

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM

CONSUMER

FORUM

HELD IN DECEMBER

2010

Few years ago, the Liberia Telecommunications Authority – LTA – launched an outreach campaign covering major cities across Liberia’s 15 counties, an event that culminated in the hosting of the first National Telecommunications Consumer Forum in Liberia under the theme “The Consumer is King”.

In attendance at the Forum were service providers and consumers from across the country, who deliberated on burning issues affecting consumers in the telecommunications sector with the aim of finding a way forward to better consumer satisfaction as regards Quality of Service (QoS), Universal Access, misleading information and promotions and unsolicited advertisements by service providers.

At the close of the Forum which was well attended by 110 consumers and representatives of LTA, Cellcom, Comium and LiberCell, the participants made the following recommendations:

1. That the LTA considers the establishment of a Consumer Parliament that will serve as the driving force for consumer education and protection
2. That the LTA takes immediate steps to issue Consumer Guidelines that will set the procedures of handling consumer complaints related to quality of services, unsolicited advertising, and other consumer related issues.
3. Operators must take seriously their obligations under the Telecom Act of 2007 to provide quality services and value for money, provide warranties for the products they sell and that the LTA begin to implement equipment type approvals for ICT products
4. That, operators consider the provision of tailored services for physically challenged individuals such as voice text.
5. That, service providers make every effort to ensure that consumers are aware of the time limitations for the use of numbers before recycling them through the dissemination of adequate information to consumers.
6. That, consumers are adequately educated on the potential health risks associated with the use of ICT and Telecommunications products and be mindful of how they use them. Service providers should ensure adherence to the relevant environmental protection regulations in the expansion of their networks and use more co-location on existing infrastructure.
7. That the LTA takes the necessary measures to put in place a mechanism for both SIM card and phone registration to establish proper identification which could discourage phone theft and ensure the responsible use of cell phones.

8. That the LTA give priority to the implementation of number portability to allow consumers the right to network choices without losing their assigned numbers.
9. That the LTA immediately introduce toll free numbers to provide aggrieved consumers free access to its Consumer Helpdesk and establish regional offices throughout Liberia.
10. That service providers introduce options that will allow consumers to block unsolicited advertising if so desired.
11. That service providers implement customer call center solutions that provide efficient and respectful customer care and provide information on the estimated wait time.
12. That Service providers, as much as is feasibly possible, open sub-offices in the areas in which they operate to provide services to consumers.
13. That service providers, as much as is possible in a commercial environment, improve the level of coordination amongst themselves.