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## **Title - Tools to Empower Consumers.**

### 1. Introduction

Most consumers lack adequate understanding of the products and services they pay for. They are vulnerable. They are not homogenous and often don't speak with one voice against powerful companies.

Without any form of protection, consumers are at the mercy of Corporates! Naturally, ill-informed and disorganised consumers are at great risk of fraudulent, unethical and monopolistic practices by businessmen and conglomerates driven by the drive for huge profits.

### 2. Tools for Consumer Protection

Consumer protection is imperative for governments. One such avenue is regulation. In Zambia, the following are key tools for consumer protection:

#### 2.1 Legislation

Zambian statutes provide for the energy regulator (ERB) to receive and investigate consumer complaints and receive inputs from consumers for the tariff determination process.

#### 2.2 Licencing

Licencees are obligated to operate within prescribed guidelines, standards and procedures stipulated by ERB and aimed at protecting consumers.

#### 2.3 Institutional Arrangements

Targeted collaboration with consumer protection agencies enhances consumer protection. CWGs protect consumers at the local level.

#### 2.4 Outreach Programmes

Consumers are sensitized through radio, TV, road shows and public meetings to help them know their rights.

### 3. Conclusion

Regulation stands at the center of consumer protection as it is one way of control.