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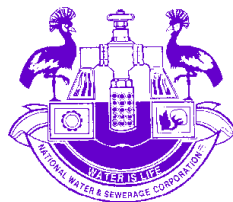
LAKE VICTORIA WATER & SANITATION INITIATIVE FAST TRACK CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME# CUSTOMER SERVICES USER MANUAL

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ES
EXTERNAL SERVICES

National Water &
Sewerage Corporation

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PREAMBLE

This Customer Services User Manual has been compiled for use as a guideline to the staff of the Water utilities in the execution of their duties to ensure that the UTILITY achieves its customer service objectives. This manual reflects the commitment of the UTILITY to offer the highest quality of service and customer care to its customers. It is the responsibility of each employee to ensure that they are familiar with the contents of this manual and that they follow the procedures laid out in it. The standards, practices, procedures and specifications contained in this manual are in accordance with the UTILITY's corporate objectives, strategies and other governing policies.

All amendments, after approval acceptance by the respective functional officers shall be promptly inserted into the manual by the Manager in charge commercial/billing activities, as the holder of the manual, who will be responsible for its safe custody, maintenance and conscientious amendment.

The manager in charge of commercial/billing activities of the UTILITY is responsible for the development, maintenance, distribution and amendment of this manual. Comments/suggestions for improvement of the Commercial Operations should be brought to the attention of the manager in charge commercial/billing activities (for purposes of this manual we shall refer to this manager as the commercial manager).

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------|--|
| ES | External Services |
| ET | Expert Team |
| LWATSAN | Lake Victoria Water & Sanitation Initiative |
| MD | Managing Director |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| NWSC | National Water & Sewerage Corporation |
| PIP | Performance Improvement Plan |
| SMART | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time Bound |
| UN | United Nations |

KEY DEFINITIONS

Customer Charter: Is an Official declaration of an Organization's / Business Commitment to serve its customers

Customer Slogan: Slogans are statement of norms that direct the conduct of staff in customer service. It espouses the values of the company in serving customers.

Service Standards: Standards are the promises that Organizations make to to their customers about the level and quality of service they can expect. They should be SMART

Performance Improvement Plans: Short Term tactical strategies for achievement of long term goals and long term strategic plans.

Customer Complaints Registers: A log of customer complaints detailing time of complaint, person receiving the complaint, action take and feedback given to the customer

Customer Service Performance Indicators: Measures of customer service efficiency.

Body Language: Gestures, postures and way in which we walk and sit or send information to the customers.

Customer Satisfaction: Pleasant feeling a customer gets when he/she receives a service or product as a result of customer

Front Office: Office dedicated as the first contact for customers. It is usually located at the front of the office for easy access by customers

Mains Extensions: Water Service / Supply Lines

AMMENDMENTS TO THE MANUAL

Where there is any change in any aspect of the operations or where the manual no longer meets the requirements or situations in a particular area, the Commercial Manager shall recommend amendments to the Managing Director of the Utility for attention and approval.

Manual amendments shall be promulgated as approved by the Commercial Manager. After approval, amendments will be issued to all manual holders. Each amended page shall show the appropriate amendment number and date. All changes will be clearly denoted. When this manual is amended, a copy of the amendment is to be forwarded to all manual holders along with the appropriate amendment instructions. Amendment instructions shall include a "Remove Pages" and "Insert Pages" and "Reason for Change list". The amended text shall be identified by a vertical line in the right hand margin. When a manual or amendments thereto are superseded, instructions shall be issued to all manual holders to destroy the superseded copies.

CIRCULATION LIST AND CONTROL

The Commercial Manager shall maintain a master list of all manual holders and control their distribution. The following personnel will hold copies of this manual and will be responsible for its amendment and strict adherence: -

- a) Zone Managers
- b) Commercial Officers
- c) Billing Officers

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND RATIONAL FOR THE CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY MANUAL

1.0 Perspectives of Water Supply in the Lake Victoria Basin

In March 2004, UN-HABITAT in association with the Governments of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda launched the Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative (LVWATSANI) to address the water and sanitation needs of the people particularly the poor in the secondary towns around Lake Victoria. The Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative (LVWATSAN) has been designed to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets for water and sanitation in small urban centres, taking into account the physical planning needs of these urban centres with attention to drainage and solid waste management as an integral part of environmental sanitation. The initiative has a clear pro-poor focus and is intended to generate desirable outcomes that have a lasting effect on the poor.

Water and Sewerage services in the Lake Victoria Secondary Towns are managed by Utility Corporations which, in general, suffer from severe institutional weaknesses including inadequate cost recovery, high levels of unaccounted for water, outdated billing and collection systems, low skill levels of staff and poor relations with customers and the local communities. While good progress has been made in establishing corporate governance structures, most of the Utilities are new and there are urgent needs for training and capacity building at all levels.

One of the key objectives of the LVWATSAN is to ensure the financial and operational sustainability of the capital investments being provided under the initiative. However, the financial sustainability of the investments will not be achieved without a significant increase in utility revenues and higher levels of operating efficiencies, as measured by the rate of unaccounted for water, which exceeds 60% in most cases. The Utility Corporations in the towns are unable to generate adequate revenues to meet operational and maintenance costs, a situation which is due to a range of factors, including inefficient billing and collection systems, a low revenue base and high rates of unaccounted for water.

1.1 Capacity Building

To strengthen the capacity of the Utilities in delivering effective service, UN HABITAT identified, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) through its External Services Unit as a suitable partner with potential experience within the region and competence to carry out fast track capacity building programme.

The NWSC was tasked with developing training modules and a comprehensive training programme that would result in: improved sustainability of the investments in each of the utilities, predicated on adequate cost recovery systems; an expansion of the revenue base; improved customer relations as well as more effective operational systems geared at reduction of unaccounted for water.

In executing capacity building, the NWSC ES sent an expert team (ET) during the period 11th – 29th June 2007 to carry out a situational analysis and training needs assessment in the towns of Muleba and Bukoba in Tanzania and Homa Bay and Kisii in Kenya. Based on the findings of the training needs assessment, the NWSC ES developed a fast track training and programme. The programme included training of Change Agents from the utilities, preparation and implementation of short term performance improvement plans and on job training. Priority areas included: billing & revenue collection, water demand management focusing on un-accounted for water and customer care.

The customer care training was geared at enhancing the knowledge and skills of the staff in Customer handling. This course provided the participants with skills on how to:

- i) Build profitable relations with customers of the Utility, based on systematic approaches;
- ii) Cut down customers' response time and learn how to express the company's closeness to the customer;
- iii) Set a new dimension that differentiates the Utility from other service providers;
- iv) Set standards for customer care in the Utility
- v) Appreciate what customer care means both to the customer and the organization
- vi) Understand how different customers behave
- vii) Understand how to handle different types of customers
- viii) Effectively communicate with customers
- ix) Understand how to relate to customers

- x) Help customers to get a better view and appreciation of the offers of the organization
- xi) Understand how to capture and manage customer complaints
- xii) Understand how to utilize customer complaint information

1.2 The Customer Services User Manual

The Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative (LVWATSAN) has been designed to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets for water and sanitation in small urban centres. To achieve this, the Utility Corporations managing the towns around the Lake Victoria Basin need to operate in an effectively controlled environment and adhere to the highest standards of service internally and externally. To sustain expected levels of customer services, these Corporations need guiding policies and procedures to back up the intensive capacity building already provided. This manual presents a details description of policies, procedures, standards and performance indicators meant to guide customer service in these towns.

1.3 Structure of the Manual

The User's Manual is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1 – Background and Rational** presents the perspectives of water supply in the Lake Victoria Basin, the Visions and Missions of the water operators, the role, goals and objectives of customer service.
- **Chapter 2 – Customer Service Key Result Areas and Performance Indicators** briefly outlines the key result areas that guide customer service, the service standards, performance indicators, rewards and penalties.
- **Chapter 3 – Organization, Structural Set-up and Logistics** presents the placement of customer service within the Organizational Structural set-up, the appropriate office set-up framework for customer service, and staffing.
- **Chapter 4 – Customer Service Policy and Procedures** provides comprehensive guiding principles governing customer service along with the attendant codes of practice and procedures for effective customer service.

- **Chapter 5 – Strategies for Policy Implementation** provides an overview of strategies for implementation of the Customer Service Policy..

CHAPTER 2

CUSTOMER SERVICE KEY RESULT AREAS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

2.0 Introduction

To enforce quality service delivery, Customer Service and Handling shall be guided by the following Key Result Areas and Customer Service SMART Standards against which the utilities shall measure their capability in providing and improving services to the customers.

2.1 Key Result Areas

To provide clean, reliable and safe drinking water to the population within the jurisdiction of the utility the following shall constitute the customer service key result areas:

Customer Service Key Result Areas

1. To promptly connect all eligible applicants to our service lines
2. To set-up community kiosks to serve communities who may not be able to afford individual house connections
3. To correctly and timely bill all consumers for services consumed
4. To collect payment for services consumed
5. To disconnect services from delinquent customers
6. To re-connect customers who have met stipulated requirements
7. To promptly respond to customers needs and expectations

2.2 Customer Service Standards

2.2.1 Responsiveness

All technical related issues shall be responded to within 24 hours and all commercial issues shall be responded to within 12 hours (*this performance indicator can be changed based on what the utilities can actually handle*)

2.2.2 Billing

- (i) All customers on supply shall be billed monthly

- (ii) All customers shall receive their bills by the 15th day of each month (*or on the day as per the utilities' practice*)

2.2.3 *Payments*

All payments and adjustments to customers accounts shall be updated and reflected in the bills within the respective billing month

2.2.4 *Disconnection*

All customers due for disconnection will be served with a dully signed seven days notice

2.2.5 *Reconnection*

All customers eligible for reconnection shall be reconnected within 24 hours of clearing the obligations

2.2.6 *Customer Service*

- (i) Front Desks to serve customers shall be set-up at each office, well furnished and with appropriate front desk staff
- (ii) Customer Surveys shall be carried out every quarter to establish the customer perceptions towards services deliveries

2.3 **Monitoring and Evaluation**

To achieve the set standards, the Commercial Manager shall monitor customer service performance based on the following framework:

i) Frequency of Monitoring:

The Commercial Officer responsible for customer services shall produce performance reports based on standardized reporting formats namely monthly, quarterly, bi-annually and annually. The reports shall cover service status regarding all the key result areas above.

ii) Indicators to be monitored

The following indicators shall be monitored:

- Number of complaints received (broken down by type)
- Number of complaints responded to
- Percentage of complaints responded to
- Average response time to complaints of technical nature
- Average response time to complaints of commercial nature

iii) Rewards and Penalties

Where the commercial department/section in an office is unable to meet set targets by close of the year, sanctions to be determined by management shall be imposed. Rewards shall similarly be instituted for staff that are able to achieve their targets after assessment at the end of the year.

CHAPTER 3

ORGANIZATION, STRUCTURAL SET-UP AND LOGISTICS

3.0 Introduction

Customer Service is one of the key commercial functions in any Utility. The responsibility of customer service shall lie with the Head of the Commercial department who shall be the overall supervisor of the customer service activities. Customer Service shall be structured as follows:

3.1 Organization

- i) The Commercial Department shall have a Customer Service Section which shall be headed by a Commercial Officer or a Commercial Assistant depending on the nature of activity of the town.

- ii) Each Utility office must have a Customer Service Office or a Front Desk whose role shall be to:
 - a. Receive and attend to customers
 - b. Receive, Log and route customer complaints
 - c. Monitor action on reported customer complaints and give feedback to customers
 - d. Maintain the customer complaints reporting and resolution system

- iii) The customer service office shall handle all matters pertaining to customer inquiries and complaints.

3.2 Location and Space of Customer Service Office

In order for customer service to be done quickly and efficiently the following factors should be considered when designing a customer service office:

- i) The customer service office should be located at the front of the office structures. This should reduce the amount of time the customer spends moving through the system.
- ii) The customer service office should be spacious enough

- iii) The customer service office should be well furnished with the following:
 - Customer chairs, benches and tables
 - Notice boards (with brochures and publicity material)
 - Suggestion box
 - The customer service counter placed near a large service window (at least ten meters long).
 - Sufficient tables, chairs and filing cabinets for the front desk staff
 - Appropriate Air Conditioning/fan
- iv) Places of convenience such as wash rooms, and toilets for customers should be well positioned
- v) The customer service office should be accessible to pay offices where customers can easily make payments whenever necessary

3.3 Office Set-up and Ambience

- i) The offices should be well ventilated, lit, painted and cleaned.
- ii) Communication networks should be fitted: telephones, fax machine and a good computer system with appropriate software to deal with all customer issues.
- iii) The office set-up and décor should clearly promote the Corporate Identity of the Utility by having the following:
 - Office colors blending with the Utility's Corporate colors
 - Offices with clear and gleaming sign posts
 - Utility Vehicles branded with Corporate Colors
 - Offices with clear display of President/Head of State, Managing Director and Board Chairman's portraits, Utility and National Flags at Reception/Managers Office
- v) All other Office Premises and installations should be:
 - Clean and well maintained office premises and Installations
 - Well maintained compound
 - Adequate Security
 - Clean and well maintained steps, verandas, shields, etc
- vi). Proper and Attractive Office Setup
 - Inner Office setup well maintained, clean and tidy
 - Office Furniture in good state

- Front Office Desks well laid out and maintained
- Clearly well displayed Customer Charter, Utility Vision and Mission
- Properly laid out Furniture, Cabinets, Files, Documents, and equipments to reflect a good image
- Good lighting system
- Interior color (paint) blends with the office furniture
- Adequate waiting seats for customers

3.4 Staffing

- i) The head of the commercial function in the utility shall be the overall supervisor of the customer service function.
- ii) An officer at an appropriate scale shall be assigned the direct role of managing the customer service activities of the Utility.
- iii) All front desk offices must be assigned dedicated front office staff to attend to customer inquiries and complaints.

CHAPTER 4

THE CUSTOMER POLICY & CUSTOMER SERVICE PROCEDURES

4.0 The Policy Statement

The staff and Board of Directors of the UTILITY hereby pledge to offer its current and future customers the highest quality service and to provide a level of customer care, which will at the very least, meet their expectation. Our commitment is to at all times, act in the best interest of our customers and continually improve our standards of quality in every aspect of our services.

4.1 Goal /Purpose of the Policy

Goals of the customer service policy:

- To offer good quality water and sewerage services
- To create satisfied customers
- To have satisfied and well motivated staff

4.2 Organizational Values that promote the Policy

- Integrity
- Punctuality
- Accuracy
- Transparency
- Truthfulness
- Discipline
- Respect
- Smartness
- Loyalty

4.3 Scope of the Policy

The services guided by this policy include the following:

4.3.1 Extension of Water / Sewerage Services

It is the duty of any water utility to serve the population within its jurisdiction with clean, reliable and safe water services. In order to do this mains extensions of water and sewerage services shall be made to areas established in order to have the necessary demand potential.

4.3.2 Service Connections

Where mains extensions are made, the utility shall commit to connect all applicants to its service. Apart from making direct connections to individual applicants, community kiosks to serve communities who may not be able to afford individual house connections shall be set up.

4.3.3 Billing and Bill Distribution

It is the responsibility of the utility to correctly bill its customers for services consumed and timely distribute the bills to the customers.

4.3.4 Collecting Payments

It is the responsibility of the utility to collect payments for services consumed and wherever possible engage debt collectors to collect the revenue on the utilities' behalf.

4.3.5 Disconnections

Where customers default on payments or violate our set policies and procedures, the utility will be forced to disconnect the services and institute stipulated actions for any committed offences where applicable.

4.3.6 Reconnections

Disconnected customers who meet stipulated requirements in the code of practice shall be reconnected.

4.3.7 Customer Services

It is the duty of the utility to satisfy its customers. To do this the utility shall continuously listen to the needs and expectation of our customers.

4.4 Codes of Practice for Application of the Policy

4.4.1 Code of Practice for Staff

- Welcome a customer with a smile
- Put the needs of the customer first
- Treat a customer with courtesy, consideration and respect
- Listen and respond appropriately to every customer
- Have qualified and supportive staff to deal with every customer directly
- Deal with all customer issues with efficiency, fairness and integrity.
- Provide customers with relevant written information where suitable
- Be as reliable, honest, friendly as customers would like us to be
- We must ensure that the product we give our customer is of good quality.
- Be cautious when handling customers
- Never quarrel with a customer, Never abuse a customer even when he/she is abusive and arrogant
- Know that the customer is always right even when he is wrong
- Never engage a customer in a defensive argument
- Always serve a customer with a smile
- Aim at winning and retaining a customer
- All staff must be smart – clean uniform and protective clothes must be provided, and always carry identification.
- Serve customers effectively, just in time and avoid long procedures in handling customers' complaints
- Be knowledgeable staff where they are to be exposed to customers
- Be patient when handling a customer
- Never be arrogant to customers
- Be responsive to customer demands
- Be unique in the eyes of a customer
- Increase customer knowledge
- Listen to the customer
- Always answer customer queries whether verbal or written

- Be available to customers
- Always offer help to a customer
- Always know that “Customer is King and the reason for your existence”

4.4.2 Factors Governing Staff Conduct in Customer Service

I: ATTITUDE

Positive Attitude
Portray a positive attitude all the time. If we expect to do well, we will be successful.

Courteous
Always be polite, whatever the circumstances.

Attentive
Listen, show interest, be alert and observe customers; give them your individual attention

Helpful
You are there to provide a service, demonstrate that to customers.

Caring
Make customers feel they matter, that they are individuals and not just one of the crowds

II: APPEARANCE

Dress
Wear appropriate dress, be tidy and clean. We reflect the image of our organization

Voice
Our tone of voice will convey as much information to the customer as the words we use, so we must sound interested warm and sincere..

Body Language
Our gestures, postures and way in which we walk and sit all send information to the customer

Smile
People respond to a smile

Eye Contact
It is away of acknowledging people, building a relationship, establishing rapport and making customers

III: APPROACH

Confident

If we approach the customer with confidence, they develop trust

Knowledgeable

The customer must feel that we know how to do our job; that we are competent and efficient Body Language:

Acknowledgement

Always signal the customer's presence by looking at them and greeting them

Welcoming

We all need to feel liked and approved of Eye Contact

IV: CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP

Regard The Customer is the KING

The Customer is the Reason We Exist

Treat Customers with Courtesy, Consideration and Respect

Listen and Respond appropriately to every Customer

Deliver what the Customer Wants plus one Percent

Take Personal Presentation as very important.

Take Ambience, Physical appearance of our the structures and Clean Environment as an important factor of business

NEVER be too busy for our customers

Recognize and Reward Well Paying Customers

Keep anticipating customer needs and provide for them

4.4.3 Codes of practice for Customer Complaints Handling

It is in the objective of the Utility to serve its customers diligently. Due to diversity of the needs of customers, effective customer handling calls for proper Customer Relationship Management. The following Code of Practice and Procedures shall govern customer complaints handling

i) Complaints Reporting

Customers can report complaints through one or all of the following avenues:-

- a. Written communication,
- b. By telephones,
- c. Through e-mails
- d. Personal Walk Ins.

ii) Guiding Principles

- a. All customers reporting complaints shall be attended to in person
- b. All staff will receive customers with courtesy
- c. All customers will be treated equally
- d. All service offices / areas will maintain the customer complaints register for documenting and tracking actions of the complaints
- e. All customer complaints shall be acted upon
- f. Dedicated telephone numbers and email contact address shall be made available for customer communication
- g. All written complaints will be replied back in writing
- h. A framework for monitoring effectiveness of handling customer complaints shall be instituted

iii) Customer complaints handling procedure (refer to Figure 1)

- a. All complaints will be received by the customer care desk
- b. All customer complaints will be logged in by the appropriate officers at the front desk who will take relevant customer details
- c. Customers shall be informed of the minimum and maximum time to resolve each case
- d. All complaints that can't be resolved by the Front Desk officers will be routed to the appropriate section for action
- e. All actioned complaints will be duly signed by the relevant officers
- f. Feedback will be given for all actioned complaints
- g. Quarterly surveys shall be carried out to establish the customer perceptions towards services deliveries

Responsible Staff

Front Desk Staff, Commercial Officers, Meter readers, Cashiers, Office Secretaries and Top Management

iv) Customer Complaints Reporting and Resolution Systems

Each service Areas shall put in place a standard Customer Complaints Reporting and Resolution System. The system shall effectively be used for:

- Logging and routing of complaints Received
- Monitoring and evaluating action taken on complaints received
- Monitoring and evaluating complaints not acted upon
- Evaluating average time taken to act on complaints
- Monitoring and evaluating feedback to customers.

4.4.4 Codes of practice for Extension of Water and Sewerage Services

- i) Prior to making any water supply extensions, we shall undertake to:
- Carry out demand surveys to establish the demand, willingness and ability to pay for water services using questionnaires and interviews
 - Meet with the Local authorities to discuss any issues pertaining to mains extension such as land issues, etc.
 - Carry out a cost benefit analysis to establish the following: -
 - the viability of the mains extension
 - cost of the mains extension
 - Population density of the area
 - The expected level of new connections
 - Break even period
 - Pay back period
- ii) Where an extension line is found to be non viable, but the need to provide water is established to necessary, then the utility has a social mission to provide water at the ruling tariff
- iii) We shall extend Water Supply to all areas established to have potential demand.

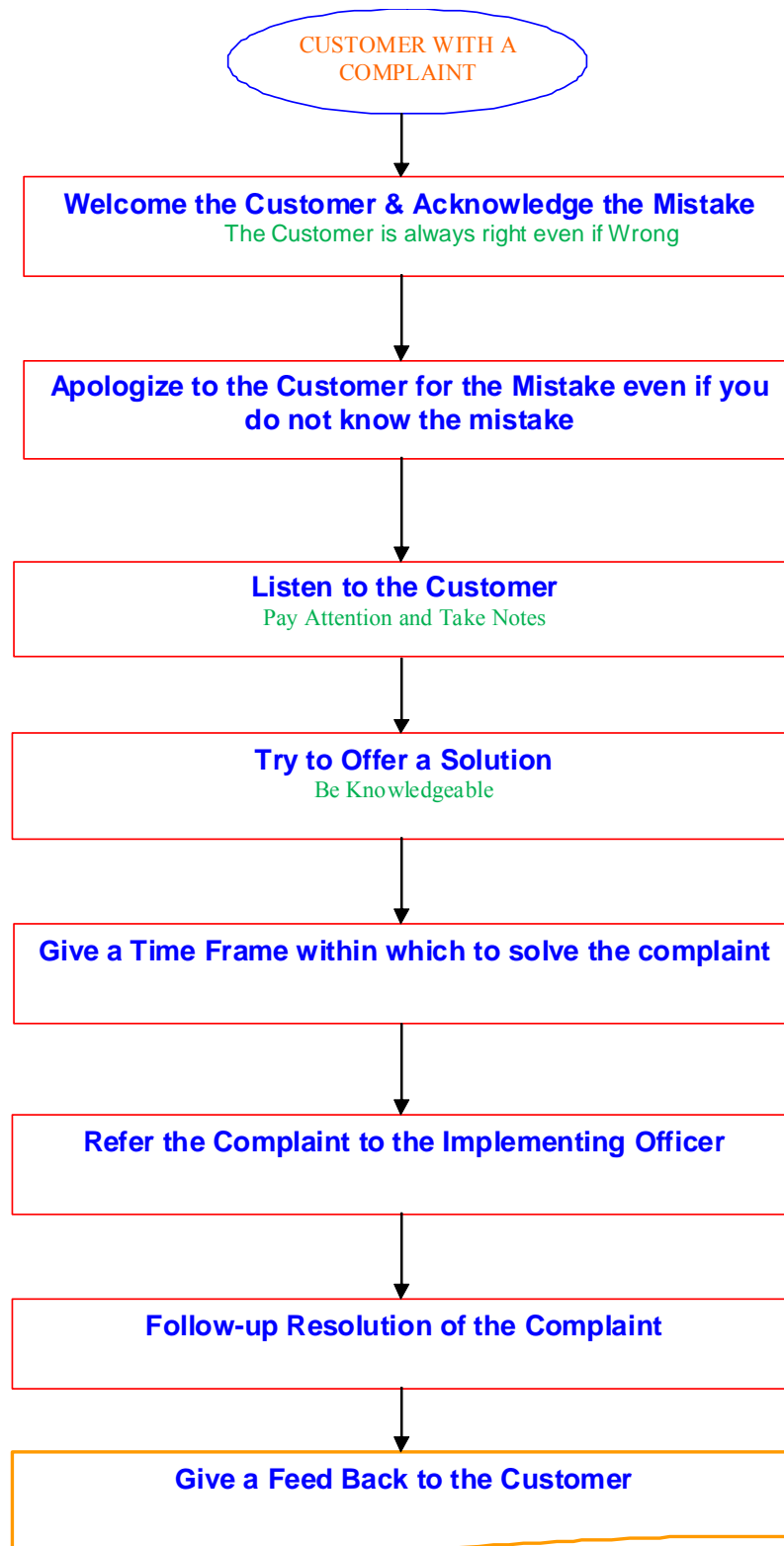


Figure 1: Steps for Managing Customer Complaints

- iv) We shall carry out public awareness sensitisation through media, strategic alliances, visits about the following: -
- Availability of Water services
 - Location of our contact offices
 - Price of our water services
 - Public Health safety and advantages of consuming improved water

Responsible Staff:

Technical Department, Meter Readers, Surveyors, Billing, Customer Services section, finance department

4.4.5 Codes of practice for New Service Connections

- (i) Customers shall be within the designated service area
- (ii) Applicants should be willing to accept our new connection policies
- (iii) Applicants shall take charge of all encumbrances which are not the responsibility of the Utility prior to connections
- (iv) Capability of the applicants to pay for services according to the terms and conditions of the utility shall be determined and confirmed before a service connection is made
- (v) Applicants shall prove true ownership of the properties for which they want the connection
- (vi) We shall make available new connection forms free of charge to all our service points.
- (vii) The front Desk officer will always be available to guide every applicant on how to fill the form correctly and register completed forms
- (viii) We shall carry out a survey of the customer premise and determine requirements for the connection within 24 hour of registering the application forms
- (ix) New connection fees are received at any nearest cash office
- (x) Connection is effected within one day once the pipe laying works is completed and all connection fees are paid
- (xi) Every customer is provided with a meter at a rent fee levied at billing
- (xii) During new connection, notices/tips are left behind to customers on how to maintain their service lines, regarding leaks and economical use of water.
- (xiii) The Customer will receive the first bill one month from connection

Responsible Staff:

Technical Department, Meter Readers, Surveyors, Billing, Customer Services section, finance department

4.4.6 Codes of practice for Billing and Bill Distribution

We pledge to provide an accurate billing system through an internationally recognised and a secure billing process that complies with the best practice principles that will include: -

- (i) Monthly meter readings to establish actual consumption.
- (ii) Kindly requesting customers to allow our staff to have access to all meters at all times for purpose of meter reading and repair.
- (iii) Timely bill production by the 10th of each month or as agreed for a particular utility.
- (iv) Staff to physically distribute bills to customer premises by the 15th of every month or as agreed by the utility.
- (v) Making our prices easy to understand and providing the detail you need.
- (vi) Promptly taking action for any billing problem.
- (vii) Allowing the customer to lodge in any complaints regarding errors that might be discovered on our bills to the nearest
- (viii) Complaints on erroneous bill shall be acted upon within 12 hours.

Responsible Staff:

Billing Staff, Meter Readers, Customer Services Section, Operations and maintenance, finance department

4.4.7 Codes of practice for Payment of Services

- (i) Customers shall pay their bills in accordance to the utility's terms and conditions.
- (ii) Customers shall pay for the service at any of the Utility's official paying points and designated banks.
- (iii) No cash payments shall be made to our staff apart from authorized cashiers
- (iv) Payments shall be in cash or cheques.
- (v) Customers whose cheque(s) is/are dishonoured by the bank due to insufficient funds shall be liable to a penalty of 25% of the cheque value.

- (vi) Customers can make advance payments.
- (vii) Official receipts shall be issued for all payments made.

Responsible Staff:

Cashiers, Front Desk Staff, Meter Readers, Billing staff, Customer Services section, finance department

4.4.8 Codes of practice for Meter Management

- (i) All meters shall remain the property of THE UTILITY
- (ii) All suspected defective meters must be reported by Customers to the utility office, who is the sole authority to establish its condition
- (iii) All meter repairs / tests will be done free of charge by our staff
- (iv) The utility shall provide a well equipped workshop at to test and repair meters
- (v) A meter registration error of 5% (\pm) shall be tolerated
- (vi) Meter testing shall be the ultimate proof of water consumption
- (vii) Consumption for metered services shall base on the meter reading and associated charges shall be in accordance with the existing tariff.
- (viii) Customers who intend to leave the premises should give a two months notice of their intention to vacate the premises
- (ix) The cost of replacing a damaged due to the negligence of the customer will be borne by the customer
- (x) The cost for replacing defective meters shall be met by the utility
- (xi) All meters shall be installed in accordance to the utility's specification and standards

Responsible Staff:

Technical Department, Meter Readers, Surveyors, Billing, Customer Services section, finance department

4.4.9 Bill Dispute Procedures

- (i) Customers shall report the disputed bill(s) to the respective area office or Head Office
- (ii) The Utility shall immediately investigate the authenticity of the disputed bills

- (iii) Where proved that the complaint is genuine, it shall be adjusted within the month of approval to correct the anomaly

Responsible Staff:

Technical Department, Meter Readers, Surveyors, Billing, Customer Services section, finance department

4.4.10 Codes of practice for Arrears / Debt Management

- (i) We may accept payments for arrears by instalment upon making agreements
- (ii) We may offer discounts to well paying customers
- (iii) We may consider amnesty to disconnected accounts as a way wooing them back to service
- (iv) Wherever necessary, we may engage debt collector(s) to recover debts

Responsible Staff:

Technical Department, Meter Readers, Surveyors, Billing, Customer Services section, finance department

4.4.11 Code of practice and procedures on Disconnection

It is not usually the intention of the utility to disconnect its esteemed customers, but under un-avoidable circumstances, disconnections may occur. The following are the codes of practice and procedures that shall be adopted whenever the need to disconnect arises:

- (i) All customers who have not paid their bills for at least three consecutive months are eligible for disconnection
- (ii) All properties found illegally connected will be disconnected and subjected to a fine as per the utility's policy
- (iii) All properties found with meter by-pass shall be disconnected and subjected to a fine as per utility's policy
- (iv) Drawing water from the distribution main using pumps is illegal. Any body found in this practice, will be disconnected and subjected to a fine as per the utility's policy
- (v) Customers who fail to honour payment agreements will be disconnected

- (vi) Disconnected customers found illegally reconnected, will be disconnected again and subjected to legal actions

The following procedures shall be observed as utility's implements disconnection

- (i) Defaulters who have not paid for at least three consecutive months will be served with a seven days notice.
- (ii) Other illegal consumers will be disconnected instantly without notice
- (iii) After seven days notice, if customers have not turned up to settle their debts, they will be disconnected without any further notice
- (iv) All disconnected non paid customers will be subjected to the utility's debt collection procedures

4.4.12 Conditions for Reconnection

Customers who have been disconnected shall only be reconnected upon the following conditions:

- (i) After making full payment
- (ii) After entering into agreements for payments by instalments
- (iii) After it is proved that the customers was wrongly disconnected
- (iv) After it is proved that the customer was wrongly billed
- (v) Where the disconnection was due to the utility's operational and maintenance activities
- (vi) All disconnected customers due to illegal consumption will be reconnected after being subjected to utility's penalties and established connection procedures

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

5.0 The Customer Charters

Customer charters confirm publicly the roles and responsibilities of the utility and the rights of its customers.

5.1. Purpose of Customer Charter

To make the functions of our utility transparent, create service accountability and friendliness with customers, we shall define each service provided by the utility and the obligations of each part (service provider and customer). Through this we shall be exposing the efficiency and reliability of the service rendered by the utility.

Our Customer Charter shall:-

- Tell Customers the Standards of Service to Expect
- Tell Customers what to do if something goes wrong
- Tell Customers How to make Contact
- Help Employees by Setting out clearly the services their organisations provide

5.1.2 Declaration of Services provided

- A clean and safe water supply
- Disposal of sewage from houses connected to sewer system

5.1.3 UTILITY Obligations

a) Applications for new connections and meters

- i) Application forms shall be available from the Customer Service Unit and supplied at a reasonable fee or free of charge.
- ii) Acceptance or rejection of the filled in forms shall be acknowledged within seven days from the day of application (Customer Service Unit).
- iii) Payments shall be accepted in full or in instalments.
- iv) Payments shall be accepted by cheque/cash.

- v) Acknowledgement of payment shall be given immediately.
 - vi) In the event of un cleared cheques the payer will be fined.
 - vii) The connection will be made within seven days from the day of full connection fee payment.
 - viii) The applicant/customer should pay an estimated advance bill for three months.
 - ix) All connection processes should be done by the Utility.
 - x) All meters will be installed at a distance not greater than 36m from the distribution main.
 - xi) The customer will be obliged to protect and maintain the meter.
 - xii) The meter will be supplied by the Utility.
 - xiii) In case of meter damage the customer will pay the sum equivalent to the cost of a replacement meter.
 - xiv) All materials from the tapping point up to the meter should be approved by the UTILITY
- b) *Options for payment of bills*
- i) The first bill shall be issued within one months from the date of connection.
 - ii) Bills shall be issued monthly and shall be delivered by the 15th of every month or as agreed by the utility.
 - iii) Receipts will be issued for all payments immediately.
 - iv) Disconnection of a water/sewerage service will be carried out with notice of 7 days after the due date of payment.
 - v) Bills will be despatched by (i) Post, (ii) Hand and despatch book.
- c) *Complaints and requests*
- i) Customer complaints/requests shall be attended in person, writing or telephone.
 - ii) Customers will be informed of the minimum and maximum time to attend each case.
 - iii) All written correspondences shall be replied within 7 working days from the mail receiving date.
 - iv) Emergency team is available 24 hours.

- d) *Service assurance*
 - i) Quality: Our water shall be clean and safe to meet required standards
 - ii) Quantity: To be determined for each Utility
 - iii) Changes or service interruptions will be informed in not more than 12 hours
 - iv) Assured minimum hours supply/day

5.1.4 *Customers' obligations*

- i) Prompt pay bills
- ii) Protect and maintain water meters
- iii) Prompt report of leaks, illegal connections, water theft and water sabotages
- iv) Give accessibility to utility staff (Bearing Identify Cards and/or uniformed)

5.2 **The Customer Appeal System**

- i) A customer, who disagrees with an event decision, shall have the right to appeal the decision to UTILITY's Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee is designated to hear all formal appeals of events decisions and to render a final decision on each appeal. The customer shall be advised of the right to appeal by an appropriate message. Customers shall be notified in writing of the right to appeal on Final Notices mailed by UTILITY to the mailing address of record. Appeals must be submitted in writing to UTILITY and received prior to disconnection of service and include the following information:
 - a. Account number
 - b. Person requesting appeal
 - c. Service address
 - d. Mailing address if different
 - e. Other occupant names- Telephone number
 - f. Date submitted- Narrative of appeal- Printed name
 - g. Signature
- ii) Upon receipt by UTILITY's Customer Service Appeals Committee of a written appeal from a customer or applicant, UTILITY shall investigate the appeal and report the results, in writing, of its investigation to the customer or applicant within

- ten (10) business days from UTILITY's receipt of the written appeal. UTILITY shall prepare a written record showing the name and address of the customer or applicant involved, the date and nature of the appeal, and the disposition of the matter. UTILITY shall retain records of the appeal pursuant to UTILITY's record retention policy.
- iii) Pending resolution of the appeal, the customer's obligation to pay undisputed and subsequent charges continues.
 - iv) A customer or applicant who has an appeal pending with UTILITY may receive continued service provided:
 - a. No evidence of theft of service, tampering or fraud is discovered, and
 - b. A bona fide appeal exists in which the facts asserted by the customer or applicant may entitle the customer or applicant to service.
 - v) If the conditions in subsection (iv) of this section are not satisfied, UTILITY has no obligation to provide continued service. UTILITY will give the customer or applicant notice in accordance with UTILITY's Policy and Procedure prior to disconnecting service.
 - vi) If the customer refuses to accept delivery of the written decision or fails to comply with the Appeals Committee decision, UTILITY may proceed with immediate collection efforts without further notice, including, but not limited to restriction or disconnection of the customer's service. The written decision of the Appeals Committee is final when issued.
 - vii) Appeals are only accepted from UTILITY customers, applicants, or their authorized agent.

5.3 Customer Feed-Back Tools

5.3.1 Suggestion Boxes

The UTILITY shall have a suggestion box conveniently placed where customers can easily gain access. Possible locations shall either be at the Front Desk/Customer Service area, or the cash receipting point.

The suggestion box shall be opened at least once a week and customer feedback analyzed

5.3.2 *Customer Perception Surveys*

The UTILITY shall regularly carry out Customer Perception Surveys to obtain customer feedback. The surveys shall be in form of self administered questionnaire requesting for customer feedback with regard to the following aspects of utility service:

- Timeliness
- Reliability
- Ambience
- Staff Care
- Product Quality

5.3.3 *Other Feedback Sources*

- Strategic Alliance Meetings with Civic Leaders, Community Leaders, Community groupings, etc
- Focus Group Discussions

5.4 Customer Service Slogans

Slogans are statement of norms that direct the conduct of staff in customer service. It espouses the values of the company in serving customers. To create an inner culture of good customer service, the UTILITY shall:

- i) Develop customer service slogans
- ii) Publicize the Slogan
 - The Print & Electronic Media
 - In the Letter Heads
 - In Offices
 - In Facilities (vehic.les, plants, etc.)
 - Advertising media
- iii) Practice the Slogan
 - Walk the Talk

APPENDIX 1: CUSTOMER SERVICE FLOW CHART

