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Zambia Energy Regulation Board Becomes More Independent and Transparent



Zambia Energy Regulatory Board visits with Commissioners at the Oregon Public Utility.

Like many regulatory bodies, even those in the United States, the Zambia Energy Regulation Board (ERB) constantly works to maintain independence. Until recently, the ERB was administratively under the Ministry of Energy, receiving its budget through the Ministry. Its hearings and meetings were closed to outside parties, and only those who were invited to could file complaints in hearings.

Through an executive exchange program organized by the us Energy Association and funded through USAID's Energy Partnership Program, the Zambian Ministry of Energy and the ERB met with the Oregon and District of Columbia regulatory commissions.

By attending hearings and open meetings with the Oregon and District of Columbia commissions, ERB saw that the open hearing process made US commissions more independent and fair in their role of balancing all interests in regulatory hearings.

After seeing the benefit of applying rules of independence from utilities and state government, they invited US commissioners to meet with their own Ministry of Energy to explain how independence serves the best interests of consumers and utilities. ERB was also able to adopt the stated rules guiding the independence of the state commissions to their own situation.

As a direct result of these partnership activities, ERB today has taken the following steps towards becoming an open and independent body:

- 1) It has opened up all of its hearings and meetings to the public;
- 2) It has begun advertising its hearings in the government's gazette;
- 3) Anyone with a grievance or concern may file a complaint in a hearing process;
- 4) It has worked with the Ministry of Energy and Zambian government to adopt new assurances of independence, resulting in its budget being allocated directly from Parliament, rather than through the Ministry.

ERB is today recognized as a leader in the energy field in Zambia, with the market and technical expertise to inspire new investment to the local electricity sector. This leadership is thanks to its independent structure and knowledge gained from the Energy Partnership Program relationship with Oregon and the District of Columbia.

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