

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **1. *What are the functions of the Consumer Protection Unit?***

The functions of the Consumer Protection include:

- a. Receiving customers' complaints concerning unethical/unfair financial practices, conducting investigation into the facts and circumstances of such practices, and preparing a full report ;
- b. Serving as the main body in the financial sector responsible for guaranteeing high quality services from financial institutions;
- c. Investigating media reports concerning unethical financial practices and/or negative publications about the financial system and individual financial institutions;
- d. Organizing consumer sensitization and education programs, including information disclosure;
- e. Arbitrating between financial institutions and their clients to find an amicable solution to consumer complaints.
- f. Publishing necessary information such as fees and charges;
- g. Monitoring the public's perception of financial services and consumer protection matters, and identifying trends that may affect consumer rights and protections;
- h. Participating in the formulation of consumer related regulations, policies, and procedures;
- i. Providing public clarification on misinformation about the financial system; and
- j. Issuing public notices and announcements on matters related to the financial sector.

### **2. *Who are Consumers?***

**“Consumer”** means a natural or legal person who engages in financial transaction and/or contract with a financial institution or benefit from the services or products of financial service providers;

### **3. *“Financial education”* means *empowering people to manage their money well*. People who manage their money well are “financially capable”.**

### **4. *What Institutions Does the CPU Investigate?***

The CPU investigates consumer protection issues of all financial institutions licensed by the Central Bank of Liberia. These institutions include: *Banks, Insurance Companies, Deposit-*

*taking Micro-finance Institutions, Development Finance Institutions, Foreign Exchange Bureaus, Rural Community Finance Institutions and Mobile Money Providers.*

**5. *Does the CPU Deal with all Types of Complaints?***

The Central Bank of Liberia through its CPU deals with all financial related complaints so far as it is within its regulatory purview. The scope of authority of the CPU does not ordinarily extend to the resolution of complaints involving factual disputes or contractual matters between financial institutions and other service providers. It also looks into the authorization of products/services and regulatory breaches that might not be helpful for a competitive market.

**6. *Is there a Fee required to access the CPU redress system?***

The CPU does not charge *ANY* fee to access its redress mechanism. Where the financial institution fails to address the complaint or where the customer is not satisfied with the outcome of the resolution, he/she can then escalate the complaint to the CPU through the hotline, walk-in or send a written complaint which is free of charge.

**7. *What is the next step if a consumer becomes dis-satisfied with complain handled by CPU?***

If a consumer is dissatisfied with the manner in which the case is being conducted by the CPU, he/she has the right to seek justice from any judiciary body.

**8. *Does the CPU deal with petitions that are already with the courts or law enforcement agencies?***

The CPU does not entertain petitions that are pending before the courts or under litigation. However, the CBL would receive petitions for cases under investigation by law enforcement agencies like the police, etc.

**Looking Forward**

The CPU welcomes the public to direct complaints and queries to its helpdesk and prioritize seeking financial education that will strengthen individuals' financial capabilities. The CPU accepts complaints involving all financial products and services including but not limited to the following: loan products, such as consumer loans, LCs etc., other financial services, such as remittances, debit cards, prepaid cards, insurance money transfers, and debt collection, etc.