

Quarterly Report on Cable Television Service



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Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority

Royal Government of Bhutan

(July - September, 2022)

Table of Content

1. Background	3
2. Monitoring Visits	4
2.1 <i>Monitoring visit to Chhukha Dzongkhag</i>	4
2.2 <i>Monitoring visit to Haa Dzongkhag</i>	8
2.3 <i>CATV monitoring tour to Paro Dzongkhag</i>	9
2.4 Digitization and awareness to the people (Tsento Gewog and Dogar Gewog)	13
2.5 Monitoring visit to Kunzang Cable Service and Mendrelgang Cable Service, Tsirang	14
3. Complaint received with and compiled by the Authority	15
4. Key Activities carried out by the Authority	20
5. Findings:	20
6. Way Forward	20

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 80 % (of 92) of our local cable operators have connected to the MSOs and sourced their cable television contents from the MSOs while both the MSO are working towards catering the digital feeds to remaining LCOs who have not yet able to connect to the MSOs. As per the MSO license terms and conditions, MSOs shall install both the CAS and SMS system in the head office, DrukMSO was in place of both the systems and readying for the provision of services such Video on Demand(VOD), channel packaging and to go prepaid model. NetCom Bhutan has installed a CAS system and SMS system which supports the accurate billing and collection system. Now NetCom is working towards interconnecting the LCOs to the systems and integrating the different systems of LCOs with the MSO' system.

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 (July-September, 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 Chhukha, Haa and Paro Dzongkhags from 30th August-08th September, 2022. and official from Tsirang branch office visit site of kunezang cable service and Mendrelgang cable service on 20th September, 2022 and 26th September, 2022 respectively. 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 tour was also intended to sensitise on the digitization of the cable television industry and its advantages.

2.1 Monitoring visit to Chhukha Dzongkhag

Karma Cable Service (Tshimasham)



Figure 1. Control Room of Karma Cable Service, Tshimasham

- The team met cable operator and technicians at Tshimasham
- The control room was located in Tshimasham
- Karma Cable Service has 5 technicians working with them.
- It was found that they have removed all the analog headend and catered the cable service in full digital.
- The Set Top Boxes were also in stock and they had entered the customer details in the SMS system of MSO.
- Since they are also providing services to the Army which have different monthly rental charges, they were directed to make a different customer list for the proper maintenance of the customer list for the taxes purpose.
- It was found that Karma Cable Service was providing services to around 659 subscribers during the visit of the monitoring team.

- Although there were dishes around the building, it was found that the signal was from the MSO and the dishes were not in use.

Tshela Cable Service (Phuentsholing Thromde)



Figure 2. Meeting with Tshela Cable Service and their control room

- Tshela Cable Service is one of the second largest cable service providers in Phuentsholing Thromde.
- The team met with the proprietor of Tshela Cable Service and the staff.
- As per the directives of Authority, it was found that Tshela Cable Service has removed all the analog equipment and signals were given in digital using STBs. They said that they removed it a month ago and since they have stopped providing analog signals to the customers, it helped them to distribute the STBs for those who are not in use.
- Tshela Cable Service has 5 technicians and the team didn't find any shortage of manpower.
- Although there was access to the SMS system of the MSO by Tshela Cable Service and STBs were recorded, it was found that the details of the customer list in the system were not updated and the team informed them on the need to update the subscriber's details.
- The team found that there was a local channel but it was informed that that channel is used only to share the important information and notification related to the cable television services.

DrukCom Pvt Ltd (Phuentsholing Thromde)



Figure 3. Visiting control room of DrukCom Pvt Ltd, Phuentsholing

- The cable television services catered by DrukCom in Phuentsholing Thromde were fully digital and there was no analog equipment in the control room.
- There were more than 1600 subscribers with them and around 100 subscribers were temporarily disconnected.
- Since they are fully digital, the billing was done through a digital system.
- It was informed that they have around 10 technicians working for both the ISPs and CATV services.
- There was also a backup line from Chukha and another from Gedu. They also got the energy back up for 8 hours.

Cable Sat Cable Service (Phuentsholing Thromde)



Figure 4. Control room of Cable Sat Club Cable Service, Phuentsholing

- The team met with the proprietor of Cable Sat along with the staff.

- The team were informed that they have just completed 70 % of their CATV network into digital and they have around 30% in analog.
- Although there was an analog signal being distributed on the day the team arrived in Phuentsholing, the analog signals were shutted down from the next day.
- On the visiting day to their control room, it was found that the analog signals were removed in the control.
- There were dishes found on the rooftop but found they were not in use.
- Although they were given the login credentials for the SMS system, they were still maintaining the subscribers list in the excel sheet and billing was done manually.
- There were 4 staff working.
- The team was informed that they have more than 160 STBs in stock and more were ordered for the distribution to those who were using analog signals.

Kharung Cable Service(Gedu)



Figure 5. Control Room of Kharung Cable Service, Gedu

- It was found that the cable signals were sourced from both the MSOs(NetCom & DrukMSO).
- Kharung Cable Service informed the team that since NetCom is too slow in incorporating their subscribers in the system, they have switched to DrukMSO and sent their subscriber details to DrukMSO.
- There were both analog and digital signals being distributed.
- There were no dishes in the LCOs premises and signals were all from the MSOs.
- Kharung Cable Services has 3 technicians working with them.
- The Team were informed that although they have distributed STBs in the town areas but left only for the far flung areas as they have to lay out the new fibres to replace the old one.
- STBs were in stock for the distribution.
- It was informed to the team that they are reducing the numbers of distributed channels so that people can come forward for installation of STBs.

- Kharung Cable Service was sharing to the team that people in the villages are resistant and reluctant to buy the STBs as they are unaware of the digitization and said they need to be given the awareness.

2.2. Monitoring visit to Haa Dzongkhag

Lekey Cable Service



Figure 6. Cable Television services of Lekey Cable Service, Haa without STB



Figure 7. Control room of Lekey Cable Service

- It was found that Lekey Cable Service was maintaining both the analog and digital signals in the control room.
- Lekey Cable Services covered four Gewogs under Haa Dzongkhag.

- The team found that only 50% of his subscribers installed STBs.
- There were signals from both the MSO but found using the signal of only DrukMSO as they have some issues in payment with NetCom.
- The team found that Lekey Cable had reached the signals to his control room and had been for more than six months.
- There were four technicians for Lekey Cable which is making a total of 3 staff.
- The team was informed that they have distributed the digital signals to the town areas and left only for the far flung areas. However, while the team were inspecting the television signals of nearby shops in the town, the team found that some televisions were receiving signals even without installation of STBs which means there are still analog signals in the town areas of Haa.
- Lekey Cable said that one of the reasons for the delay of switching to digital was having to replace the old fibres to distribute the digital signals and also lack of digital awareness of the people.



Figure 8. Random awareness on digitization of Cable Television Services, Haa

2.3. CATV monitoring tour to Paro Dzongkhag

TD Metho Cable Service (Paro Throm)



Figure 9. CAS system and control room of TD Metho Cable Service

- Although there was equipment for analog headend, it was found that the analog signals were shut down as per the directives of the Authority.
- There were dishes unremoved in the premises of the TD Metho office and seen used for distribution of the signal.
- TD Metho was seen using the different CAS system of their own (Dixen) which needs to be integrated to the CAS system of MSO.
- On the usage of dishes for distribution of signals, the team was informed that they are used for those of the channels which are encrypted by the MSO.
- TD Metho has 8 staff working including 5 technicians.
- The team were informed that they had shut down the analog signal and there were around 400 subscribers without TV signal.
- TD Metho was directed to remove the dishes which were being used and also on the quick distribution of the STBs. They were also instructed to integrate with the MSO (Details of STBs to be sent to MSO).
- Team found that TD Metho was installing the STB in their CAS system and details of 50 % of the STBs were in the CAS.
- The billing was found manually.

Sigma Cable Service (Paro Throm)



Figure 10. Control Room of Sigma Cable Service



Figure 11. Meeting with Manager and staff of Sigma Cable Service

- Sigma Cable service found maintaining both analog and digital signals in their headend. Therefore, the team asked Sigma Cable to shut down the analog headend as soon as possible.
- On the transition to digital signal, technicians informed the team that they are working phase-wise in replacing the fibres and the distribution of STBs.
- Since the Manager joined recently, he was given awareness on the importance of digital CATV services and the transparency in the cable industry.
- He said since there was no proper record kept, he is starting from the proper filing and record keeping.
- STBs and other equipment were found in stock.
- There were around 15 staff working including 8 technicians.
- Currently they were doing the billings manually.
- Since the signals were sourced from the MSO (NetCom), the dishes were not in use. However, they were informed that they can keep dishes for BBS channels.

Dogar Cable Service (Dawakha, Paro)



Figure 12. Control room of Dogar Cable Service

- While the team visited Dogar Cable Service, it was found that there were both analog and digital signals maintained in the control room.
- The signal was found sourcing from NetCom and it had not even been six months.
- Since the cable operator of Naja Geog has surrendered her cable service, Dogar Cable agreed to provide the services to Geog and the team was informed that he is still working on laying out the fibre.
- In the absence of services in the Geog, he said that he has already informed the Geog.
- The team found that their households were scattered in the far flung areas which will be difficult for the cable operator to lay out the fibres from one household to another.
- Dogar cable service said currently he has around 150 customers but losing customers due to the popularity of Ku-band dishes being distributed in his areas.
- On the distribution of Ku-band dishes, he was asked to submit the formal complaints along with the details of the seller.
- He expressed the difficulties of providing services in the rural areas and found that he couldnt even distribute a single STB to the people nor could he renew the license.
- He was informed to renew his license as soon as possible as the penalty is being imposed each day.
- The team even gave awareness on the importance of digitization and CAS and SMS systems.
- Team also directed Dogar Cable to distribute the STBs soon and to shut down the analog signals.



Figure 13. Meeting with Dogar Cable Services, Paro

2.4 Digitization and awareness to the people (Tsentu Gewog and Dogar Gewog)

- The team visited the office of Gups and met with the Gups of Tsentu and Dogar Geogs under Paro Dzongkhag.
- The team requested the Gewog to sensitise on following the people of the Gewog on behalf of the Authority;
- MSO, LCO, modality of the business of them and challenges faced by the LCOs of far flung places.
- Tariff of Nu.300/- only and how this three hundred divided into taxes, MSO fees, licence fees, bandwidth charges, pole sharing charges and other charges the LCOs need to manage from the current tariff of Nu.300.
- Digitization process and digitization target of the Royal Government. The team also asked to inform the people on the digitization target of the government, the need of Set Top Boxes for receiving digital signals and its prices. The team explained the challenges and advantages of digitization.
- The team also asked the Gewogs to sensitise on allowing the installation of Ku-band only in the remote areas where there are no cable television services.
- Although the team found that there are many dishes in the Gewogs, the team was informed that people prefer the cable television services over the Ku-band dish and they use it only when there are no services. So, they subscribe to CATV as well.
- The explained disadvantages of using dishes such as revenue leakages for the government, unfiltered channels, etc.



Figure 14. Meeting with Gup of Dogar Gewog



Figure 15. Meeting with Gup of Tsentog Gewog, Paro

Met with the Complainant of Paro Khangkhu



Figure 15. Meeting with Complainant of Paro Khangkhu

- The team also met with the complainant Phuntsho Deki of Paro Khangkhu.
- While visiting her place, the TV signals were perfectly fine and found no issues as she claimed.
- The team also found that there were internal issues which were being dragged again and again on CATV signals.
- Since there was an internal issue, the team suggested the complainant switch the services to Sigma Cable Service.
- While visiting her place, there was nothing much that she had to say.

2.5 Monitoring visit to Kuenzang Cable Service and Mendrelgang Cable Service, Tsirang



Figure 16. Control Room and site of Kuenzang Cable Service

With the disconnection of Analog Service by Kuenzang Cable service on 16th of September, 2022, the Tsirang Dzongkhag had been fully digitised covering nine Gewogs from twelve Gewogs under Tsirang Dzongkhag.

3. Complaints received with and compiled by the Authority

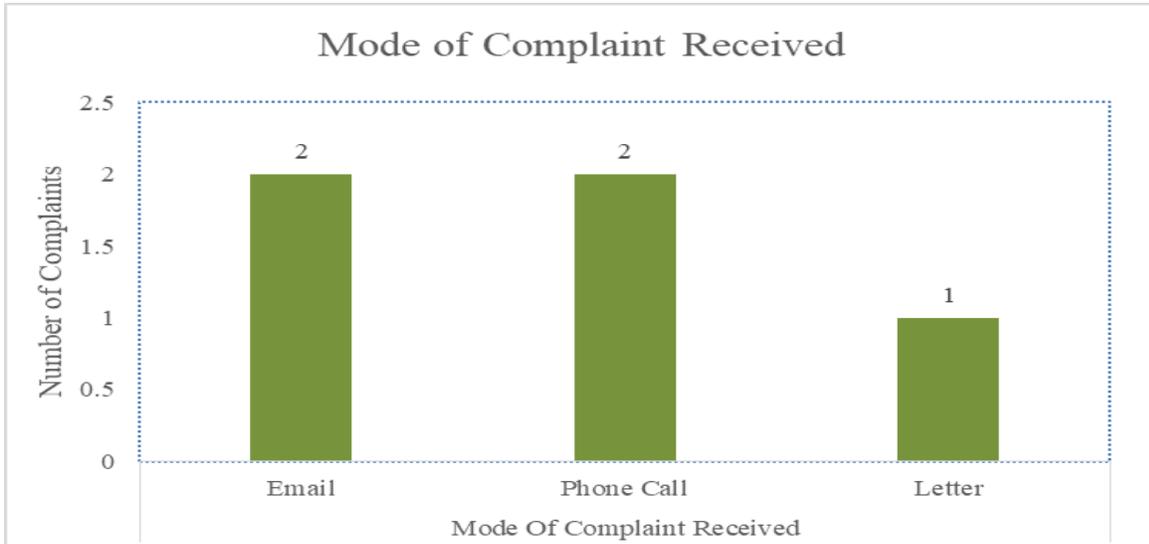
In the event of any issues/complaints related to the cable television services, the Authority has made many platforms available for the subscribers to lodge the complaints with the Authority. The complainant can contact the Authority through our focal officers appointed for the service, the details for which, have been mentioned in the website (www.bicma.gov.bt) and social media (Facebook) page (www.facebook.com/bicmabhutan). We have also an 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

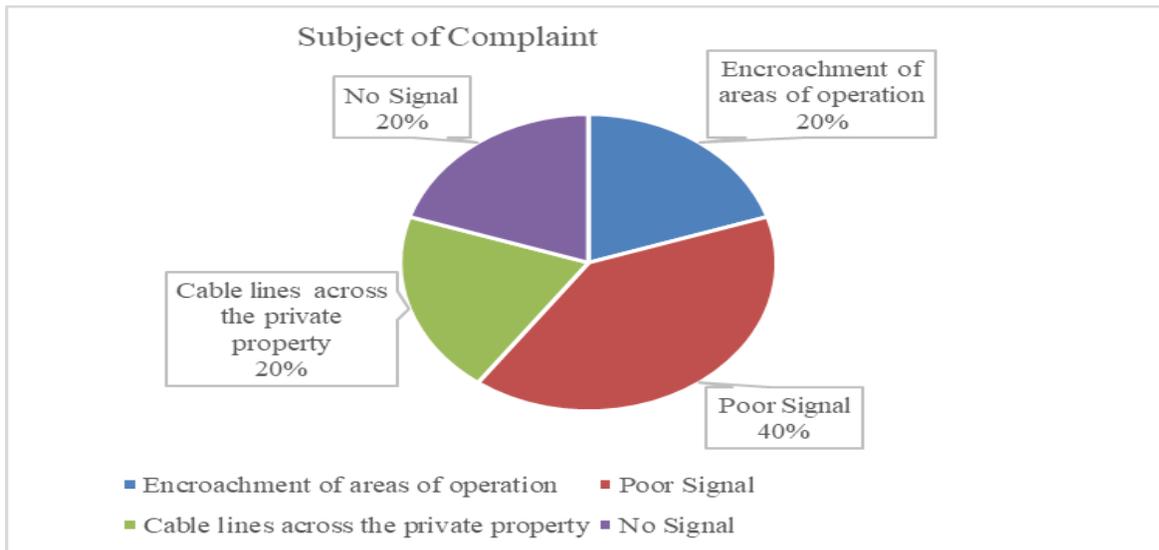
cable operators to share their challenges, issues and to submit the complaints with the Authority to take up the appropriate action, the Authority has formed the cable operators group in social media platform “Telegram”.

For the last three months (July-September, 2022), the Authority received a total of five complaints only on the cable television services. Of five complaints, all were from Thimphu Thromde except one from Samtse Dzongkhag.

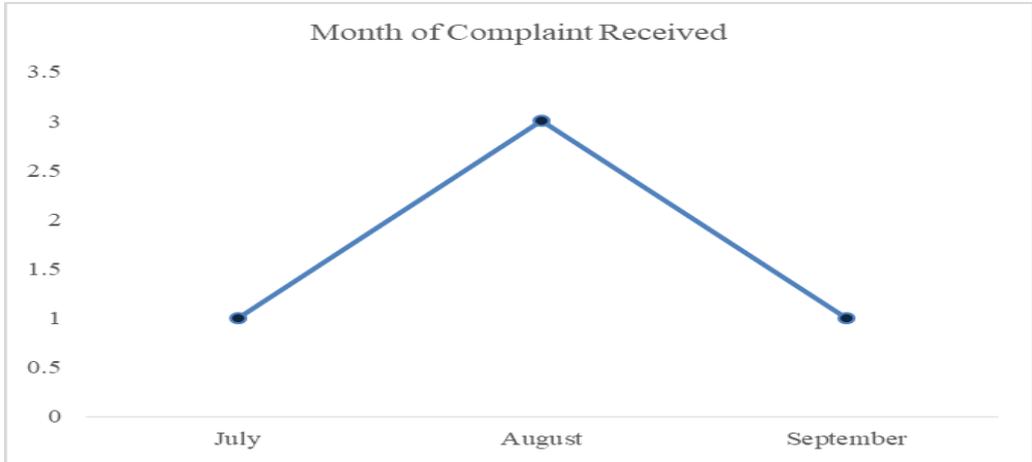
Sl. No	Complainant Received From	Mode of Complaint Received	Against LCO	TAT Achieved	Subject of Compliant	Date of Complaint Received	Action Taken	Remarks
1	Gomtu,17697577	Email	RG CS	0.5	Signal Disruptions	07/24/2022	Directed concerned LCO to rectify the issue but found that the signal disruption meant by complainant was disruptions which was from the MSO headend. However, the LCO was asked to rectify the issues if it wasn't from MSO hereafter.	Resolved
2	Babena, 77478900	Email	Etho Metho CS	3	Cable lines across the private property	08/18/2022	Directed the concerned LCOs to remove the wires which were laid across the private property to the safe place as the house owner was going to renovate the house. - The Authority did the follow up calls.	Resolved
3	Kabesa, 17110187	Phone Call	Norling CS	0.5	Disconnected cable television services	08/25/2022	Inquired the complainant about the receipt and got an explanation from the concerned CS. It was found that the issue was with the bill update on others' names. However, it was resolved after the updation of bill receipt	Resolved
4	Near Desup Club House,17110694	Phone Call	DrukCom Pvt Ltd	3	Signal Disruptions	08/30/2022	Directed concerned LCO to rectify. The issue was immediately taken up by the service provider and replaced the necessary fibres to restore the services. The follow up was done.	Resolved
5	Nakchung Cable,17646705	Letter	DrukCom Pvt Ltd	0.5	Encroachment of areas of operation	08/09/2022	Since there was no evidence and basis for the complaint, complainant was asked to either approach to the relevant agencies and also let to meet with DrukCom	Resolved



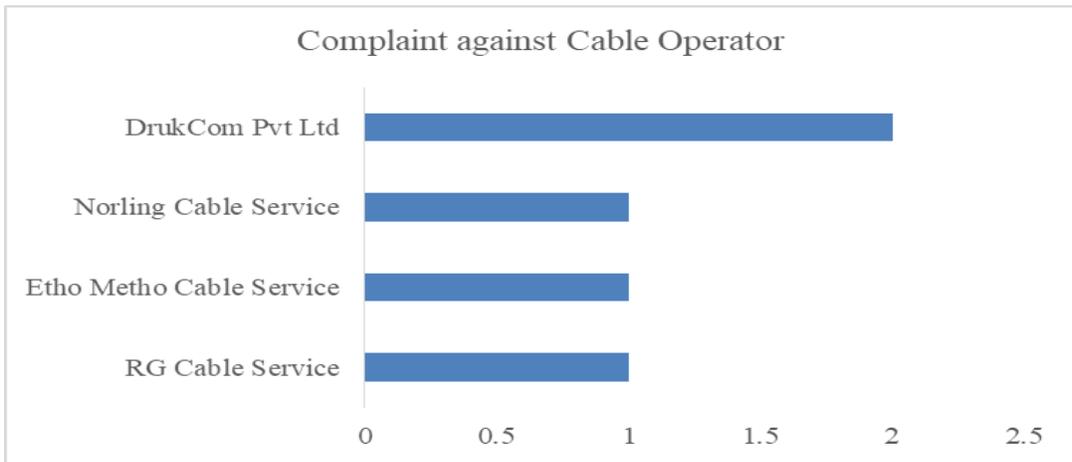
Among all the platforms available, most of the complaints (2) were lodged through email and phone call followed by (1) through formal letters.



On the subject of the complaint, 40 % (2) were on poor cable TV signals and 20 % (1) each complained about no signal, encroachment of areas of operation and cable lines laid across the private property. 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.



The highest number of complaints received was in the month August (3) followed by (1) each in the month of July and September, 2022.



As per the data recorded, the highest complaint was against DrukCom Pvt Ltd with (2) complaints and (1) each for Norling Cable Service and Etho Metho Cable Service under Thimphu Dzongkhag and one (1) for RG Cable Service under Samtse Dzongkhag.

4. Key Activities carried out by the Authority

- I. As per the decisions of the MSO stakeholders meeting dated 12th August, 2022, the Authority formed a technical team for verification for fulfilling the technical requirements and standards for MSOs. The field verification was carried out on 26th August, 2022.
- II. For the digitization of cable television, the Authority issued public notification through official pages as well as through the print newspapers vide BICMA-MCD/CATV/2022/394 dated 18th August, 2022.
- III. In this quarter, the division has renewed the annual licence for 88 LCOs collecting annual license fees Nu. 2,223,294 only and done the Ownership change for 6 LCOs including the licence duplication.
- IV. The division has also collected annual licence fees Nu. 2, 48,060.75 only from two MSO including the Nu.45, 000/-penalty from NetCom Bhutan (MSO).
- V. The Authority also issued one new cable television service licence for Li Wang Digital Cable Service in Thimphu Dzongkhag to provide services.
- VI. In order to avoid penalty accumulation and subsequent suspension of licence, concerned LCOs are reminded to renew the annual licence vide letter no. BICMA-MCD/CATV/2022/555 dated 16th September, 2022.
- VII. For this quarter, the division took the monitoring tour in Haa, Paro, Chhukha and Tsirang Dzongkhags.

5. Findings:

- I. Although most of the LCOs have registered their Set Top Boxes with MSO, the Authority found that they have not registered the exhaustive list of STBs with their MSOs.
- 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, most of the complaints lodged were from Thimphu Thromde.
- IV. Of the complaints recorded with the Authority for these three months, the majority of the complaints were against Etho Metho Cable Service of Thimphu Thromde.

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. 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.