

Simon Echewofun Sunday

Many electricity consumers across the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and other states are groaning over incessant power outages, prolonged rationing of electricity and exorbitant estimated bills.

Residents of the FCT who spoke to *Daily Trust Saturday* about their power situation called for more actions from core operators of the sector for more hours of electricity supply.

At Gwagwalada town in the FCT where a transmission feeder problem caused a month-long low voltage, some residents said the situation had not really improved after the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) confirmed the issue was rectified.

Mr Usman Audu, a resident behind the University of Abuja mini campus said they had several days of power rationing. "We have days of power rationing and the worse is that we won't have electricity most times during our days. When they restore it, it is cumulatively less than 10 hours daily.

"Gwagwalada has a big substation [referring to the 330kV transmission substation]. We are not supposed to have issues of power rationing here," Audu noted.

At the market area of Gwagwalada, the rationing problem also gives electricity consumers concerns. Traders and shop owners whom our reporter spoke to were unhappy about it. Mrs Mary Otache, who operates a cold room for poultry and fish business said her bills keep rising as a commercial customer on estimated billing.

She said, "They bill me for 30 days even when they do rationing for the power. That is fraudulent and I have contested this position with the marketers under our service centre of the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC). They haven't resolved this across this area."

In Lokoja, Kogi State capital, Mr Idris Idoko said Lokongoma area of the capital was out of supply for about six days and the residents were not informed by AEDC. "It was after I went to the Business Unit that I was told the technical team was working on some faulty transformers. No formal apologies from them and they won't deduct those days of outage from our monthly bills," he lamented.

Back in the FCT, parts of Kuje town experienced protracted outages and rationing which some residents traced to poor load allocation to the area. Malam Musa Abdulaziz, a corn mill operator at the Kuchiyako I area of Kuje town said small businesses mostly relied on generators because the power from AEDC has no guarantee.

He said the outage was becoming incessant and frustrating that he chooses to run on diesel fuel. He however has a grouse with the billing. "Every month the bill rises, I paid N15,000 for February but the March bill has risen to N19,000, the same period I spent days running on generator without light," Abdul said angrily.

Rainstorm, others affect networks

The *Daily Trust Saturday* observed that as the rainy season sets in, the issue of power outages is rising. Several poles fell around Gwarinpa and Galadimawa areas of Abuja recently after a heavy storm. Similar issues affected the Mpape area where residents in some parts had to stay for about five days without power. Mr Joshua Malam who lives behind EcoBank in the area said, "We saw AEDC team passing to detect the fault. We only had power restored temporarily after five days out protracted outage. They need to

Electricity users groan over outages, rationing



■ MD, AEDC, Engr. Ernest Mupwaya



■ MD, TCN, Mr Usman Gur Mohammed

strategise about this."

The Federal Housing Area (FHA) of Lugbe had outage for over three days due to technical issues which our reporter confirmed have been resolved at the time of filing this report.

In Kubwa and its environs, residents have been on load shedding (rationing) as a supplementary transformer has been out of operation at the 132/33 Kubwa transmission substation. A resident of Kubwa FHA, Mr Chukwudi Nwosu said, "We have not been enjoying power as usual. We were told there is an issue but that TCN is fixing that soon."

AEDC, TCN trade blames

Last week, an official of the Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), responsible for wheeling power from the Generation Companies (GenCos) to the Distribution Companies (DisCos) with AEDC inclusive, said there was a fault at the 132/33kV Karu substation in Abuja which resulted in a drop in power supply to the area. The substation feeds about 13 towns including Orozo, Karshi, and Mararaba in Nasarawa State.

The official however said that was not the reason for continuous load shedding in those areas. He blamed AEDC for installing an auto-reclosure system at the substation which the firm



■ TCN crew installing a 60MVA transformer at Kubwa substation, Abuja

turns off and closes feeders of those areas it wishes not to serve but ration.

He said just last week, AEDC only picked about 10 megawatts (MW) from the over 70MW available power feeders serving Katampe, Jabi, Maitama and other areas within Abuja city went out intermittently thereby creating outage for several hours, it was learnt.

But officials of AEDC have also pointed fingers at TCN for capacity limitation in the substations. For

instance, *Daily Trust Saturday* reports a system collapse last Monday when the entire national grid plunged to 18MW, barely enough for an industrial area.

Records from TCN show that another system collapse occurred on Tuesday and dropped power generation to 197MW. This incident occurred around 11pm, but the situation was restored before morning which is often the peak power generation period.

Respite as TCN fixes Kubwa transformer

Our reporter was told on Thursday that TCN has dispatched its maintenance crew to replace a faulty 60MVA transformer at the 132/33kV Kubwa transmission substation. "When we finish this, it will help to eliminate the load shedding experienced on feeders in Kubwa, Bwari, Deidei and Dawaki," an official said.

Reacting to this, the General Manager, Corporate Communications of AEDC, Mr Oyeboke Fadipe, welcomed the news saying it was a big relief that TCN had finally responded to the call from AEDC. "We congratulate them and salute our customers for their patience. With this

great work taking place in Kubwa, we can look forward to a reduction in the load shedding regime that had been foisted on the area as a result of capacity limitation," he noted.

Responding on the outage across various areas of the FCT and AEDC's action, Mr Fadipe said, "Although the rains have had its effect on our network especially at a place like Galadimawa where a few number of poles fell down, our network has been largely stable."