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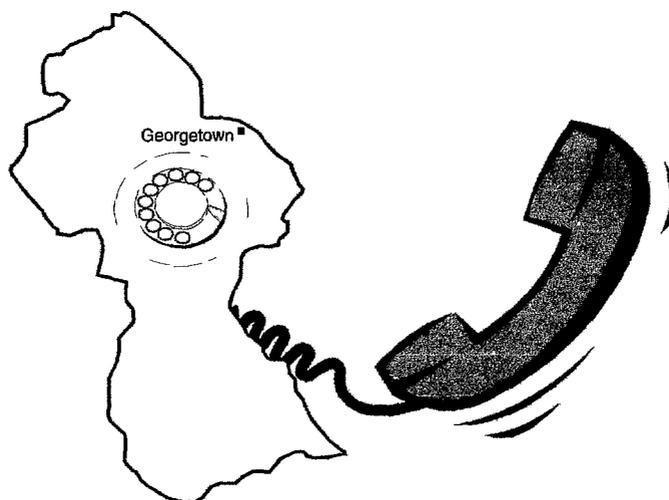
Building Equity And Economic Participation

(BEEP) Project

Contract No 504 0107 C 00 620 00

Consumer Hot Line

Workshop Report



Submitted to:

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Project Officer
U S A I D /Guyana
Georgetown, Guyana

Submitted by:

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MANAGEMENT &
TRAINING CONSULTANT

August 1997



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1 SCOPE OF WORK

THE CONSULTANT WILL

- (a) Assess the need for specific aspects of communication and customer service training through observation and interviews with members of the staff
- (b) Prepare a training design for the workshop sessions
- (c) Conduct the workshops
- (d) Assist the Consumer Affairs Division and the GNBS with the design of a system for receiving, recording, channeling and following-up on complaints
- (e) Provide training to the hotline staff in interacting with the public and responding to complaints

2 FULFILLMENT OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (A) ASSESS THE NEED FOR SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING THROUGH OBSERVATION AND INTERVIEWS WITH MEMBERS OF THE STAFF

- Between April 28 and April 29, the Consultant spent 9hrs interviewing key and relevant members of staff of the GNBS (relevant in items of the specific focus of the task) These persons included, Director of GNBS, Assistant to the Director, Chief Inspector, Snr Inspector and Inspectors, Technical Assistant, Admin Officer, Receptionist, Information Assistant Clerk - Public Relations The Director, Consumer Affairs and the Permanent Secretary were already interviewed as part of the Consumer Care Scope of Work of the first Consultancy

From these interviews, the Consultant was able to diagnose specific deficiencies in the areas of communication and customer service. Problems, needs and concerns of staff in these areas were discussed with them on a one-on-one basis.

- During this period, the Consultant was also observing office conduct as this relates to Communication and Customer Service.
- On June 9, the Consultant spent 6hrs observing in the GNBS, specifically in the room where the Hotline is placed, and listening to how staff members generally answered telephone calls. 3 additional hours were spent
 - Evaluating the level of absorption of what was done at the workshop.
 - Evaluating how aware/knowledgeable members of staff were of good and bad Customer Care.

(B) PREPARE A TRAINING DESIGN FOR THE WORKSHOP SESSIONS

This group named at APPENDIX D will already have benefited from training as shown at APPENDIX E, since they were all participants, therefore this 3hr workshop on the Hotline was supplementary and specifically focussed. The Training programme dealt specifically with

- A Hotline Questionnaire
- (A summary of the findings of this Questionnaire is on pgs 13-18)
- Customer Care as this relates to Hotline Callers
- Follow-through Activities
- Telephone Techniques

- Dealing with Complainants with specific references to the angry or displeased customer
- Listening Skills/Interview Skills
- Preserving the Image of GNBS
- Professionalism and Commitment to Excellence

Practical Sessions

In practical sessions held on a separate day, June 9,1997 both groups (staff of MTT& I and GNBS) did 2 Role Play Scenes at GNBS Both of these were very good and demonstrated all the pitfalls of poor Customer Complaint Service At the end of the presentations, lessons learnt were highlighted for the entire group

(C) CONDUCT THE WORKSHOPS

The workshops were conducted

- (1) Prior to the conduct of the workshops, a Hotline Questionnaire was designed by the Consultant This provided much useful information that informed the proposals made later in this report Some responses to the Questionnaire are on pages 17
- (2) Research was done on the complaints records which were in the GNBS for three years 1995-1997

This provided useful information for use at the workshop Details of findings follow

3 MY FINDINGS WERE VERY INTERESTING AND CORRESPONDED WITH THE RESPONSES ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following are my findings

- 3 1 A Hot-line does not really exist On very many days the hot line No 77889 does not ring It did not ring on June 9 while I was at G N B S
- 3 2 According to the response on the questionnaire, the hotline number is used like any other number when callers do not succeed on other G N B S numbers It is a number not used necessarily for complaints
- 3 3 Also, when there is a blackout and the regular GNBS numbers are shut down, the hotlines number continues to work therefore it "comes in handy" for general communication purposes
- 3 4 The form "Consumer Complaint form" is adequate but
 - 3 4 1 The officer completing the form must remember to tick indicating whether the person complaining did so by telephone, in person or by correspondence
 - 3 4 2 The form needs to indicate how the matter ended and whether there was any feedback given to the complainant There is room for this but the officer has not been filling in this part of the form

A version of the complaint form, reduced in size is at Appendix B

3 4 3 There needs to be a quarterly summary report prepared by the Inspectorate Section. A copy of this should be forwarded to the Permanent Secretary and the Director of Consumer Affairs

A draft of the summary sheet is attached at Appendix C

3 4 4 The level of Report Writing is very poor. English grammar is poor. Officers completing these records need to understand that what they write becomes a permanent record of the Bureau. It is a record to which they sign their names. The Bureau must establish standards of excellence in all areas

3 4 5 Advertisement of the hot-line was for too brief a period. Consumers do not know of the existence of a hot-line

3 5 Information from records of complaints

3 5 1 Complaints processed in 1997

January-June 1997

Total number complaints processed	23
(i.e. responded to as per procedures form)	
By telephone	7
By Personal visits	10
Officer did not indicate method	6

3 5 2 Complaints processed in 1996

January- December 1996

Total number of complaints processed	76
By telephone	16
By personal visits	48
By correspondence	3
Officer did not indicate	9

3 5 3 Complaints processed in 1995

January- December 1995

Total number of complaints processed	107
By telephone	15
By personal visits	79
Officer did not indicate	11
By correspondence	2

- 4 The above indicates that the Bureau needs not only telephone skills but interface/interview skills. Most of their complaints are from visitors to the Bureau. However, since the Bureau moved to Sophia in 1996, there has been a reduction in the number of visitors.

- (D) ASSIST THE CONSUMER AFFAIRS DIVISION AND THE GNBS WITH THE DESIGN OF A SYSTEM FOR RECEIVING, RECORDING, CHANNELING AND FOLLOWING-UP ON COMPLAINTS

The Consumer Affairs Division and the Guyana National Bureau of Standards already have in place a good system for receiving, recording, channelling and following up on complaints. The problem is the management of the system.

A copy of the existing procedures is at Appendix A

- The consultant held two meetings in August to discuss with those concerned the deficiencies in the system
- August 9 Meeting was held with Dr C Ramcharran and Mr Paul Wharton
- August 16 Meeting was held with Dr C Ramcharran, Mr Paul Wharton and the relevant staff of GNBS who had participated in the Hotline workshop in May and June

5 PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED AND PROPOSALS

Problem #1 There is very little use of the Hotline by consumers. Consumers are not generally aware of the GNBS Hotline number because advertisement of the hotline was inadequate.

Proposal 1 Secure from GT&T by the end of September a new Hotline # that is easy to remember. It should also be a Hotline which has no call-out facility.

- 2 Between October 1 and November 1 at peak periods, advertise the Hotline on Radio, television and in the Newspapers The advertisement will give guidance examples of some of the things the Hotline should be used for
- 3 Officials of G N B S and Ministry of T T & I should make use of the more popular Radio talk shows to advertise the consumer Hotline
- 4 Between November 1 and December 1 the frequency of the advertisements on radio and television should be reduced However, posters advertising the Hotline should be available for use on the city's billboards, in cinemas, etc and flyers used for distribution in public places
- 5 The media should be asked to assist by carrying this advertisement during the second and third months as a public service announcement
- 6 At the end of January 1998, the staff of G N B S assisted by the Director of Consumer Affairs should hold an evaluation session to assess the impact of the media blitz on consumers complaint behaviors Depending on the findings at this evaluation session, the following should be done
 - successes with the hotline should be highlighted
 - a decision should be made whether the campaign be continued in a modified fashion
 - a decision should be made whether the campaign be discontinued, because the Hotline was now being more fully utilized

- 7 An evaluation report should be sent to the Permanent Secretary, the Director G N B S and the Director of Consumer Affairs

- 8 Consumers should be made aware of what the procedures are when complaints are made on the Hotline These should be in the form of attractive flyers and placed in strategic places for free distribution

Post Offices

Department Stores

Airline Offices

G E C

Pharmacies

Doctors/Dentists Surgeries, Clinics, etc

One such proposed flyer is attached at Appendix ²

The above proposals have been discussed with the Director of G N B S , Dr Ramcharran, who is agreeable and has accepted all the proposed dates They have also been discussed with Mr Paul Wharton He thinks the proposals are good workable ones He is prepared to lend every assistance to Dr Ramcharran

Problem 2 Complaint forms are just filed according to years There are no periodic reports on consumer complaints prepared by G N B S and forwarded to the Director of Consumer Affairs and the Permanent Secretary

Proposal That there be quarterly reports prepared by G N B S and submitted at the following times each year March – June - September and December This should begin in September 1997 At this time a report should be prepared for the period January to August 1997 The December report should be for the period September – December

Problem 3 The items on the consumer complaint form need to be numbered so that they can be referred to easily

Proposal A more attractively designed and more easily readable form is at Appendix C

Problem 4 The level of English and Report writing on the forms is poor

Problem 5 The Reports are not overseen by a Supervisor

Proposal 1 Since these reports form part of the permanent records in the Bureau, the reports of the Inspectors should be checked before they are filed This should begin immediately

2 A twelve week programme in Upgrading English and Report-Writing conducted In-House by I D C E (Institute of Distance and Continuing Education) should be started Information conveyed to the Consultant is that a current six-week programme will end in August The Director G N B S has agreed for another to begin in October

- 3 The Chief Inspector should be asked to evaluate after a 3 month period i.e. by March 1998 whether the standard of Report-Writing has improved. This information should be reported to the Director of G N B S and the Director of Consumer Affairs

Problem 6 **Not all parts of the Complaints Form are completed by the Inspectors e.g. item 2 is frequently not ticked likewise items 15 and 18. The result is that the reader does not always know how the matter ended**

Proposal 1 The Chief Inspector should from time to time (since Inspectors come and go) conduct her own in-house training programme with the Inspectors on the completion of the form

The consultant has gone through with the Chief Inspector and staff what the shortcomings are, but the completion of the form needs to be monitored on a continuing basis

Problem 7 **The absence of Consumer legislation in Guyana is severely hampering the work of G N B S in dealing with complainants. Many salesmen and manufacturers are aware of this and know that the Standards Bureau can go so far and no further. Consumers are therefore constantly at a disadvantage**

Proposal Those in the Ministry of Trade who are responsible for ensuring that the draft consumer legislation is completed and gets the approval of Parliament should do so as a matter of urgency. It should be completed before the end of 1997

E PROVIDE TRAINING TO THE HOTLING STAFF IN INTERACTING WITH THE PUBLIC AND RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

This has been done

- in the training workshops and
- in the meetings held with the staff

Joyce E Sinclair
August 26 1997

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A¹ - Copy of Existing Procedures for Complainants
- APPENDIX A² - Proposed Flyer for Consumers
- APPENDIX B - Existing Complaint Form
(Reduced in size with items numbered)
- APPENDIX C - Draft of Summary Sheet
- APPENDIX D - Names of Participants
- APPENDIX E - Training Programme
- APPENDIX F - Some Responses From The Hotline Questionnaire

Appendix A¹

Guyana National Bureau of Standards

Procedure for Consumer Complaints Investigation

- 1 Complaints are reported either by telephone, correspondence or in person to the Inspectorate Division of the Bureau in respect of a product or service. By telephone, the hotline 02-77889 is used to receive complaints.
- 2 Complaints which are relevant to the other agencies are referred thereto and complainants are advised to contact the Agency concerned. Complaints received by correspondence are replied to promptly.
- 3 An Inspector from the Inspectorate Division receives the complaint from the complainant and enters all particulars pertaining to the product or service on a prescribed form. An entry is also made into the Complaints Register. The form and the register are kept updated as to the progress of the investigation by the Inspector carrying out the said investigation.
- 4 The complaint is then investigated by the inspector who contacts the place of business where the product or service was sold. Particulars of the complaint are verified and further information on the product or service, whether technical or general are recorded on the complaint form.
- 5 Inspection of the similar goods in stock is carried out by the Inspector and necessary advisory issued to the supplier of the goods concerned.
- 6 The legitimacy of the complaint is ascertained. The possibility of a refund, goods exchanged, repairs or other measures is negotiated for the benefit of the consumer.

- 7 The defective product, if necessary, is examined/tested by an appropriate Agency recognised by the Bureau. The results of such examinations are used in the investigation of the complaint.
- 8 After the investigation is concluded, the complainant is contacted on the results. If there is no agreement, the complainant is advised to seek legal advice.
- 9 A follow-up letter confirming the complaint and the investigation carried out, along with the appropriate advisory, is dispatched to the business place.
- 10 The complaint is then signed off by the Inspector and countersigned by the Chief Inspector.

Appendix A²

Consumer Rights

THE RIGHT to seek redress against unfair trade practices or unscrupulous exploitation of customers

To provide the customer with prompt attention and speedy redress of their grievances, the Guyana National Bureau of Standards Investigates consumer complaints through its Consumer Affairs Section for all categories of products excluding food, drugs, cosmetics, pesticides and agricultural produce

THE RIGHT to be informed about the quality, potency, purity etc So as to protect the consumer against unfair trade practices

**QUALITY
APPROVED**

Consumer Rights *Contd*

THE RIGHT to consumer education Guyana National Bureau of Standards Consumer Affairs and Public Relations Department disseminate very useful information for consumers through the newspaper, radio, television and fact sheet

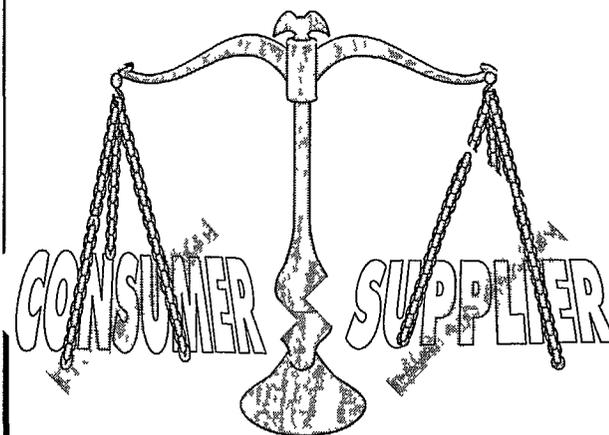
THE RIGHT to be protected against marketing of goods which are hazardous to life and property

There are products which, if not produced or manufactured according to the correct guidelines can be harmful, and can be hazardous to life Fortunately, there are standards for products which prescribe built-in mechanisms for safety, the domestic electric appliances toys etc are common examples

**QUALITY
APPROVED**

GUYANA NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS

PROCEDURE FOR CONSUMER COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION



Tel: 59041

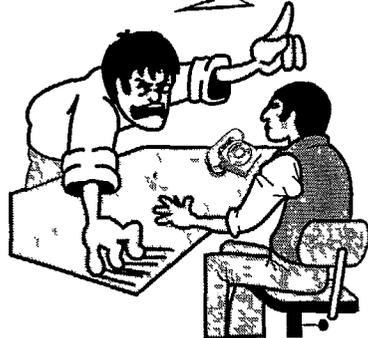
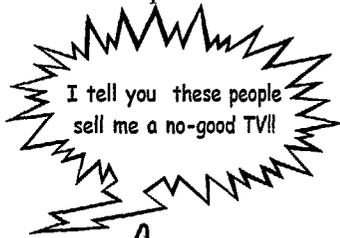
Hot Line
Number 02-77889

PROCEDURE FOR CONSUMER COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATION

1 Complaints are reported either by telephone, correspondence or in person to the Inspectorate Division of the Bureau in respect of a product or service. By telephone, the hotline 0277889 is used to receive complaints.



2 Complaints which are relevant to the other agencies are referred thereto and complainants are advised to contact the Agency concerned. Complaints received by correspondence are replied to promptly.



3 An Inspector from the Inspectorate Division receives the complaint from the complainant and enters all particulars pertaining to the product or service on a prescribed form. An entry is also made into the Complaints Register. The form and the register are kept updated as to the progress of the investigation by the Inspector carrying out the said investigation.

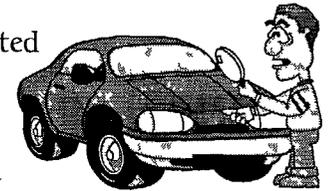
4 The complaint is then investigated by the inspector who contacts the place of business where the product or service was sold. Particulars of the complaint are verified and further information on the product or service, whether technical or general are recorded on the complaint form.



5 Inspection of the similar goods in stock is carried out by the Inspector and necessary advisory issued to the supplier of the goods concerned.

6 The legitimacy of the complaint is ascertained. The possibility of a refund, goods exchanged, repairs or other measures is negotiated for the benefit of the consumer.

7 The defective product, if necessary, is examined/tested by an appropriate Agency recognised by the Bureau. The results of such examinations are used in the investigation of the complaint.



8 After the investigation is concluded, the complainant is contacted on the results. If there is no agreement, the complainant is advised to seek legal advice.



9 A follow up letter confirming the complaint and the investigation carried out, along with the appropriate advisory, is dispatched to the business place.

10 The complaint is then signed off by the Inspector and countersigned by the Chief Inspector.



APPENDIX A2

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BUREAU OF STANDARDS CONSUMER COMPLAINTS FORM

1 Ref No _____

2 Medium of Complaint Telephone [] Person [] Correspondence []

3 Date _____ 4 Time _____

5 Complainant's Name _____

6 Address _____

7 Tel No _____

8 Product/Service _____

9 Date of Purchase _____

10 Particulars of Complaint _____

Consumer Hot Line

11 Signature of Complainant _____

12 Officer Receiving Complaint _____

13 Any Immediate Remarks _____

14 Action taken by Inspector _____

15 Results of Investigation _____

16 Signature of Investigating Officer _____

17 Date _____

18 Feedback to Complainant

19 Signature

20 Date

21 Remarks

DRAFT SUMMARY SHEETSUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVEDQUARTER: JAN - APRIL 1997

Total no. of complaints received

By Telephone

By Correspondence

By Personal Visits .

Classification of Complaints

	Solved to the satis- faction of complainants	Still Pending
Category 1 () ()	()	()
Category 2 () ()	()	()
Category 3 () ()	()	()
Category 4 () ()	()	()

Prepared by

Certified by

Date

Appendix D

CONSUMER HOT-LINE WORKSHOP
MINISTRY OF TRADE & GUYANA NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS

Tuesday May 27 1997

<u>Name</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Location</u>
1. Desiree Nieuwenkerk	Licensing Officer(ag)	M.T.T&I
2. Susheel Ramnauth	Typist Clerk	G.N.B.S
3. Minerva Inverary	Information Assistant	G.N.B.S
4. Shellone Reynolds	Technical Assistant	G.N.B.S
5. Maxine Solomon	Filing Clerk	G.N.B.S
6. Margaret Frank	Stenographer	G.N.B.S
7. Joseph Cumberbatch	Senior Consumer Affairs Officer	M.T.T & I
8. Clifford Zammett	Senior Foreign Trade Officer	M.T.T & I
9. Jormonica Walcott	Foreign Trade Officer(ag)	M.T.T & I
10. Karen Primo	Receptionist	G.N.B.S
11. Shabika Lynch	Chief Inspector(ag)	G.N.B.S
12. Debra Gill	Information Assistant	G.N.B.S
13. Othneil Greene	Inspector	G.N.B.S
14. Marcellene Browne	Confidential Secretary	G.N.B.S
15. Adrian Balgobin	Inspector	G.N.B.S
16. Shallendra Rai	Inspector	G.N.B.S
17. Tracy Ann Seiforth	Assistant to PRO/Clerk	G.N.B.S
18. Abigail Daniels	Licensing Clerk	M.T.T & I
19. Muriel Tinnis	Research Assistant	M.T.T & I

Appendix E

Appendix E

TRAINING PROGRAMME

- Recap of work done by participants when they did Customer Care Workshop
- Administering of Hotline Questionnaire
- Customer care as this relates to Hotline Callers
- Follow-through activities
- Telephone Techniques
- Dealing with complainants with specific reference to the angry or displeased customer
- Listening Skills/Interview Skills
- Preserving the image of G N B S
- Professionalism and Commitment to Excellence
- Practical Projects for the two (2) groups

Appendix F

Was opinion of the
users of the hot line
raised ?
Appendix F
only if to be
my line
See

SOME RESPONSES FROM THE HOTLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 4

Is the Hot-line working the way it was intended?

Yes No Not altogether

Circle one

- 5 participants said No
- 8 participants said Yes
- 6 participants said Not Altogether
- 3 participants did not respond

Question 6

How do Consumers know about the Hot-line?

- Newspapers Radio Television
- Other Staff Members Public Relations Programmes on the Radio

Question 11

G N B S Staff who Attended the Hot-line Workshop How many
complaints have you received in the last month?

(a) On the Hot-line 5 said nil

Five said nil	Three said 2	One said 3
One said 4	One said 1	One said several
One said 7		
One said 3		

(b) On other lines

One said 1
One said 2

MTT&I Staff

How many complaints have you received?

One other lines

One said 3

One said very few

3 said nil

Several did not respond since complaints do not generally go through lines at the Ministry of Trade

Question 17

What do Consumers complain about?

- "Articles or appliances not functioning "
- "Missing parts from appliances that work for a short period and stop "
- "Short Weight "
- "Appliances that work in the store but not at home "
- "Persons who would like to purchase something but don't know where to get it "
- "G E C Bills "
- "Vehicles "
- "Faulty electrical appliances "
- "Buying vegetables, fruits, greens and other items "
- "Quality of commodity being sold on the local market "
- "Quality of service received in some organisations "
- "Textiles –Lumber "
- "Exorbitant prices in shops "

- "Inadequate information on Tourism "
- "Duties at Customs and Excise Dept "
- "High prices for second hand items sold as new "
- "Shabby treatment by store attendants "

Question 18

Problems with the customer Hot-line

- "There is only one hot-line so when persons do not get through on the consumer hot-line, they use other numbers to make complaints "
- "When there is a power outage and other lines go down, the Consumer Hot-line 77889 remains working So persons use this no to contact staff on other matters
- "This line is seldom used Consumers claim that the hotline number is the only one free so they use it "
- "Persons do not remember the Hot-line number "
- "Advertisement of the Hot-line number is irregular "
- "The Hot-line number is often called for someone's home "
- "There is not enough information in circulation about the hotline internally and externally "

Question 19

What do you think is the Consumer's biggest problem with the Hot-line?

- "No action can be taken after a complaint is given either because of the consumer's wrong -doing or inability of the Bureau to take action "
- "Consumers expect immediate solutions to their problems "
- "Consumers are not aware of the Hot-line "
- "Consumers do not remember the number of the Hot-line "
- "They are not sure how it works and how it can help them "
- "It is also not listed in the directory "

Question 20

From your experience with consumers who call to complain, what kind of technical training do you think the staff needs to deal effectively with the complaints?

- "To be knowledgeable about legal and other remedies available to him/her and to the consumer "
- "A knowledge of the regulatory body which has specific responsibility for particular kind of problem "
- "Knowledge of the functions of consumer protection agencies "
- "How to be patient and calm "
- "How to deal with the uncouth caller "
- "How to practise courtesy on the telephone "

- "How to tell consumers trade a bad purchase and that the item does not have to be replaced by the stall owner "
- "Training in customer relations "
- "General telephone techniques training "
- "Training in the basic procedures for receiving and managing complaints

Question 23

What do you expect to gain from a Consumer Hot-line Workshop?

- "To be more efficient, patient and kind to consumers "
- "To be more courteous on the telephone All in all I have learn so much from the previous workshop that I am already better equipped to deal with the Hot-line "
- To enhance my ability to deal especially with the more difficult customers/consumers "
- "To learn to deal with anxious consumers in a tactful way "
- "To learn how to improve the Quality of life of the consumer "
- "I expect to learn how the concerns of fears of the consumer should be addressed
- "I am expecting to learn to deal effectively and professionally with complainants "
- "I am hoping to be able to furnish the customers with much needed information "
- "I am hoping to develop a better telephone personality "