

POLICY BRIEF

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES (ACTIVE ELECTRICAL ENERGY METERS) REGULATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS¹) organized the very first consultative meeting on "Weights and Measures (Active Electrical Energy Meters) Regulation" on Thursday 25th February 2010. It is against complaints by both consumers and retailers that UNBS thought it vital to develop a law on the same. This regulation is long overdue; consumers need an independent energy regulator. Under Section 43 of the weights and measures Act, cap 103², UNBS drafted the proposed weights and measures (Active Electrical Energy meters³) rules with an objective to regulate the use of active electrical energy meters in order to promote fair trade in electrical energy transactions in Uganda. Therefore, UNBS recognizes the importance of stakeholder consultations before submission to the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Industry for Government to approve the Regulation. This is on the background that UNBS' role is to ensure fairness in Trade and precision in Industry through measurement systems.

2. STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

These include, Electricity generation Companies, Electricity Transmission Companies, Electricity Retailers (i.e. UMEME), Electricity Consumers, Electricity Regulators plus Legal Experts.

3. ELECTRICITY RETAILERS' CONCERNS

There are over 60,000 power thieves, aggregating to 38% of UMEME power losses worth UGX 37 billion per annum through Meter tempering and illegal connections⁴. This has a significant Implication to Consumers in a sense that it leads to higher electricity tariffs to a few honest and compliant consumers of electricity.

4. ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS' CONCERNS

These include; it is reported that electricity meters' accuracy is doubted since they have been in service for so long without verification. Also, electricity retailers import, calibrate, seal, install and

¹ UNBS is a statutory body under Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Industry with a mandate of enhancing National development through the application of standards in Trade and Industry and Consumer Protection.

² See hard Copy for details on this ACT, PSFU Advocacy Unit/UNBS

³ Active Electrical Energy meter means; a device which measures the active electrical energy consumed in a circuit

⁴ According to an interview by UNBS and UMEME (Report), 2008

POLICY BRIEF

read the meters, consequently billing consumers without any independent player in the business. Important to note also is that some electricity retailers import faulty meters to cheat electricity consumers⁵.

5. RESPONSE BY UNBS

A law on energy meters was drafted to enable UNBS inspectors to exercise their powers to enforce regulation on the same, consultations are under way, and this was the first consultative meeting organized by UNBS.

6. WOULD BE BENEFITS IF LAW IS PASSED

If the regulation/law is approved, the following benefits would accrue; Consumer satisfaction, deterrent fines/penalty against electricity fraud, reduction in electricity thefts and tariffs, better and improved planning in the sector, among others.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

In conclusion, for fair play in the sector and protection to both consumers and retailers, the Government ought to pass this regulatory law. There is also need for an independent body to carry out testing and calibration of electricity meters-UNBS is responsible for any queries on verification issues. More so, all stakeholders should be engaged in order to implement this regulation (i.e. manufacturers and importers), for consumers' rights and protection to be met, their interests should be incorporated in the law. The new law should be "Weights and Measures (Electrical Energy Meters) Regulation" to include all meters not only the 'Active meters' as presupposed by UNBS.

The over all conclusion is that it is relevant that Uganda has an independent regulatory law/body in electrical energy to ensure fair play in electrical energy transactions in Uganda and reduced electricity tariffs. This is in accordance with acceptable international standards if Uganda is to compete favourably. This being the very first stakeholders consultative meeting on the proposed law, UNBS will receive comments on the same till **25th March 2010** further changes and where there is need, carry out other consultations before the bill is presented to Government/Ministry of Trade and Industry for approval.

⁵ UNBS Inspectors' report/survey (interview with UMEME), 2008