

Quarterly Report on Cable Television Service



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Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority

Royal Government of Bhutan

(October - December, 2022)

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Report on Cable Television Service (CATV)

1. Background

Television has become one of the most important parts of our life. With other mediums of communications like radio, newspaper, magazines, etc. Television is also one of the most impactful mediums. Television being an important medium for dissemination of the information and indispensable means of entertainment, its influences in the society are enormous. Although Bhutan introduced the television relatively later compared to the other parts of the world, it gained fast popularity in our society within the last two decades. Since Cable Television is an essential service, multi-services operators (MSOs) and the local cable operators (LCOs) have been asked to render consistent quality of service with minimum interruption at all times. Apart from the satellite network and few terrestrial transmitters, the Cable TV network is also one of the main distribution platforms for the three national television channels namely BBS 1, BBS 2 and BBS 3.

The Authority is working together with multi-services operators (MSOs) the TV content distributors and our local cable operators (LCOs) to ensure uninterrupted Cable Television Services which is crucial for dissemination of important public information and entertainment. Currently, the cable industry in the country is under digitization and almost more than 90.9 % (of 88) of our local cable operators have connected to the MSOs and sourced their cable television contents from the MSOs while both the MSO are exploring towards catering the digital feeds to remaining LCOs who have not yet able to connect to the MSOs due to the lack of BTL P2P. As per the MSO license terms and conditions, MSOs have installed both the CAS and SMS system in the head office, that supports the accurate billing and collection system. NetCom has also integrated the different systems of LCOs with the MSO' system to make it one common central system for interoperability and working towards the remaining systems.

BICMA as the Authority, the cable television services provided in the country is also regulated and monitored by the Authority. Although there is no standard and equipment for the measurements to monitor the quality of cable services, the Authority carries out the monitoring visit to the various Dzongkhags and Gewogs regularly. The report contains the report from the field visit, complaints received with and compiled by the Authority. The report also contains the key activities carried out by the Authority for these three months (October-December, 2022) to enhance the effective and efficient delivery of cable television service in the country.

2. Monitoring Visits

The Authority regularly takes the monitoring, inspection, and verification of cable television services visits to the Dzongkhags and Gewogs. In this quarter, the team from the Market and Competition Division made a field visit to Sarpang, Tsirang and Dagana Dzongkhags from 15th-29th October, 2022. There was also a monitoring visit to Mewang Gewog under Thimphu Dzongkhag and the two cable operators of Paro Thromde in the November month.

The objective of undertaking a monitoring tour was mainly to monitor the control room of the local cable operator and to check if they have complied the sent directives vide letter no. BICMA-MCD/CATV/2022/1628 dated 23rd May, 2022 on migration to full digital signal and removal of the local dishes. The main purpose of the tour was to meet with the LCOs and discuss the digitization status in the Dzongkhags and to create awareness on digitization and Ku-band dishes.

During the entire tour, the team met with the LCOs including their technical team to discuss the status of the digitization of the CATV. The discussion mainly focused on advocating policy, rules and regulation, technical issues, and wayforward to transition from analog to digital by the end of 2022.

2.1 Monitoring Visit to Sarpang Dzongkhag

1. Talo Cable Service

The Team visited the control room of Talo Cable Service located in Shompangkha Gewog under Sarpang Dzongkhag and made the following observations:

- Observed that the analog signal has been removed and connected with the digital signal since two months back.
- Talo Cable Service is also sharing the digital signal to Subba Cable Service operating in Singye Gewog of Sarpang Dzongkhag.
- Currently there are 3 staff working with Talo Cable Service.
- Billing is done manually using social media platforms such as telegram and wechat.
- The team also reminded the Talo Cable Service to raise the one month notice to their subscribers before disconnecting the subscribers.
- The Talo Cable Service expressed that after the digital signal, the quality of service is better.
- The team also disseminated the importance of SLA and directed the LCO to draw and maintain the SLA.
- Talo cable currently has around 250 subscribers.
- Overall, the picture and sound quality of the cable service in the Dzongkhag were found good.
- The team also made some random visits to a few of the shops and households of sarpang town to check the quality of cable services.



Figure. Control room of Talo Cable Service and meeting with Subba and Talo CS.

2. Subba Cable Service

- The team met with the staff of Subba Cable Service and he is alone working for Subba Cable Service under Singye Gewog of Sarpang Dzongkhag.
- Although there is no independent control room of Subba Cable Service, LCO is sharing the control room of Talo Cable Service and sourcing the signal from Talo Cable of Shompangkha Gewog.
- Subba Cable has around 30 customers and expressed the difficulty in sustaining the business.
- Since the Subba Cable Service is not turned up for licence renewal, the LCO was reminded to renew it within the month of October in order to avoid the licence cancellation.
- The billing was done manually (Physical collection).
- Subba Cable Service was given awareness of the importance of integration of STBs to the CAS and SMS, SLA and maintaining of complaint lists.



Figure 2. Quality of Subba Cable Service

3. Dilpali Cable Service

- The team visited the control room of Dilpali Cable Service which is located in Dekiling Gewog.
- The cable is still in analog and catering the service using the dishes. However, he is planning to source the signal from Pemathang Gewog (Gurung Star Cable) since there is P2P and promised to complete it before the digitization timeline.

- Currently there are 26 channels provided through dishes and 180 subscribers and billings are done manually.
- The LCO was reminded to maintain SLA, complaint records and to digitise on time.



Figure 3. Analog Control room of Dilpali Cable Service

4. Gurung Star Cable Service

- While the team made a visit to the control room of Gurung Star Cable Service located in Pemathang Gewog, Sarpang, the analog station was removed and the signals were fully digital sourced from NetCom Bhutan.
- There are 147 subscribers and three staff working with the Gurung Star Cable Service.
- Since billing was still done manually, the team gave awareness on the importance of CAS and SMS systems, SLA and digitization of cable television services.



Figure 4. Control room of Gurung Star Cable Service

5. Zhenphen Trulsum Zhedhay Cable Service

- The team visited the control room of Zhenphen Trulsum Zhedhay Cable Service located in Lekithang Gewog, Sarpang.
- Currently, the signal is shared from Techno Cable Service in Gelephu Town and signals are fully digital with 200 subscribers.

- There are 2 staff working with the cable service.
- Although the cable operator has access to the SMS system of MSO, LCO is still billing manually because MSO has not scrambled the channels fully.
- Zhenphen Trulsum Zhedhay Cable Service is using complaint record slips to maintain the records of complaints.
- The team directed them to maintain SLA and complaint record properly. They were also asked to use the SMS system for billing once the MSO scrambles all the channels.



Figure 5. Meeting with Zhenphen Trulsum Zhedhay Cable Service

6. Techno Cable Service

- The control room of Techno Cable was located in Gelephu Town, Sarpang.
- The team found that the signal was fully digital sourced from NetCom Bhutan.
- There were dishes unremoved found on the rooftop but were not in use anymore. The team directed to remove and keep only for the BBS channels. The LCOs agreed to remove it by winter as currently they couldn't remove it because of the weather.
- Techno Cable Service informed the team that they have distributed around 900 STBs and STBs are in stock to be distributed to the hotel and offices.
- They got 6 staff working including 2 bill collectors and 4 technicians.
- They have access to the SMS system but currently billing is done manually and complaints are recorded in a slip.
- The team directed to raise the invoice at least a month or a week before the disconnection and to maintain SLA with the customers.

7. Gelephu Digital Cable Service

- The team also visited the control room of Gelephu Digital Cable Service located in Gelephu town and met with the manager.

- The signals were fully digital and analog stations were removed from the control room.
- They have distributed around 1200 STBs and STBs are still in stock.
- Billings were done manually.
- The team directed them to maintain SLA and complaints records.

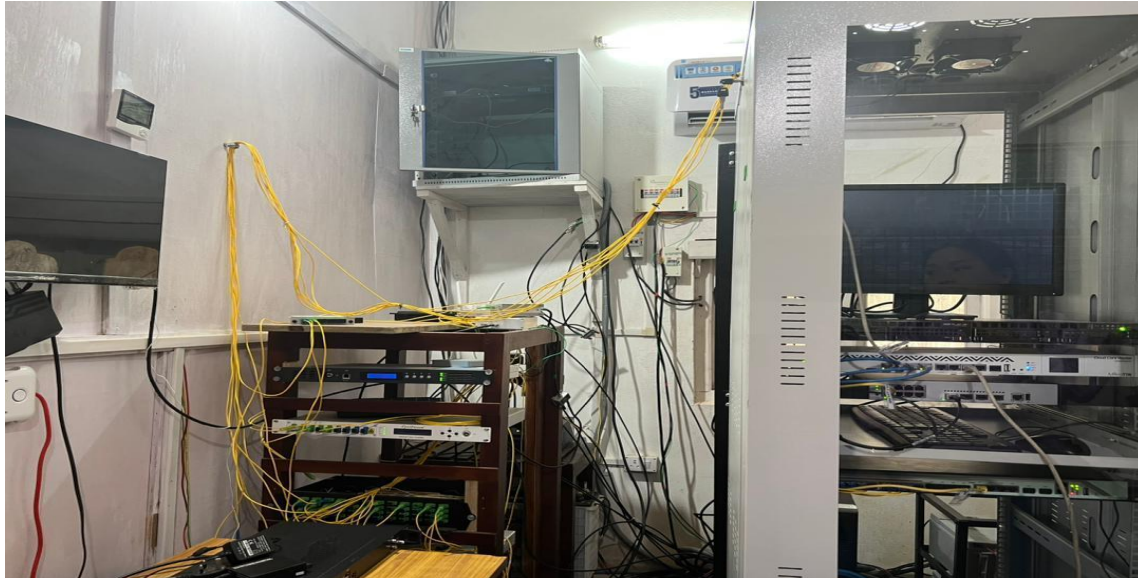


Figure 6. Control room of Gelephu Digital Cable Service

8. TT Cable Network

- The met also met with the proprietor of TT Cable Network of Gelephu Pelrithang.
- Although the signal was fully digital, TT Cable Network is currently sharing the control room with the Gelephu Digital Network.
- TT cable has distributed around 250 STBs and informed the team that they have STBs in stock.
- There are 3 staff working with them and billing is done manually.
- LCOs asked to maintain SLA, complaints record and to raise the invoice before the disconnection of the service.



Figure 7. Meeting with TT and Gelephu Digital Cable Service

9. *Goedue Kuenjung Cable Service*

- The team visited the control room of Goedue Kuenjung Cable Service located in Chuzagang Gewog, Sarpang.
- The analog station was removed from the control room and digital signal was sourced from Techno Cable Service, Gelephu Town.
- LCOs shared that they could only distribute around 50 STBs and during the analog, he got around 120 subscribers. Now most of the people in the gewog have resorted to using dish TV as their STBs are getting damaged because of the frequent lightning and power fluctuation.
- There are 3 staff members working with the cable operator.
- The team gave awareness on the importance of CAS and SMS system, SLA and importance of digitization.



Figure 8. Meeting with Goedue Kuenjung Cable Service

10. *Norla Cable Service*

- Norla Cable Service was still with the analog signal and digital was not there due to the lack of P2P in Suray, Sarpang and informed the team that LCO is going to source the digital signal by or before the digitization timeline.
- The billing was done manually.

2. 2 Monitoring Visit to Tsirang Dzongkhag

1. *Kunzang Cable Service*

- The Team visited the control room of Kunzang Cable located in Tsirang Town.
- The signal is full digital and the analog station was removed from the control as per the directives of the Authority.
- There are 6 staff working with the LCO and records of the complaints were maintained properly.
- Currently the billings are done manually.

- The team directed the LCO to maintain the SLA and to integrate the STBs to the CAS and SMS of the MSO.



Figure 9. Control room of Kunzang Cable Service

2. Mendrelgang Cable Service

- Currently Mendrel Cable Service is sharing the control room with Kunzang Cable Service in Tsirang town and the signal is fully digital.
- The LCO was catering the service to only 60 subscribers in Mendrelgang Gewog and informed the team that he had sent the details of all the distributed STBs to MSO for the integration.
- Currently, the billings are done manually and only one staff working.
- Since there was no proper record of the complaints and the office, the LCO was directed to maintain records of the complaints, office, SLA and to raise the invoice before the disconnection of the service.

3. Thong Wai Gaden Cable Service

- The LCO was sharing the control room and sourcing the signal from Kunzang Cable from Tsirang Town.
- The signal is fully digital and catering services to only around 100 subscribers.
- The LCO was directed to maintain records of the complaints, office, SLA and to raise the invoice before the disconnection of the service.
- The billing was done manually and asked the LCO to use the SMS system for billing after the scrambling of all the channels from the MSO.

2. 3. Monitoring Visit to Dagana Dzongkhag

1. Norbu Cable Service

- The team visited the control room of Norbu Cable Service located in Drujegang Gewog, Dagana.
- Norbu Cable is catering services to around 80 customers in analog signal and there is no digital signal yet.
- The LCO is using dishes to cater 22 channels to the subscribers.
- The team was informed that he is planning to source the signal from DrukMSO within the digitization timeline.
- The LCO was directed to maintain proper office, SLA, complaint record and to raise the invoice before disconnection of the services.

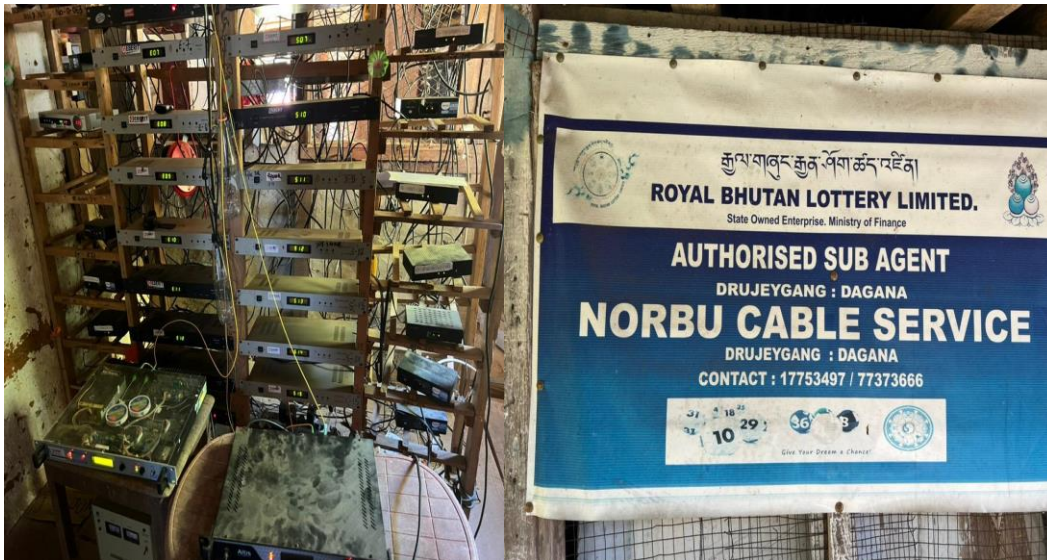


Figure 10. Control Room of Norbu Cable Service

2. Lopchan Cable Service

- Lopchan Cable Service located in Lhamoizhikha was still in analog and catering the services to around 200 subscribers using the dishes.
- The LCO was also directed to maintain proper office, SLA, complaint record and to raise the invoice before disconnection of the services.

3. NL Cable Service

- NL Cable Service was catering services to around 600 subscribers in full digital.
- The analog stations were removed from the control room and complaints were found handled properly.
- The LCO expressed that the services were much better after the digitization and the number of subscribers also increased.
- The LCO has 2 staff members working with him.
- The cable operator can access the SMS system and ready to use the features once all the channels are scrambled from the MSO.
- The LCO was also directed to maintain SLA and to raise the invoice before disconnection of the services.



Figure 11. Control room and meeting with NL Cable Service

4. T and T Cable Service

- There was a fully digital signal and the analog station was removed from the control room located in Dagana.
- Currently he is providing services to around 295 subscribers and working along with 2 staff members.
- Similar to the other LCOs, the LCO was also directed to maintain proper office, SLA, complaint records and to raise the invoice before disconnection of the services.



Figure 12. Meeting with T and T Cable Service

2.4 Awareness by the Team and other matters



Figure 12. Meeting with Gup of Chuzagang Gewog

The team also visited the Gup office of Chuzagang Gewog and gave the awareness on following topics to be further disseminated to the public. The team gave the awareness to all the LCOs of three Dzongkhags on the same topic;

1. *Digitization of CATV and its importance*
2. *Awareness and importance of SMS and CAS*
3. *Distribution of Ku band dishes*
4. *Importance of SLA and raise of billing before the disconnection of the services from the source.*
5. *Sign board and complaint records*

Challenges shared by LCOs of the south.

There were few challenges share by LCOs of Southern part of Bhutan such as;

1. Frequent lightning in the areas and damages of equipment such as TV, amplifiers and other household equipment.
2. Distribution of Ku band and dishes in the cable reached areas.
3. Scattered settlement and having to lay the fibres to few households.
4. Lack of knowledge/limited knowledge of both of the subscribers as well as LCOs on digitization and CAS and SMS systems.
5. 30% of entertainment tax.

The Team also checked the speed of Lease line internet provided by the ISPs as follows;

1. BTL

Lama Residency (Hotel) in Gelephu main town has subscribed leaseline from Bhutan Telecom ltd 3Mbps.while testing using a single device,the test result is 3.31Mbps which is slightly higher than subscription.

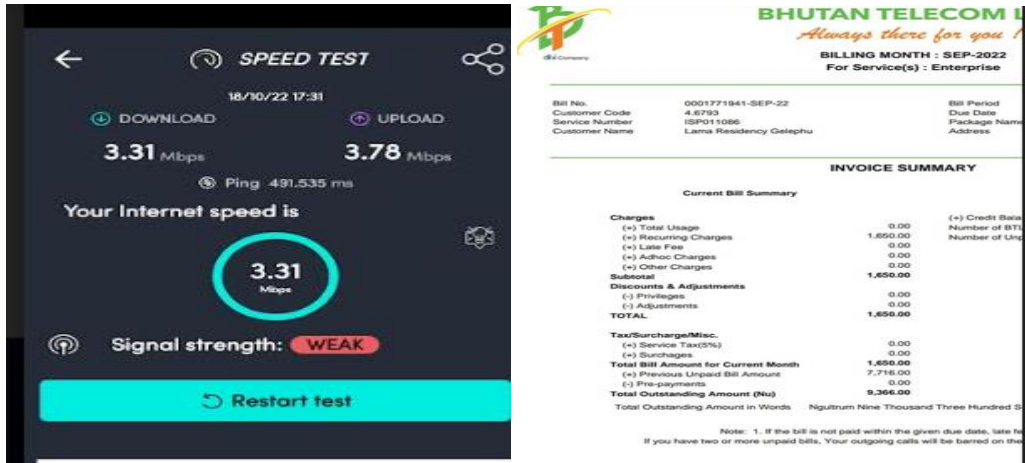


Figure 13. monthly billing and speed test result of Lama Residency, Gelephu

Hotel Ningtob, Gelephu has subscribed to a 6Mbps leased line from Bhutan Telecom Limited. while testing using a single device, the test result is 6.04Mbps which is within the subscription range.



figure 14. Speedtest result of Hotel Ningtob, Gelephu

2. Gelephu Digital Network ISP

The Gelephu Digital Network ISP is still using free testing bandwidth provided by Bhutan Telecom ltd as the pricing for wholesale and retailer have no difference and they are still negotiating with service provider (Bhutan telecom Ltd). Since they are not subscribed to any bandwidth and they have no customer yet, the team has not monitored the speed of the lease line provided by them.

3. Tash Cell Ltd

The branch office of Authority at Tsirang had subscribed 4Mbps from TCL. while testing directly from source (single user), the internet speed. while testing using a single device, the test result is 4.12Mbps which is slightly higher than subscribed.

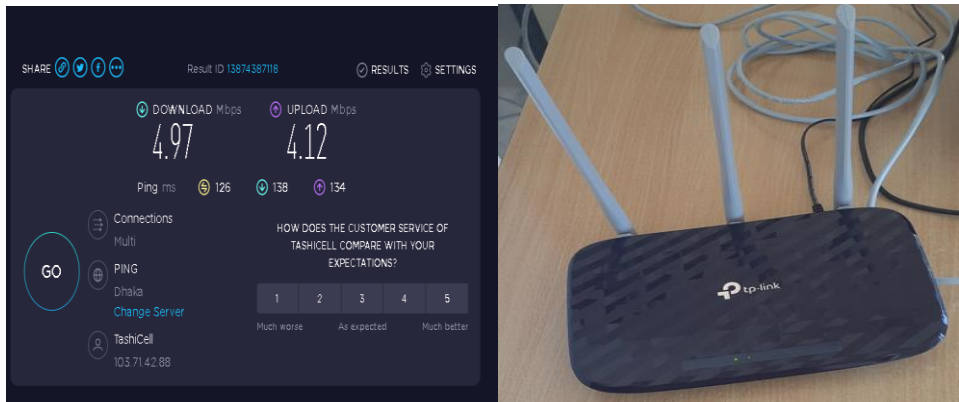


figure 14.Speed test and device used for lease line

3.Complaints received with and compiled by the Authority

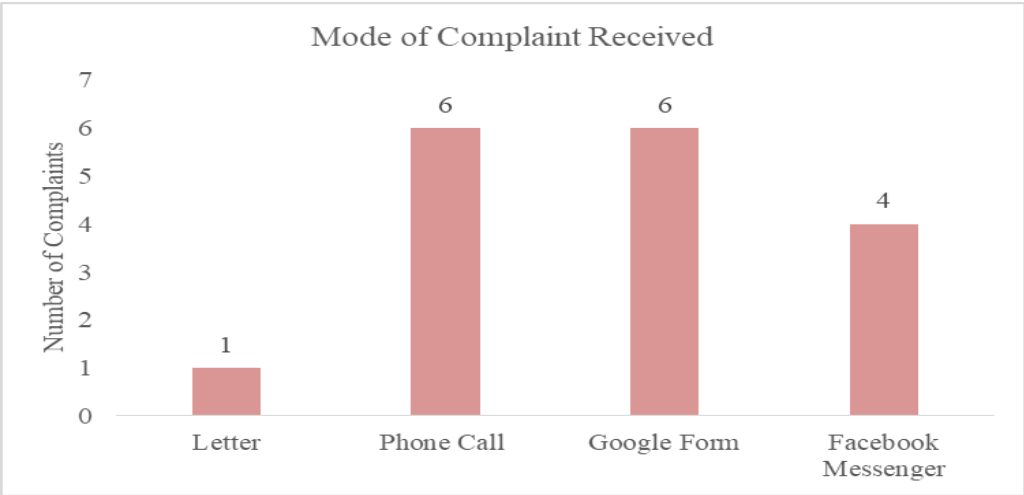
In the event of any issues/complaints related to the cable television services, the Authority has made many platforms available for the subscribers to lodge the complaints with the Authority. The complainant can contact the Authority through our focal officers appointed for the service, the details for which, have been mentioned in the website (www.bicma.gov.bt) and social media (Facebook) page (www.facebook.com/bicmabhutan). We have also online complaint platform on our website under the services/complaints section (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeFgg1JZRe1DLlyL2kHlxXZ11Xx2y-CyVuqO-S16YIirDE28g/viewform>) through which anyone can lodge the complaints. They can also write an email to bicma@bicma.bt.

In order to enhance the customer grievance redressal mechanism, the officials from the Authority also scan the social media pages on a daily basis to see if there are any complaints and issues related to the cable television services provided by the Service providers. As mentioned above, the Authority has made many platforms available from where the subscriber of cable television as well as our licensee such as local cable operators and multi-service operators can lodge the complaints with the Authority. The complaints received are well documented and try not to leave even a single issue unresolved. The BICMA also receives the customer complaints through emails and formal letters from the public and Gewogs administrations. Particularly for the cable operators to share their challenges, issues and to submit the complaints with the Authority to take up the appropriate action, the Authority has formed the cable operators group in social media platform “Telegram”. For the last three months (October-December, 2022), the Authority received a total of Seventeen complaints only on the cable television services. Of Seventeen complaints, the majority of the complaints were from Thimphu Dzongkhag.

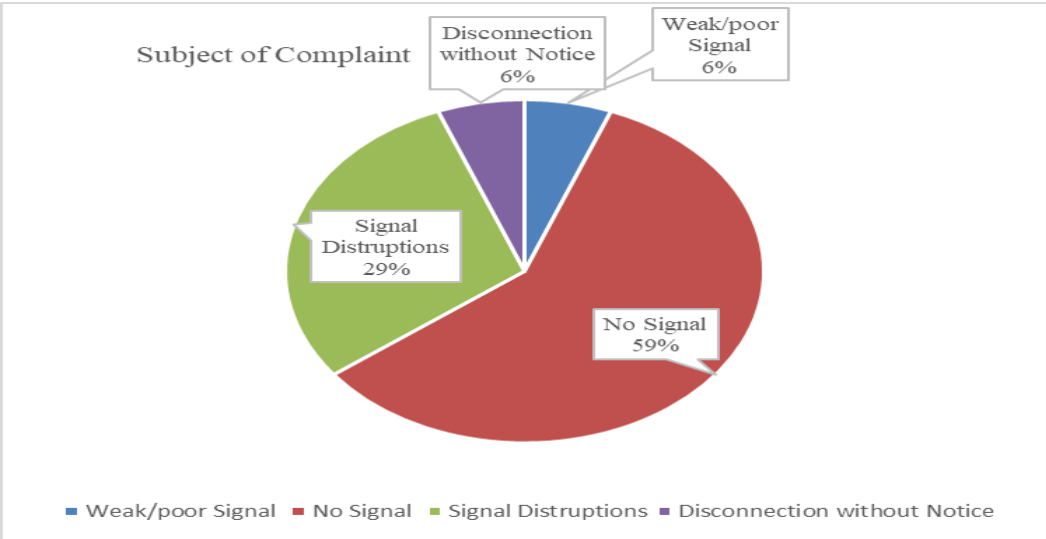
Sl. no	Complaint Received from	Mode of Complaint Received	Against LCO	TAT Achieved	Subject of Compliant	Date of Complaint Received	Action Taken	Remarks
1	Jungzhina	Google form	Etho Metho CS	1	Disconnection of service without notice	10/15/2022	Complainant lodge complaint with the Authority that TV services are cutting without prior notice to the customer. Same issue has been raised by others and directed all the LCOs to raise the invoice before disconnecting the services	Resolved
2	Pekerzing, Phuentsholing Throm	Google form	Tshela TV	1	Signal Disruptions	10/16/2022	The LCO was directed to resolve the issue	Resolved
3	Changangkha	Google form	DrukCom Pvt Ltd	1	Signal Disruptions	10/17/2022	Forwarded the details of the complainant and was directed concerned LCO to resolve the issue	Resolved
4	Hejo, Thimphu	Facebook Messenger	Etho Metho CS	1	Signal Disruptions	10/18/2022	The Authority directed the LCO to look into the issue and resolve it immediately. LCO found that there was signal fluctuation and resolved it accordingly	Resolved
5	Chukha	Phone Call	Karma Cable Service	0.5	No signal	10/20/2022	The complainant lodged the complaint to the Authority that the service provider has refused to come to replace his STB after the damage and there is no CATV signal at his home. The Authority immediately directed the concerned LCO and the issue was resolved.	Resolved
6	Doonglagang Gewog Office	Letter	Thong Woi Gaden Cable Service	2	No signal	11/8/2022	Upon receiving the complaint by the Authority, Tsirang Branch Office directed the LCO to restore the service	Resolved

7	Gidagom	Facebook Messenger	Nakchung Cable Service	0.5	No signal	11/14/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs and the Authority did the follow up with the LCO	Resolved
8	Chizhi Goenpa	Phone Call	Nakchung Cable Service	2	No signal	11/14/2022	The complainant lodged a complaint to the Authority that the concerned LCO has failed to come to restore the service. The LCO was directed to rectify the issue.	Resolved
9	Wangkha	Google form	Karma Cable Service	2	Signal Disruptions	11/19/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs	Resolved
10	Wangkha	Google form	Karma Cable Service	2	Signal Disruptions	11/19/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs	Resolved
11	Khasadrapchu	Phone Call	Nakchung Cable Service	1	No signal	11/21/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs and the field visit was made by the Authority	Resolved
12	Khariphu	Phone Call	Nakchung Cable Service	4	No signal	11/22/2022	The Authority visited the place and directed the LCO to resolve the issue.	Resolved
13	Dalukha,17996549	Phone Call	Nakchung Cable Service	2	No signal	11/22/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs and resolved it	Resolved
14	Khasadrapchu, 17525855	Phone Call	Nakchung Cable Service	1	No signal (No STB)	11/25/2022	The Authority directed the concerned LCOs to look into the issue and resolved it	Resolved
15	Namseling,17758587	Google form	Nakchung Cable Service	1	Weak signal	11/25/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs and resolved it	Resolved

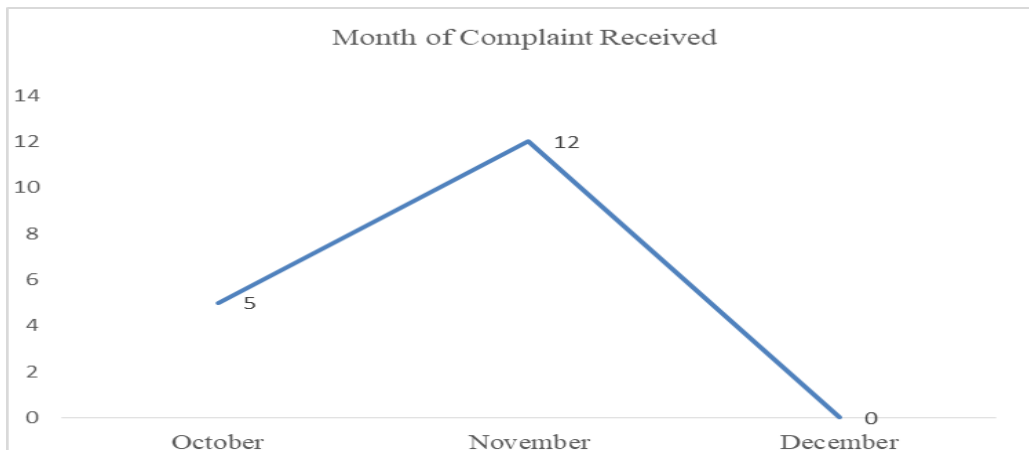
16	Chimmithangka, 17632144	Facebook Messenger	Nakchung Cable Service	2	No signal	11/25/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs and resolved it	Resolved
17	Tshendapsa, 17892281	Facebook Messenger	Nakchung Cable Service	0.5	No signal	11/26/2022	The issue was forwarded to concerned LCOs and resolved it	Resolved



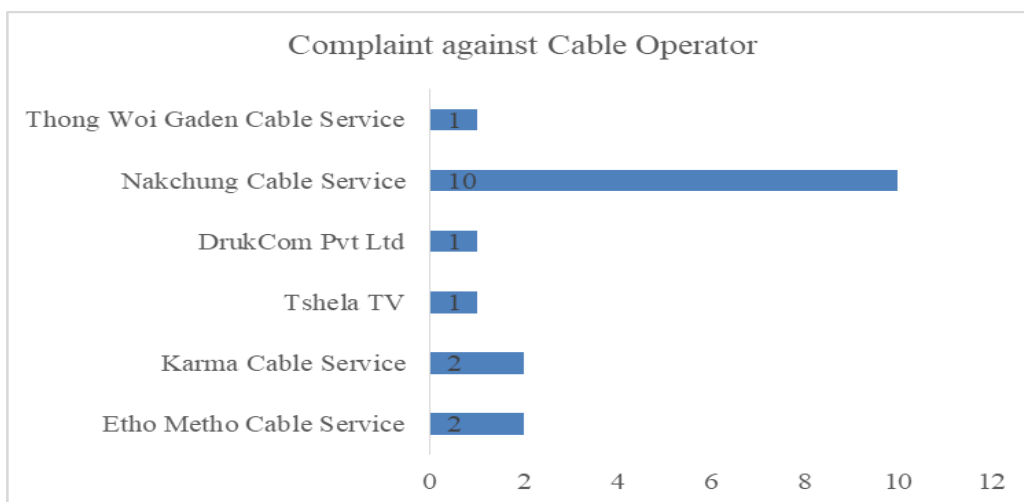
Among all the platforms available, most of the complaints (6) were lodged through google form and phone call each followed by (4) through Facebook Messenger and (1) through the formal letter.



On the subject of the complaint, 59 % (10) were on no signals and 29%(5) on signal disruptions followed by disconnection without notice 6%(1) and weak/poor signal 6% (1) each. The disconnection of services is mainly due to the non-payment of rental charges on time or lack of proper updation of bills on system by service providers. It also came to the notice of the Authority that there are few subscribers who do not pay rental charges on time and get their CATV signal disconnected and lodge complaints with the Authority. Particularly for this quarter, the Authority received majority complaints from Mewang Gewog, Thimphu Dzongkhag. Following the complaints, the Authority also visited the sites and penalised the service provider of the area.



The highest number of complaints received was in the month November (12) followed by (5) in the month of October and we received no complaints for the month of December, 2022.



As per the data recorded, the highest complaint was against Nakchung Cable Service (10) followed by Karma Cable Service and Etho Metho Cable Service with (2) each and one (1) each for Thong Wai Gaden Cable Service, DrukCom Pvt Ltd and Tshela TV of Phuentsholing.

4. Key Activities carried out by the Authority

- I. The Authority vide letter no. BICMA-MCD/CATV/2022/689 dated 14th October 2022, issued a notification to all the local cable operators in the country on improvement of the quality of their services and to raise the invoice before disconnection of the service. They were also directed to maintain a Service Level Agreement (SLA) as per the provisions of the Rules and Regulations for the Operation of Cable Television Service, 2019.

- II. In the month of December,2022, all the Set Top Boxes in the country were made interoperable through integration of systems in the MSO. Subsequently, the Authority issued on the same subject to the general public vide letter no. BICMA-MCD/CATV/2022/1168 dated 10th January, 2023.
- III. In the month of December,2022, with the support from BBSCL, the Authority aired the public notification on having to buy STBs to the general public for more than a week in both the languages (English & Dzongkha). The video on the same message was aired to the public through Film Association of Bhutan during their National Film Award.
- IV. With the technical and financial support from stakeholders such as Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation Limited (BBSCL)and two Multi-Service Operators(MSOs), the signals of BBS channel 1,2 and 3 were connected to the MSO headend with direct fibre connection from BBS studio improving the quality of channels received and strengthened the reliability of the signals during the bad weather conditions. The same information was shared to the general public vide letter no. BICMA-IID/CATV/2023/1250 dated 24th January,2023.
- V. In this quarter, the division has renewed the annual licence for 6 LCOs and done the Ownership change for 1 LCOs and collected penalty from 5 LCOs across the country due to the non compliance to the directives,terms and conditions and Rules and Regulations of the CATV.
- VI. As of December,2023, 80 out of 88 LCOs in the country have connected and sourced the digital feed from the MSOs.
- VII. For this quarter, the division monitored the cable television services and digitization status in Tsirang, Dagana and Sarpang Dzongkhags and also met with all the LCOs of the same Dzongkhags to discuss the issues and challenges.

5. Findings:

- I. Although the LCOs have registered their Set Top Boxes with MSO, the Authority found that they have not registered the details of the STBs in the SMS system.
- II. It was also found that some of them still maintained both the analog and digital signals and the Authority has called each of them and reminded them of the switchover time.
- III. Although there were no major complaints and issues recorded with the Authority regarding the cable television services for this quarter, most of the complaints lodged were from Mewang Gewog under Thimphu Dzongkhag.
- IV. Of the complaints recorded with the Authority for these three months, the majority of the complaints were against Nakchung Cable Service under Thimphu Dzongkhag.

- V. The team observed that some of the complaints from subscribers are due to the inadequate knowledge of operating remote controls and TV systems as shared by LCOs of other regions of the country.

6. Way Forward

- I. The Authority will take up the monitoring, verification and inspections on a regular basis to other Dzongkhags.
- II. The complaints lodged with the Authority will properly record and resolve it.
- III. Since the team gave awareness on the importance of SLA, complaint records and SMS system, the follow up and compliance mentioning would be necessary in a few months later.
- IV. Compile and publish the quarterly report for the cable television services to facilitate Authority in taking proper regulatory measures for improving the quality of cable television services.