

## **Training Programme for SERC Officials on Consumer Protection Issues**

16-20 February 2009, Hotel Regale Inn, New Delhi

**Agenda>>**

### **Background**

Protection of consumer interest is one of the primary objectives of the Electricity Act of India 2003 as well as the National Electricity Policy 2005. In the emerging independent regulatory regime, Electricity Regulatory Commissions (ERCs) are required to safeguard the interest of consumers by promoting competition and economic efficiency in production as well consumption. Reliable and adequate availability of service at reasonable price and addressing consumer grievances are the key consumer issues in electricity regulation. Furthermore, consumer participation in the regulatory decision-making process is a crucial factor in order to make it accountable, transparent and acceptable to people.

Various SERCs have passed regulations to improve the service delivery and enhance consumer satisfaction. Broadly speaking, these include regulatory guidelines on quality of service standards, complaint redressal mechanism, appointment of ombudsman and consequences of non-compliance, etc. However, adequacy of implementation process and regulatory capacity to take follow up actions are the key challenges in the sector. Poor consumer participation in the policy and regulatory decision-making process is another major challenge faced by the SERCs. This affects the quality of regulation. Therefore, there is a need to develop the capacity of staff of the regulatory bodies so that they can assist the respective SERCs in protecting the interest of electricity consumers and promoting effective consumer participation in the decision-making process.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of the programme is to develop the capacity of the SERCs staff on various issues of consumer protection in electricity sector so that they can play the required role effectively.

The programme would be conducted with the following specific objectives to:

- Highlight the key provisions in consumer protection in the relevant statutes and policy documents
- Update the participants on recent developments on consumer protection in the sector
- Provide appropriate tools of consumer protection to the SERC staff
- Provide training on issues in service monitoring and regulatory compliance
- Develop the capacity to facilitate a consumer friendly redressal mechanism
- Provide useful input to effectively engage consumers in the regulatory process
- Share the remarkable experiences and best practices across the states
- Facilitate a mechanism for further discussion and input sharing among participants

### **Participants**

Senior and middle level staff from State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) and Ombudsman of some SERCs would participate in this training programme. This will also provide an opportunity to them to share and learn from the best practices followed by certain SERCs on key issues in regulation.

## **Resource Persons**

Existing and former regulators, consumer experts and practitioners would conduct various sessions. Selected presentations on behalf of SERCs and utilities would also be made to facilitate the discussion on best practices and experience sharing.

## **Contents**

### ***Issues in Consumer Protection***

- Key provision of the Electricity Act 2003,
- National Electricity Policy and other relevant statutes
- Various regulations issued by SERCs
- Recent legal developments
- Regulatory challenges in consumer protection
- Going beyond the formulation of policy and regulations
- Best practices and safeguards employed at the national as well international levels

### ***Consumer Participation in the Regulatory Process***

- The importance of consumer participation
- Status and major challenges in effective consumer participation
- Engaging consumers in the regulatory process
- Training and capacity building programmes for consumers
- Experiences from select states

### ***Effectiveness of Complaint Redressal Mechanism***

- Effectiveness of the existing mechanism
- Monitoring the compliance of regulatory guidelines
- Creating awareness about the role and functions of ombudsman and grievance redressal forum
- Effectiveness of alternatives channels for complaint redressal
- Follow up action required on part of regulatory bodies
- Relevant orders passed by court of law and Appellate Tribunal
- Best practices of effective redressal mechanism

### ***Assessing the Quality of Regulation***

- Consumer impact assessment
- Regulatory impact assessment
- Preparing consumer satisfaction index
- Quality of service monitoring
- Incorporating the key consumer issues in the Annual Report (of SERC)
- Comparing the regulatory performance across regions

### ***Using IT as a Tool for Consumer Protection***

- Using IT for the protection of consumer interest
- Online and offline data monitoring and evaluation
- Monitoring quality of service through use of IT
- Using IT for consumer empowerment