



Guideline for Harmonizing Awareness and Education of Telecommunications Service Users–West Africa

WATRA Working Group on Consumer
Access and Experience

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1 General Conditions

1.1 Preamble

Protecting the interests of telecommunications service users and strengthening their capacity to act are priorities for National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs). To this end, the West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Association (WATRA) has developed these guidelines to harmonize approaches to education, awareness-raising, and public information within member states.

These guidelines aim to promote a better understanding of telecommunications services, strengthen consumer protection, and establish a lasting relationship of trust between users, operators, and regulators.

1.2 Terminology

In this document, unless otherwise specified, the following terms have the following meanings:

"Awareness-raising": all actions aimed at informing, educating, and empowering users;

"Consumer education ": the process of acquiring knowledge that enables informed use of telecommunications services;

"Consumer": any natural person who acquires telecom goods and services for end use;

"NRA ": refers to the National Regulatory Authority;

"Consumer association": an organization representing and protecting/defending the interests of users;

"Continuing education platform": a mechanism designed to strengthen the capacities of stakeholders.

"Digital inclusion": equitable access to télécommunications services and information for all;

"NCC": refers to the Nigerian Communications Commission.

" PURA ": refers to the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority, from Gambia.

1.3 Goals

a) Main objective

These guidelines aim to establish a harmonized framework for raising awareness and educating consumers of telecommunications services in West Africa, to strengthen their information levels, capacity to act, and active participation in the digital ecosystem.

b) Other objectives:

National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs), through the implementation of these guidelines, also aim to:

- Clarify and define the regulator’s mandate in relation to consumer protection.
- Enhance public understanding of regulatory roles, actions, and approaches.
- Strengthen consumer engagement and responsiveness to consumer concerns.
- Improve identification, monitoring, and analysis of consumer challenges.
- Support the development of targeted, consumer-centric solutions.
- Inform and support evidence-based decision-making by Public Authorities.
- Promote responsible digital usage by reinforcing consumer rights and obligations.
- Enhance consumer autonomy, empowerment, and willingness to report complaints.
- Establish robust monitoring frameworks for effective oversight of regulated sectors.
- Promote proactive and anticipatory regulatory practices.
- Foster community-based engagement and proximity to consumers.
- Promote awareness of ethical standards and best practices in digital usage.

1.4 Methodology

Drawing on the experiences of Member States, this document outlines key best practices and emerging trends in consumer awareness and education for electronic communications services.

Accordingly, the guidelines are developed based on:

- Experiences of Member States.
- Established practices within National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs);
- Output of the Working Group on Consumer Access and Experience; and
- Findings from the reference meeting report (WATRA/WG/CAE/2024/001).

These contributions have enabled the identification of common approaches, effective tools, and innovative mechanisms to enhance consumer awareness across the sub-region.

1.5 Provisions

National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) are mandated to ensure compliance with legislation governing the electronic communications sector and, in this regard, play a key role in consumer education and awareness.

- Specifically, they are responsible for safeguarding consumer interests, strengthening the capacity of user associations,
- Monitoring as well as disseminating relevant information to government and stakeholders on operators' performance, service quality, and consumer satisfaction in line with international standards, among other functions.

2 Education and Awareness Mechanisms

2.1 Online continuing education platform

Awareness-raising activities implemented by National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) must be based on structured mechanisms adapted to the realities of the populations they serve. To this end, they rely in particular on establishing continuing education platforms that promote inclusive, participatory, and interactive approaches.

2.2 Field actions

These educational actions should also prioritize organizing awareness campaigns on the ground, taking into account local specificities, particularly by using national languages to ensure better understanding of the messages disseminated.

Furthermore, the use of information and outreach caravans is an essential lever for strengthening ties with communities and ensuring widespread dissemination of information.

2.3 Access to the regulator

Furthermore, particular attention must be paid to communicating information about complaint mechanisms to facilitate users' access to available recourse mechanisms. These actions also help protect users against fraudulent practices, malicious intent, and misinformation by equipping them with the knowledge necessary to identify and prevent these risks. On-site support for users or user associations is recommended.

2.4 Correspondence management and user information

Managing correspondence and informing users are essential elements of the awareness and outreach system within the ARNs.

a) Correspondence management

The NRAs are committed to ensuring the efficient and diligent processing of consumer correspondence. As such, they undertake to acknowledge receipt of letters and contributions, and to diligently follow up on all requests related to complaints or other user concerns.

b) Information for applicants

- The NRAs also play an informational role by responding to requests from users, researchers, or students. They provide relevant data on regulated sectors, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the telecommunications environment.
- The NRAs must exploit these requests for information through surveys aimed at measuring the level of satisfaction of applicants and continuously improving the quality of services.
- The NRAs must initiate a partnership with national statistical agencies and conduct surveys on sector data to assess the dynamics.

3 Consumer Protection Framework

Overall Objective :

- To prevent potential abuses and build consumer confidence.

Specific objectives

- Strengthening collaboration with consumers (Education and awareness)
- Ensuring consumer well-being (Protecting consumer interests)

NRAs are encouraged to adopt multi-channel engagement models inspired by international best practices.

Indeed, the aforementioned NRAs have implemented various consumer engagement models to ensure that telecom users are informed, protected, and empowered. Here are the main models:

3.1 Consumer awareness programs (COPs)

During these campaigns, consumers are informed through the free distribution of telecommunications manuals, fact sheets, and other consumer education materials. The main points are:

- **Orientation Camp Sensitization of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC):** targets fresh young graduates mostly under the age of 30 on consumer-centric issues and Commission initiatives.
- **Telecom Campus Conversations (TCC):** a dynamic platform to engage undergraduate students, one of the most digitally active groups.
- **Village Square Dialogue on (VSD):** focuses on grassroots engagement in rural and semi-urban areas to ensure inclusion for all.

3.2 Telecommunications Consumers' Parliament (TCP)

- a high-level quarterly forum between ecosystem players to address major consumer concerns;
- a space for deliberation to foster collaboration and improve the overall user experience.

3.3 General Assembly of Radio Telecom Consumers (TCTHR)

- a model of radio engagement to reach a wide audience;
- includes live discussions, listener calls, and question-and-answer sessions in English and local languages.

3.4 Digital/Online Engagement

- The NRAs use social media (X: [@consumersncc](#)), the Consumer Portal, and email (consumer@ncc.gov.ng) to interact with the public. Now Zoho CRM and Hootsuites

This dynamic of proximity is also found at the Gambian regulator, PURA, which conducts sustained communication through its users; notably, the following codes :

- **Toll-free (Short code):** allows customers to escalate unresolved complaints or request compensation;
- **Do-Not-Disturb (DND code):** helps consumers block unsolicited messages.
- **Mobile Number Portability (MNP code)**

Ultimately, this engagement model of the NRAs is multi-channel (physical, radio, digital, and community-based) to ensure accessibility and efficiency in resolving consumer issues while maximizing awareness and education. This approach facilitates the reporting of complaints.

4 Recommendations

The working group recommends the following actions:

- Facilitating access to legal action to guarantee consumer rights
- Communicating about the referral mechanisms
- Establish a single, accessible customer service for all users of digital services, modeled after The Gambia's system, using code 148. This code records all complaints and requests from operators and service providers, including:
 - Operators
 - ISP
 - SVA

5 Revision

WATRA may periodically revise these guidelines to adapt to developments in the sector.

6 ANNEXES

Strengthening collaboration with the consumers.

PROGRAMS	PROJECTS	RESULTS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Education and awareness	Consumer training and awareness projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several training and awareness campaigns for consumers are carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of training sessions and awareness campaigns conducted • Consumer satisfaction index rates for training courses
	Implementation of communication materials for consumer associations and consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several resources are being developed for consumer associations and consumers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of media/radio enlightenment campaigns carried out for consumers • Consumer satisfaction index rates on the media campaigns
	Creation of a platform for engagement between regulators and consumers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The platform for engagement between the regulator and consumer is created and operational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of engagement platforms between the regulator and consumers
	Establish a functional consumer feedback framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measured by its operational effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilization rate of the consumer satisfaction index

	Facilitate capacity building and collaborative engagement with licensees on regulatory tools and emerging technologies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple training programs are provided for regulated sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of training programs delivered to licensees and citizens. Completion rate of scheduled training programs.
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Ensuring well-being

PROGRAMS	PROJECTS	RESULTS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Protection of consumer interests	Strengthening the protection of consumer interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives to strengthen consumer protection are being carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of initiatives to strengthen consumer protection
	Responsible and sustainable environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrations on the meaning of green digital technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness session completion rates
	Promoting ethics and integrity in practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductory sessions on the meaning of responsibility were conducted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness session completion rates
	Protection of personal and critical data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities related to the protection of personal data are carried out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion rate of activities related to the protection of personal data
	Establish a platform to detect, prevent, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An initiative platform aimed at combating telecom fraud has been 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation rate of the anti-theft and anti-smuggling platform



	combat fraud within the telecom sector.	successfully implemented • Targeted awareness to address and prevent digital fraud.	• Equipment and terminal approval rates
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