



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

"Now we know what role we have to play with the Ministry so that a consumer protection law, acceptable to all, could be adopted."

Maguette Fall, President, Association for the Defence of the Environment and Consumers of Senegal

UNIDO as a key player in strengthening consumer protection in West Africa

Consumer protection is a vital link in the chain of ensuring quality services and robust products. Unfortunately, consumer protection associations in West Africa often encounter a lack of information and visibility at both national and regional levels. To improve this situation, UNIDO successfully organized a number of regional training workshops in West African states to facilitate knowledge sharing and underline the importance of consumer protection for the ECOWAS region.

UNIDO'S APPROACH

Jointly with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNIDO conducted the first consumer protection workshop in April 2018 under the West Africa Quality System Programme (WAQSP). Forty participants from fifteen West African countries took part and the workshop brought together national consumer protection associations and governmental bodies. It was opened by the Togolese Minister of Industry and Tourism, together with the ECOWAS Commissioner for Industry and Private Sector.

Prior to the workshop, only four associations considered themselves sufficiently informed about the activities of consumer protection organizations in the region and only two about ECOWAS activities related to consumer protection. Only five associations considered themselves sufficiently visible at the regional level. The workshop sought to address this gap and allowed the associations a platform to suggest initiatives to increase visibility of consumer protection issues and promote regulatory quality frameworks at the country and ECOWAS level.

In June 2018 at the Directorate for the Promotion of Quality and Standardization (DPQN) in Abidjan-Plateau, Côte d'Ivoire, UNIDO facilitated a second knowledge transfer workshop for consumer protection associations on the recommendations of the United Nations guidelines for consumer protection. UNIDO representative, Issouf

Quattara, said the workshop supported the establishment and consolidation of the national regulatory framework to ensure consumer protection.

The third regional workshop was held in November 2018, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Participants were given presentations on WAQSP objectives and results, the provisions of the community regulatory framework for consumer protection, the mechanism for appointing representatives of consumer associations and the platform of exchange for consumer associations. The platform, established under the WAQSP, enables interaction between consumer associations in the region.

IMPACT

As a result of UNIDO's capacity building exercises, the community regulatory framework for consumer protection was validated and a mechanism for the representation of consumers in ECOWAS

Quality Infrastructure bodies was also created.

Fifteen ECOWAS member states and Mauritania adopted legal provisions, which harmonize activities of consumer protection associations in the region.

Countries that did not have an office or directorate responsible for consumer protection were advised to appoint a focal point.

Ultimately, the outcomes of all three workshops ensured that ECOWAS has an efficient consumer protection exchange platform.

WAY FORWARD

UNIDO takes the issue of consumer protection in West Africa very seriously by building the capacities of national consumer protection associations and governmental bodies. It will continue to promote a culture of consumer protection in the future.

AT A GLANCE

Project title	West Africa Quality System Programme (WAQSP)
Thematic area	Advancing Economic Competitiveness
Donor	European Union
Project counterpart	ECOWAS
Budget	12,000,000 EUR
Duration	August 2014 – September 2019