session
10:30 –10:50	Welcome address <i>Local partner organisation</i>
10:50–11:00	Highlights on the objectives of the programme: Project on capacity building on electricity reforms in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, : objectives, scope, partners and activities <i>SAWTEE</i>
11:00-11:30	Session I: Electricity reform process and role of consumers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure of the Electricity Sector • Historical evaluation of the electricity supply industry (major structural changes through various legislation) • Unbundling, corporatisation and privatisation • Electricity Regulatory Commission • Consumer Participation – importance and status • Opportunities available to participate and the institutional structure
11:30-11:45	<i>SAWTEE</i> <i>Floor Discussion</i>
11:45-12:15	Session II: Complaint redressal mechanism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing mechanism for the redressal of consumer complaints (bottom to top level institutions available to consumers for grievance redressal) • Filing of complaints and follow up by the consumers • Time frame for redressal of complaints • Various precautions to be taken while making complaints
12:15 - 12:30	<i>NEA Personnel</i> <i>Floor Discussion</i>

Time	Sessions
12:30 - 13:10	<p>Session III: Energy conservation: role of consumers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of conservation of electricity? • Saving of electricity at consumption ends? • Introduction to the use of CFL, energy efficient equipments, etc <p style="text-align: center;">Reduction of power theft: role of consumers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is power theft, un-authorized use of power? • Who pays for theft of power? • Disincentives/penalties to discourages power theft • How consumers can support the utilities in reducing the theft of power <p><i>Local partner organisation</i></p>
13:10 – 13:40	<i>Floor Discussion</i>
13:40 – 14:00	<p>Closing session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants feedback • The way forward: closing remarks
14:00 onwards	Tea

Annexure III: List of resource persons

S.N.	Name	Present position	Affiliation	Address
GIM Ilam				
1.	Asish Subedi	Programme Associate	SAWTEE	P.O. Box 19366 254, Lamtangeen Marg, Baluwatar Kathmandu, Nepal asish.subedi@sawtee.org
2.	Raj Kumar Raman	Chief	NEA	Ilam Distribution Centre, Ilam
3.	Himalaya Karmacharya	President	Ilam Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Chok Bazaar, Ilam 9841472310 9852680422 iccilam@ntc.net.np
GIM Morang				
4.	Sachchidananda Yadav	Chief	NEA	Biratnagar Distribution Centre, Biratnagar 3 9852024477
5.	Ramesh Chandra Poudel	Member	Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Morang	9842030398 paudelrc@gmail.com
GIM Sunsari				
6.	Shyam Kumar Yadav	Chief	NEA	Itahari Distribution Centre 9854021626
7.	Ram Pokharel	Chief	NEA	Dharan Distribution Centre
8.	Roshan Agrawal	Chief	NEA	Dhankuta Distribution Centre
9.	Bhawani Dhakal	Chairman	Consumer forum Nepal, Sunsari	bhawanidhakal@gmail.com 9852047882
GIM Palpa				
10.	Surendra Kumar Agrahari	Chief	NEA	Palpa Distribution Centre
11.	Radha Poudyal	Journalist	Radio Madan	9847102560

			Pokhara	ajabi.2006@yahoo.com
GIM Rupandehi				
12.	Bhanu Bhakta Bhattarai	Chief	NEA	Butwal Distribution Centre
13.	Narbu Lama	President	Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Rupandehi	narbu_lama@yahoo.com 9807053896
GIM Banke				
14.	Anirudra Prasad Yadav	Chief	NEA	Nepalgunj Distribution Centre
15.	Birendra Kumar Jha	Senior Engineer	NEA	Nepalgunj Distribution Centre
16.	Basudev Lamichane	Executive Member	Banke UNESCO club	unesconpj@wlink.com.np
GIM Dailekh				
17.	Kapil Gautam	Programme Officer	SAWTEE	P.O. Box 19366 254, Lamtangeen Marg, Baluwatar Kathmandu, Nepal kapil.gautam@sawtee.org
18.	Hari Prasad Regmi	Officiating Chief	NEA	Dailekh Distribution Centre
19.	Basant Shrestha	Secretary	Forum for community sector support programme	984806275 bashrestha@gmail.com
GIM Birgunj				
20.	Rajeshwor Tiwari	President	Forum for protection of consumer rights Nepal, Parsa	98550173121
21.	Ajay Adhikari	Secretary	Forum for protection of consumer rights	9855020114 lgicbrj@ntc.net.np

			Nepal, Parsa	
GIM Kathmandu and Lalitpur				
22.	Dr. Dhruvish C Regmi	Programme Director	SAWTEE	P.O. Box 19366 254, Lamtangeen Marg, Baluwatar Kathmandu, Nepal dhrubesh.regmi@sawtee.org
23.	Sher Singh Bhat	Chief	NEA	Load Dispatch Centre 01- 6631527
24.	Om Dahal	Engineer	NEA	Distribution and Consumer Service Division
25.	Rama Kant Gauro Tharu	Immediate past member, Infrastructure sector, National Planning Commission	Freelancer	9851003796 rkgauro@gmail.com