

76% consumers pay middlemen to get electricity connection

By Hetal Vyas, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Jan 27, 2014, 01.00 AM IST



The survey found that 20 per cent of users did not get a receipt, while 11 per cent received receipts for only a part of the amount paid to Bescom

A study by Public Affairs Centre finds that 80 per cent of Bescom consumers were not asked to pay bribes, but paid anyway to speed up delivery of service. Vigilance against power theft was almost nil

During his stint as managing director of Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Ltd (Bescom), P Manivannan had initiated a series of measures to improve customer relations, increase transparency and end corruption apart from improving supply of electricity. Following the introduction of those measures, many consumers reported a marked improvement in the quality of service and the style of functioning of staff of the utility service. But a survey conducted by a reputed research institute suggests the power utility still has a long way to go.

The survey, conducted by Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a not-for-profit organisation, reveals that 76 per cent of those seeking a fresh Bescom connection approach a middleman or a third party to get the job done. Significantly, a majority of consumers revealed that they were not asked to pay bribes, but paid anyway just to speed up delivery of service.

The study, funded by Bescom and the state government, was aimed at assessing the quality of electricity supply at two levels: consumers and staff. During the six-month long survey conducted last year, the researchers surveyed 2,000 Bescom consumers and 600 staff of the power utility.

While the survey of consumers focused on quality and reliability of electricity supply, problems associated with supply, resolution of problems, satisfaction levels of service delivery and suggestions for improvement, the survey of Bescom staff concentrated on job aspects, support from department and community, responsiveness, efficiency, corruption, satisfaction and suggestions for

improvement. The survey was conducted in all the three zones of Bescom, viz: Bangalore Metropolitan Area Zone (BMAZ), Bangalore Rural Area Zone (BRAZ) and Chitradurga Zone (CTAZ).

A majority of respondents (58 per cent) claimed they engaged the services of a middleman to ensure timely connection, while 21 per cent said they went to a middleman because they did not understand the processes. About 15 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that everybody gets a connection only with the help of intermediaries, while 2 per cent admitted that they sought a middleman as their documentation was not in order.

"This reflects the need to reduce or remove involvement of middlemen by simplifying the application process (40 per cent reported that the application process is difficult) and using new technology (applying online)," said the study authored by senior researchers, K Prabhakar and Meena Nair.

The researchers also found that almost half the sample members (47 per cent) use inverters and/or generators to cope with power cuts and voltage fluctuations. "This has led to forced expenditure to maintain these peripherals even though they are paying to get uninterrupted and quality power supply," noted the authors.

The study also unearthed external corruption while getting securing a power connection. "One-fifth (20 per cent) of users did not get a receipt, while 11 per cent received receipts for only a part of the amount paid. This clearly shows the existence of an unaccountable money-taking practice from consumers, which is reflected in the low levels of satisfaction ratings by consumers. The existence of this pattern of external corruption has also been agreed to by Bescom personnel, albeit an under-reported 14 per cent of the staff," the study says.

Biggest payers in BAMZ

The researchers found that consumers in BMAZ paid nearly thrice the sum paid by users in BRAZ and CTAZ to get the new electricity connection. "The average amount paid by users in BMAZ was Rs 9,076, while users in BRAZ and CTAZ paid Rs 3,070 and Rs 2,971 respectively," the survey noted.

Faster delivery of service

The survey revealed that among those respondents who received receipts for a part of the sum paid and those who did not receive any receipt, 84 per cent said they paid the extra amount to get the connection soon. About 11 per cent felt that they would not have got the connection if they hadn't paid a bribe.

Of those who admitted to paying bribes, 53 per cent said they paid the money directly to Bescom officials, while 47 per cent said they paid intermediaries. Surprisingly, only 20 per cent of the users who paid extra amounts said that the extra money was demanded from them. "It is regrettable that 80 per cent of them voluntarily paid this extra amount. After paying this extra amount, nearly 95 per cent of users said their work got completed," the report says.

No advance notification

"Only two per cent of users said they always see advance notifications of power cuts from Bescom. About 24 per cent said they see such notifications sometimes, while 74 per cent said that they had never seen any such notification. It is clear that dissemination of information regarding power cuts from Bescom, needs to improve drastically," the study states.

Lack of vigilance

The survey revealed an almost total lack of vigilance against power theft. Only 2 per cent of users said officers from Bescom's vigilance department

visited their houses to check on power theft. About 12 per cent said Bescom staff, in addition to the routine work, also checked on power theft. Nearly 58 per cent said no one ever visited their homes to check or enquire about power theft.

Work overload

The survey also noted that on an average, each sub-division caters to 83,068 consumers and each O&M addresses 39,305 consumers. Currently, there is a shortage (27 per cent) of staff at all levels and this gap is highest among the ALM/LJM (39 per cent) and lineman (29 per cent) cadres. "With an insufficient workforce, additional burden is put on employees who are reportedly working almost round-the-clock (17 to 24 hours) especially in Tumkur, Davangere, Bangalore Rural and Kolar Circles. On the whole, each office requires a minimum of 13 persons at all levels to meet consumer expectations for better service delivery," the survey noted.

'Public perception must change'

Commenting on the findings of the survey, Jayanthi N, general manager, customer relations, Bescom claimed that the procedure to obtain a new connection has been simplified. "We are looking to improve in areas that need improvement," Jayanthi said. "People will have to overcome the perception that their work will get done only if they approach a middleman. The procedure to get a new connection has been simplified and very few documents are required. It can be done within a month's time if all the documents are submitted."

We Recommend



Indian Street Food is Safer Than Restaurant Food

NDTV.com



Building A Bridge From Both Sides

Business Innovation



Why Decriminalizing Prostitution Is The Wrong Solution

hubub



Innovation: this is how you can reach your consumers

EY

Recommended by

From Around The Web More from Bangalore Mirror

■ Ghanaian Women Show The World The Beauty In... Business Innovation	■ I'm seen as a recluse because I am single Entertainment
■ You've Been Peeling Mangoes Wrong Your Whole Life NDTV.com	■ Garbage stink reaches Bangaloreans' backyard Bangalore
■ Big Fat Surprise - Butter and Cheese are Not Bad... NDTV.com	■ Sexual innuendos women hear in Bangalore Bangalore
■ The 10 Worst Traffic Cities in the World EscapeHere	■ 'I got HIV after visiting spa' Bangalore
■ Our favourite images of the week BBC	■ High Court lets denotification accused to go to... Bangalore
■ Top 3 rooftop restaurants in Bangalore LiveInStyle.com	■ Woman gang-raped by 10, including husband, in MP News

Recommended by

BangaloreMirror	Home	Bangalore	Columns	Entertainment	News	Sports	Photos	Others
Mumbai Mirror		Cover Story	Ask the Sexpert	Bollywood	State	Cricket	Entertainment	Letters to the Editor
Ahmedabad Mirror		Crime	Sunday Read	Hollywood	India	Football	News	Sci Tech
Pune Mirror		Civic	You	Reviews	World	Tennis	Technology	
Times of India		Others	Work	Lounge	Business	F1	Sports	
Economic Times			Code 560	South Masala		Others		
E-paper			Views					
M-Paper			Food					
Lifehacker India								
Gizmodo India								
Happy Trips								
Weekend Getaways from Bangalore								
Go Cricket								

About Us Advertise with us Terms of Use and Grievance Redressal Policy Privacy Policy

Copyright © 2014 Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. All rights reserved. For reprint rights:Times Syndication Service