

Citizen's Charters: a step towards better service delivery

P.A.G. Van de Pol

In 2000, PARC recommended the introduction of Citizen's Charters in a number of public agencies. In 2007, the Government of Bangladesh circulated an official order to prepare Citizen's Charter, especially in those parts of the public sector that provided basic services.

In 2009, MoE conducted a range of divisional and district workshops, as well as a number of consultations, to get the comments of field officers and citizens on the intermediate impact of the 'first generation' Citizen's Charter on service delivery. The feedback was revealing.

Citizen's Charters encouraged the service providers to spell out which services they provided and how, to reflect upon the standard and relevancy of these services (and their delivery), and to make a start to become more accountable and responsive to the people's needs.

However, there was some confusion about the concept, aim and format of a Citizen's Charter. The centrally formulated Citizen's Charter often did not reflect the needs of the local people nor the capacity of the local service providers to deliver. Many Citizen's Charters, therefore, were neither relevant or realistic and could not be used as benchmarks for the quality of service delivery.

A start has been made. Although not perfect, the first generation of Citizen's Charters has initiated a process that carries the seeds of a continuous improvement of service delivery. To realise that promise, the Citizen's Charter Initiative needs some fundamental readjustments.

In summary, these readjustments are:

1. Focus on the (ever changing) needs of the local citizens and the capacity (requirements) of the local service provider;
2. Engage local citizens and service providers in the formulation, monitoring, evaluation and reformulation process;
3. Encourage continuous citizen-civil servant collaboration;
4. Establish accessible and approachable mechanisms for citizen's complaints and redress;
5. Muster patience, dedication and long term commitment.

The Ministry of Establishment, through its project Civil Service Change Management, has taken the initiative to continue the Citizen Charter's Initiative. As John Major said, when he launched the first Citizen's Charter Initiative in 1991: "The charter programme will find better ways to convert money into better services. I want the people of the country to have services in which they can be confident, and in which public servants can take pride"... "It is a programme for a decade... I don't pretend that I am offering a quick fix." It is, therefore, time for a 2nd generation Citizen's Charter, aimed at improving basic service delivery, but based upon both the reality and needs of the local people and the capacity of the local administration.

To facilitate this process, the Ministry of Establishment has developed the manual **Towards Pro-people Service Delivery: How to Formulate Locally Relevant Citizen's Charters**, which is based upon the experiences and lessons learned. It hopes to show the way forward to a second generation of Citizen's Charters that will make a major contribution to improved and people-centred service delivery. It can be used by service providers as well as stakeholders. It is an easy-to-use guide, full with practical tips and tricks. The Ministry of Establishment will set the example and go into the divisions, districts and upazilla to organise local formulation and monitoring sessions.

The manual consist of 5 Chapters. The **1st Chapter** introduces the concept, aim and principles of the Citizen's Charter Initiative in Bangladesh. The link with continuous and people-centred service improvement is emphasised. The **2nd Chapter** presents a ready-to-use Citizen's Charter format as well as a checklist and examples of its essential components. The **3rd Chapter** gives practical tools and examples on how to formulate a local Citizen's Charter in a participatory way. The **4th Chapter** focuses on monitor instruments such as citizens report cards and social audits. The **5th Chapter** discusses how the Citizen's Charter Initiative can contribute, in a very practical way, to the capacity development and performance improvement of (local) service providers.

The most important point, however, of the 2nd generation Citizen's Charters, is that the citizens and the civil servant sit together and discuss what kind of services the citizens need, and how they can be best delivered. The time of 'one-size-fits-all' services and the 'we-know-what-is-best-for-you' mindset is over. The Citizen's Charter Initiative is not about the piece of paper hanging on the wall; it is about the process of meaningful, continuous interaction and collaboration between the citizens and the civil servants to improve the lives of the people and to contribute, **together**, to the further development of this great nation. The 2nd generation Citizen's Charter initiative is about **Building the Future Together**.

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Digital Bangladesh for A Pro-People Civil Service

Anir Chowdhury

The Government recognizes that the presence of a capable, effective, and forward-looking civil service that will be able to implement the Government's pro-poor policies and deliver services efficiently and timely, is a pre-requisite for pro-people development.

ICTs can make an important contribution to creating this type of public service, offering the civil servants exciting and promising new way of 'doing' and 'seeing' things. ICTs might break down the sometimes rigid hierarchy and procedures. Moreover, they might also decrease the dependence on individual's capacities and experience, and edge the organization towards a more collaborative decision making and knowledge management.

RELEVANCE OF ICTs

Below is a rough categorization of areas where ICTs (internet, intranet, email, shared documents, and blogs) can have a positive impact on the civil service:

Informed decision making: Decision making can be greatly helped with access to databases containing information, prior decisions, relevant rules and laws, research and evaluation reports and findings at the fingertips of the decision makers. Policy makers can decide with more confidence, less room for error and save crucial time and effort.

Integrated use of information: ICTs allow integration of information across the government so that the right hand indeed knows what the left hand is doing. This can reduce duplication of efforts, wastage of precious scarce national resources, and tighten collaboration and integration in both the central administration and the field.

Quick and speedy delivery of information and services to citizens' doorsteps: The introduction of ICTs enables civil servants to re-design information and service delivery processes that suit both their requirements and the citizens' needs. At the same time, by cutting the number of steps and levels involved, e-Services will make service delivery more transparent and accessible.

Engagement with the citizens: In this day and age, the citizens increasingly expect to be engaged in the formulation and implementation of services that affect their lives. ICTs offer appropriate solutions to field officers who need to be in constant touch and communication with their clients on these issues.

Close monitoring and quality assessment of implementation: ICTs offer various ways to address the challenges of monitoring in an increasingly decentralized government by allowing decentralized access to enter data and centralized processing of the data.

Fast communication with and within the government: ICTs can make an important contribution to reducing the physical and mental 'distance' by opening new communication channels between government and civil service, between central and field administrations, between civil servants and citizens and between different ministries, departments and functional levels.

Knowledge management within the government: Institutional memory is seriously hampered when a knowledgeable person moves away from the organization. Digital knowledge management platforms can help capture individual's knowledge, assimilate knowledge from multiple persons and groups, and can serve up this knowledge at the right time to the right people.

CURRENT READINESS

ICT Access: In the latter half of 2009, the government made a landmark decision to furnish all Secretaries, e-Governance Focal Points, Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Upazila Nirbahi Officers with laptops and Internet connectivity through mobile modems.

A large project, called BanglaGovNet initiated by the Ministry of Science and ICT in early 2010, is in the process of taking broadband connectivity to government offices down to the upazila level.

The Cabinet Division, in early 2010, started the process of connecting the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Division to all 6 Divisional Commissioner's offices and all 64 Deputy Commissioner's offices with high-speed video conferencing facility.

Integrated Decision Making: Most government information is in physical files or, in limited cases where it does exist electronically, the databases and knowledge bases are disjointed. The Access to Information (A2I) programme of the Prime Minister's Office has drafted an e-Governance Interoperability Framework (e-GIF) to connect all major government databases, to facilitate integrated decision making.

Being Pro-Citizen: The colonial administrative organization is no longer valid or relevant in an independent, democratic and rapidly changing country that requires collective and collaborative action of the Government, civil service, private sector, civil society and citizens to solve complex developmental issues. ICT skills are not sufficient: new ways of 'seeing' things by senior government officials may be much more important than new ways of 'doing' things.

Compliant with the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009: Information disclosure to the public is mandatory for the civil service under the RTI ACT. The 64 District Portals launched by the respective DC offices, with facilitation from the Cabinet Division, is a good example of how the field administration has started implementing this very important law. Each Ministry/Division and Directorate has appointed a focal point to implement the RTI Act in its own way.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Change Management to Inspire Civil Service for Improved Service Delivery: The introduction and beneficial use of ICT in reforming the civil service and thus creating better service delivery is essentially a change management process. It is important to ensure that the conceptualization, development, implementation and evaluation of e-Service delivery are inclusive and participatory processes, and that the relevant stakeholders are actively involved and engaged.

Creating One-stop Shops: The idea of 'one-stop shop' is to develop service delivery centres by aggregating many services that originate from different departments of the government. The establishment of Union Information and Service Centres (UISC) is a good example of one-stop shop which caters to wide ranging needs of the citizens, in addition to pure ICT-based services.



Citizens Charter as a Point of Departure for Ensuring Accountability: Almost all agencies of the government prepared Citizens' Charters by the middle of 2008. It is now imperative, next to continuing the process of fine-tuning the Citizen's Charters to local needs, to develop citizens monitoring mechanisms and publish results on the internet for all service-rendering public organizations.

Paperless/ 'Less-paper' Office: A paperless government office is unattainable in most countries, where record-keeping on paper and legal support for evidence still being paper-based. What is, however, practical, is to develop a strategy towards a 'less paper' environment for the civil service. Starting to electronically track the movement of files may be a worthy first step, already being piloted by several Ministries.

Connecting the Civil Service: To ensure their continued connectivity its maintenance and replacement, the laptops and modems given to the Secretaries, e-Governance Focal Points, Divisional Commissioners, DCs and UNOs, need to be included as soon as possible to TO&E. The Telephone Policy 2004 must be amended to include a paid provision for civil servants on the use of mobile phones for Internet access.

Developing the Institutional ICT Support and e-Leadership Capacity of the Government: The government has benefited from introducing the concept of e-Governance Focal Point at the level of a senior policy maker in each Ministry/Division. The concept of e-Governance Focal Point will be expanded to the Directorate and field level, and the Focal Points paired up the with technical personnel in the respective organization.

Ensuring Proper Budget Allocation: It is essential to mobilize planning wings of line Ministries/Divisions/Directorates, in collaboration with the Planning Commission and Finance Division, to develop ICT-enabled projects for service delivery and administrative automation.

Human Resource Development and Continuous Improvement: Modern ICTs play a crucial role in making learning more efficient, by providing learning opportunities anywhere, anytime. In addition, ICTs can also enable linking of the received training, through a Digital Human Resource Management System, to effective career planning, talent management, sensible transfers and transparent promotion.

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Secretary
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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

The day of the 23rd of June of every year is, as designated by the United Nations, being globally celebrated as the International Public Service Day. The essence of the values that have induced the UN body to earmark this Day is the recognition of the enormous significance of the balanced fusion of democracy and good governance. The core feature of this outstanding Day is the dissemination of the gamut of contributions made by the Civil Service toward enhancing the extent of Development and enriching the Development process of the country as well. It also goes to highlight the value and virtue of the delivery of citizen centric service.

Bangladesh, as a UN member nation, is privileged to join the global festivities of celebration that spans over whole of the world. The central elements that feature the Day in Bangladesh is the aspects of the contribution and the stupendous attainments of our Civil Service since the achievement of our national independence. This special occasion of civil service day has undoubtedly laid bare the opportunities for us to look forward to reaching the heights of better achievements for our nation and her people as a whole.

In the backdrop of this international day of civil service, our avowed objective should be set to foster the commitments among our younger civil servants to dedicate themselves selflessly to the causes and services of the people of the country. My firm conviction is that our young corps of civil servants would adhere to undertake and execute their professional pledges to that effect. In the same go, I sincerely wish that the Ministry of Establishment shall play its parental and lead role in putting up challenging efforts that shall go a long way to motivate as well as invigorate our civil servants for any supreme sacrifice.

I, on behalf of the Ministry of Establishment and on my own behalf, heartily wish the International Public Service Day a successful event of memorable celebration that will integrate all the civil servants and the people to get into making a happy and prosperous BANGLADESH.

Iqbal Mahmood



National Project Director, CSCMP and
Additional Secretary, MOE
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

Today, following the example set by the United Nations in 2002, we celebrate International Public Service Day. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all public officers for the valuable contribution they have made to the ongoing development process of Bangladesh. At the same time, we should use the opportunity to identify and discuss future challenges and think about positive and constructive responses.

The development of Bangladesh over the last 39 years has been remarkable, much to the credit of all those public servants working tirelessly and diligently. These successes, however, are no guarantee for the future. We, humble public servants, owe it to ourselves, our illustrious predecessors and the great people of Bangladesh, including its representatives, to constantly update, adapt and innovate our knowledge, skills and working methods to improve the quality and delivery of services.

It is our responsibility to remain a flexible and resilient organization, being able to adjust to the changing needs of the changing times. We need to uphold our core values, but we have to keep on working assiduously, together with the people and Government of Bangladesh, to implement reforms and changes in order to remain a force for the betterment of the country. The Ministry of Establishment is there to assist the public servants to realize this vision.

It is my sincere wish that International Public Service Day 2010 will give rise to joyful celebrations and meaningful discussions nationwide.

Muhammed Sadique



UNDP Resident Representative a.i. in Bangladesh

Message

The 23rd of June, commemorated as the International Public Service Day, recognizes that democracy and successful governance are built on the foundation of a competent public service. The ability of a society to maintain safety and essential public services, protect human rights, maintain an efficient framework for market activities and to hold free and fair elections draws on the skills and sense of purpose of public servants working as a team.

This day is therefore an opportunity to acknowledge the support extended to us by our public servants, who are committed to the ideals of Public Service, including accountability, transparency and efficiency, and who continuously strive to provide quality services.

With the continuously changing requirements of the society today, the public service must be responsive to the needs and demands of citizens. It is commendable that the Government of Bangladesh considers service delivery as key objective of its reform agenda. This is also demonstrated by ongoing work on a roadmap for civil service reform and the Civil Service Act.

As we mark this important day on International Public Service Day 2010, I would like to convey my best wishes to all the public servants in Bangladesh and I am sure that they will put their utmost effort in the formidable endeavor of serving the citizens of the country.

Stefan Priesner



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