

NEWS

Makurdi electricity customers kick over crazy bills

From Hope Abah, Makurdi

Electricity consumers in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, are groaning over huge energy bills from the Jos Electricity Distribution (JED) Plc, with many residents describing the situation as annoying and fraudulent.

Some of the customers express worry that they do not get value for their money with several epileptic supply of electricity while others recounted how they lived in total blackout for most part of the month but were compelled to pay for 30 days through the estimated billing system.

They said they were worst hit in March 2018 when supply completely dipped. To their chagrin, the bills for those who spoke with the *Daily Trust* were higher than February's when supply was better.

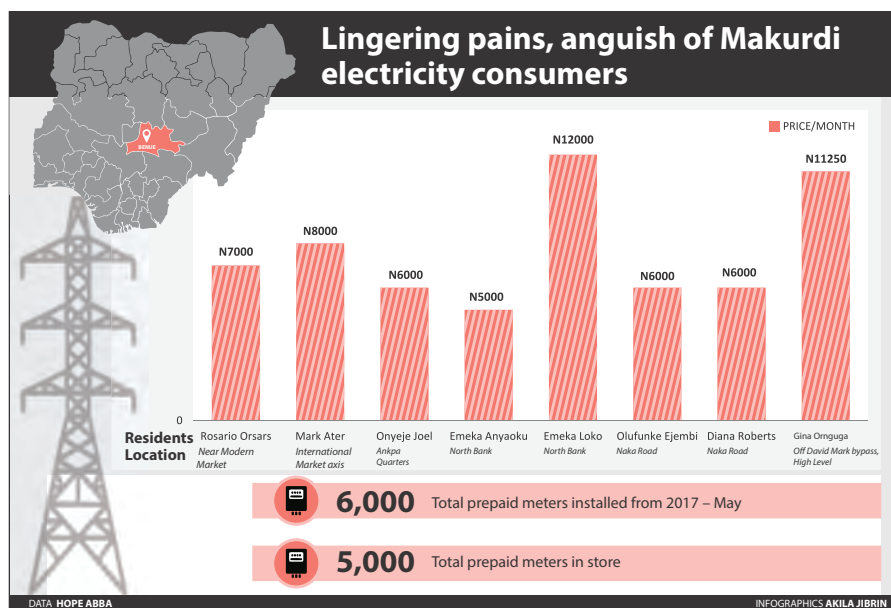
Rosario Orsars, lives in a one bed-room apartment around the modern market in Makurdi metropolis. For just little appliances and a few bulbs, she is still billed heavily as her monthly bill ranged from N5,000 to N7,000.

Although the estimated billing method approved by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) for the 11 Distribution Companies (DisCos) mandates the firms to do energy audit for their customers to optimal estimation, Rosario, a Residential 2 (R2) customer of Jos DisCo has never known that at her premises.

A resident at the International market axis of Makurdi, Mark Ater, also lives in a one-bedroom house with simple electrical appliances but is billed N8,000 and latter raised to N10,000.

"I felt so bitter about the bill that I had to confront the marketer who promised to consider it. The next month, it dropped to N4,000. It is quite annoying, and I wonder why they exploit us," Ater said.

At Vershima Street, Ankpa Quarters Extension, Mrs Onyeje Joel's pain is on the



prepaid meter. She consumes N6,000 worth of units monthly, suspecting some form of tampering with the meter by the DisCo upon installation. "My experience is horrific," she lamented.

The plights of Ater and Rosario depict the nightmare of many Makurdi residents who are customers of Jos DisCo on either prepaid meter or the infamous post-paid estimated bills which they say is exploitative, abnormal and unreasonable. Worst still, the estimated charges are high despite the erratic power supply.

More instances of the exploitation especially on the estimated billing method was captured by our correspondent at other parts of the metropolis.

Emeka Anyaoku at Ter Guma Street, North Bank said it was over three months since outage hit the area but bills have been coming to the residents. "The blackout occurred at the new bridge where cables were vandalized. We learnt that the contractor absconded and so the entire vicinity has been in darkness including the Nigerian Army School of Military Engineering (NASME), 72 Special Forces Battalion, the Federal University of Agriculture, and the College of Advanced Studies," he said.

Baaki Mathew Ayuka, the Vice Chairman of JED customers' consultative forum in the area confirmed the outage and exploitation as he hinted on possible protest plan by the forum.

"For about two months, we have hardly

had light. We have been complaining to JED and yet no improvement," he lamented.

Ayuka however said he was not aware of the existence of Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) Forum Office in the state, neither did he know that complaints could be channelled to the commission for redress.

Emeka Loko of North Bank said he gets N12,000 bill for his six-room home but didn't get light for at least three consecutive days.

Loko had severally requested for meter but was often told they were not available, adding that he had reported the crazy bills to JED but with no respite. He, too wasn't aware of the NERC Forum Office in the state.

"I requested for meter, but they said it was not available. This N12,000 bill is so high and yet we don't even see the light," he said.

For Mrs Olufunke Ejembi, who lives at Adeke on Naka road, she went to JED office in Makurdi in April after a very high bill in March. "I had to visit the office of JED to complain but no remedy. March bill was annoying for me because there was no power supply for even one day, yet they brought huge bill," she said.

Independent findings by *Daily Trust* showed that some customers in the same environs pay about 50 per cent of the high bills with their prepaid meters. However, other prepaid meter users protested exploitative reset of the meters by the DisCo as they claimed 'fast' credit consumption.

However, majority of the JED customers largely due to ignorance do not lodge their complaints with NERC for possible solution when their rights were infringed upon.

Such consumers maintained that non-availability of prepaid meters was only an excuse orchestrated for estimated billing which they in their thinking assumed was nothing but a scam that must be addressed by NERC.

Under the Electric Power Sector Reform Act, 2005, NERC established a methodology for determining electricity tariffs in the Nigerian Electricity Supply Industry (NESI) referred to as the Multi-Year Tariff Order (MYTO), which defines tariffs for electricity generation, transmission and distribution to ensure none of the parties was cheated.

It also said unmetered customers are to be issued electricity bills strictly on NERC's estimated billing methodology as they are obliged to pay for electricity used within the stipulated time frame, and can contest bills if they are higher than their normal bills.

But the findings revealed that the DisCo did not comply with the regulations as none of the many consumers could remember when the DisCo issued a written notice to them.

At the NERC's Forum office in Makurdi where customers can lay their complaint, an employee said consumers had been coming to report grievances.

But Head of the Makurdi Forum Office of NERC was not

available during several visits to the office, while an email to the office was also not answered.

Emails, phone calls and messages sent to commission's public affairs unit at the headquarters were also not answered as at the time of filing this report.

JED dismisses claims of meter scarcity, huge bills

The Regional Manager of JED in Makurdi, Aondoakaa Denen, has said that prepaid meters are available and currently being administered to customers on request and through the company's strategic coverage plan.

"We have meters and we are presently metering our customers. In Makurdi town, between last year and now, we installed close to 6,000 prepaid meters and as we speak now, we have close to 5,000 meters in our store and more are expected," he said.

On the overbilling of consumers and load shedding (rationing),

he insisted that proper assessment of premises was always done based on the load in the houses before the bills were issued.

Denen said the outage at North Bank will be addressed with the ongoing Federal Government's power project in the area when completed.

For the prepaid meters allegedly set to read higher, Denen said the meters were perfect and reading customers' consumption accurately. He advised consumers to manage their energy consumption patterns.

He also said aggrieved customers could seek redress at the JED's complaints desk if they noticed overbilling with the estimated method. "They should write to us and we will verify their claims and correct errors where necessary," he said.

This report was done with support from the Daily Trust Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation.

STUDIO PRESS NIGERIA PLC RC 4414 NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 37th Annual General Meeting of Studio Press Nigeria PLC will be held at Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN) House, No. 77 Obafemi Awolowo Way, Ikeja, Lagos on Thursday, 26th July, 2018 at 11.00 a.m. to transact the following businesses:

ORDINARY BUSINESS:

1. To lay before the meeting the Audited Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December, 2017 and the reports of the Directors, Auditors and the Audit Committee thereon.

2. (a) To elect/re-elect Directors.
(b) Special Notice: Pursuant to Section 256 of the Companies and Allied Matters Act CAP C20, LFN 2004, to propose the following as Ordinary Resolution:

"That Mr. Kolawole Ogunsanya who is retiring at this Annual General Meeting, be and is hereby re-elected a director of the Company, notwithstanding that he has already attained the age of seventy years".

3. Resignation and appointment of Auditors.

4. To authorize the directors to fix the remuneration of the Auditors.

5. To elect members of the Audit Committee.

SPECIAL BUSINESS:

6. To fix the remuneration of the Directors.

7. To consider and if thought fit, pass the following resolution as an ordinary resolution of the Company:

"That, pursuant to the Nigerian Stock Exchange Rules Governing Transaction with Related Parties or Interested Persons, a general mandate be and is hereby given authorizing the Company during the 2018 financial year, to procure goods and services necessary for its day to day operations from its related parties or interested persons on normal commercial terms consistent with the Company's Transfer Pricing Policy".

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD
CAUTIOUS SERVICES LIMITED
COMPANY SECRETARIES

Date: 11th April, 2018

Plot B, Israel Adebajo Close,
Industrial Estate, Ikeja, Lagos.

PROXY

A member of the company entitled to attend and vote at this meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote instead of him. A proxy need not be a member of the company.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD
CAUTIOUS SERVICES LIMITED
SECRETARIES
FRC/2013/ICSAN/00000002873
LAGOS, NIGERIA

All proxy forms must be completed, duly stamped at the Stamp Duties Office and deposited with the Registrars, Pace Registrars Limited 24, Campbell Street, Knight Frank Building, (8th Floor), Lagos not later than 48 hours before the time of holding the meeting.

CLOSURE OF REGISTER OF MEMBERS AND TRANSFER BOOK:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Register of Members and Share Transfer Book of the Company will be closed from Monday, 16th July, 2018 to Friday, 20th July, 2018, both days inclusive, for the purpose of updating the Register of Members.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE AUDIT COMMITTEE:

The Audit Committee comprises of 2 (two) shareholders and 2 (two) Directors. In accordance with section 359(5) of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, CAP C20 LFN 2004, any shareholder may nominate another shareholder for appointment as a member of the Audit Committee by giving notice of such nomination in writing to the Company Secretaries at least 21 (twenty-one) days before the date of the Annual General Meeting.

RIGHTS OF SHAREHOLDERS TO ASK QUESTIONS:

Pursuant to Rule 19.12 (c) of the Nigerian Stock Exchange's Rulebook 2015, please note that Shareholders have a right to ask questions not only at the Annual General Meeting, but also in writing prior to the Annual General Meeting and such questions must be submitted to the Company on or before Friday, 13th July, 2018.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 2017.

The Directors of Studio Press Nigeria PLC hereby announces the results for the year ended 31st December, 2017 together with the comparative figures for the previous year as follows:

	2017 31 st December	2016 31 st December	% Change
Revenue	N900	N900	
Profit before taxation	5,496,442	10,254,095	(47)
Income tax	566,485	470,477	20
Profit for the year after taxation	(257,900)	(213,827)	(21)
Total comprehensive profit	288,577	256,620	20

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD

CAUTIOUS SERVICES LIMITED

SECRETARIES

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LAGOS, NIGERIA