

CP1A: Define and establish consumer protection policies

REGULATORY FUNCTION: CONSUMER PROTECTION REGULATION		CP1A
OBJECTIVE CP1 There are clear rules regarding the interface between consumers and operators	ACTION CARD CP1A <h2 style="margin: 0;">DEFINE AND ESTABLISH CONSUMER PROTECTION POLICIES</h2>	
COST: Low FREQUENCY: One time TARGET GROUPS: Regulators, consumers, service operators, consumer associations		
DESCRIPTION <p>Regulators establish consumer protection policies containing information such as the prohibition of charging prices that do not match the costs, obligations to give prior notice of suspension due to non-payment, frequency of billing, minimum payment times or especially short times for expiry of debts, consumer charts, and associations rights. Publicly outlined, consumer policies are also an opportunity for regulators to include essential regulatory principles they adhere to, such as universality or equity. Protecting consumers always requires the establishment of clear measures that adequately reflect their interests and ensure the full comprehension and acknowledgement of operators. The non-exhaustive list of policy information, open to be adapted to different circumstances, becomes an essential regulatory tool for achieving consumer protection objectives.</p>		
EXPECTED OUTCOMES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are clear and transparent policies in place that are accessible to all parties. Service operators are contracted in accordance to consumer protection policies. Consumer associations are actively engaged in shaping policies. 		
EXAMPLE: ZAMBIA <p>In Zambia, the creation of a vertical regulatory agency, the National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO), led to the establishment of principles that were not explicitly present in the water sector until then, namely universality, accessibility, the quality of service, and equity. The 1994, the National Water Policy created the legal framework for implementing the decentralization of responsibility for the sector. NWASCO requires water and sewerage service providers to guarantee their customers a certain and defined level of service for a specified price in a Service Level Guarantee (SLG). Customers may use these SLGs as a basis for airing their complaints. Areas guaranteed are drinking water quality, billing for services, client contracts, interruptions of water supply, blockages of sewers, and pressure in the network.</p>		
LINKS Zambia National Water Policy: http://www.nwasco.org.zm/index.php/policy/send/4-policy-and-legislation/56-national-water-policy-1994-zambia Zambia Service Level Guarantee (SLG): http://www.nwasco.org.zm/index.php/regulatory-tools/service-level-agreements-and-guarantees		
INTERNAL CAPACITIES NEEDED AND THE ROLE OF PARTNERS <p>Identifying consumer interests lies primarily in working with consumers and their respective associations. Capacities required including engineering or customer relations abilities that could be supported by related ministries or service operators, while much required facilitation of multi-stakeholder consultations remain with civil society and development partners. Regulators' staff must be trained on basic consumer policies and concepts, and how to apply them in their specific context.</p>		