



Mains Marathon

Day 10: The main aim of Citizen Charter is to ensure a quality of goods and services to the citizens delivered by the public organizations but it has failed in its main purpose. Examine the major issues which have made the success of Citizen Charter difficult? (250 words)

20 Jul 2022 | GS Paper 2 | Social Justice

Approach / Explanation / Answer

- Introduce by defining Citizen Charter and its importance.
- Discuss the issues of Citizen Charter.
- Suggest some points to tackle the issues.
- Conclude by stating the need for the Citizen Charter

Answer

Citizen's Charter (CC) is a document of commitments made by a government organization to the citizens/client groups in respect of the services/schemes being provided to them or to be provided to them. The objective of Charter exercise is to build bridges between citizens and administration and to streamline administration in tune with the needs of citizens. This exercise, if appropriately conceived and carried out, can enthuse and enable organizations to tune their planning, policy and performance to the needs and concerns of citizens/ stakeholders/ users/ clients.

Six principles of the Citizens Charter movement as originally framed, were:

- Quality: Improving the quality of services
- Choice: Wherever possible
- Standards: Specify what to expect and how to act if standards are not met
- Value: For the taxpayer's money
- Accountability: Individuals and Organisations
- Transparency: Rules/ Procedures/ Schemes/Grievances

Issue of the Citizen Charter

- **Devold participative mechanisms** - in a majority of cases, not formulated through a consultative process with cutting edge staff who will finally implement it.
- **Poor design and content:** lack of meaningful and succinct CC, absence of critical information that end-users need to hold agencies accountable.
- **Lack of public awareness:** only a small percentage of end-users are aware of the commitments made in the CC since effective efforts of communicating and educating the public about the

standards of delivery promise have not been undertaken.

- **Charters are rarely updated:** making it a one-time exercise, frozen in time.
- **End-users, Civil society organizations and NGOs are not consulted when CCs are drafted:** Since a CC's primary purpose is to make public service delivery more citizen-centric, consultation with stakeholders is a must.
- **Measurable standards of delivery are rarely defined:** making it difficult to assess whether the desired level of service has been achieved or not.
- **Little interest shown by the organizations in adhering to their CC:** since there is no citizen friendly mechanism to compensate the citizen if the organization defaults.
- Tendency to have a uniform CC for all offices under the parent organization. CC have still not been adopted by all Ministries/Departments. This overlooks local issues.

Reforming CC to make them Effective

- **One size does not fit all:** formulation of CC should be a decentralized activity with the head office providing only broad guidelines.
- **Wide consultation process:** CC be formulated after extensive consultations within the organization followed by a meaningful dialogue with civil society.
- **Firm commitments to be made:** CC must be precise and make firm commitments of service delivery standards to the citizens/consumers in quantifiable terms wherever possible.
- **Redressal mechanism in case of default:** clearly lay down the relief which the organization is bound to provide if it has defaulted on the promised standards of delivery.
- **Periodic evaluation of CC:** preferably through an external agency.
- **Hold officers accountable for results:** fix specific responsibility in cases where there is a default in adhering to the CC.
- **Include Civil Society in the process:** to assist in improvement in the contents of the Charter, its adherence as well as educating the citizens about the importance of this vital mechanism.

A Citizens' Charter cannot be an end in itself, it is rather a means to an end - a tool to ensure that the citizen is always at the heart of any service delivery mechanism. Drawing from best practice models such as the **Sevottam Model (a Service Delivery Excellence Model)** can help CC in becoming more citizen centric.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-marathon-daily-answer-writing-practice/papers/2022/main-citizen-charter-quality-goods-services-citizens-delivered-public-organizations-failed-main-purpose-examine-issues-difficult-paper-2-social-justice/print>