



## Promoting Social Accountability for Better Public Service Delivery

### Citizen Charter

Citizen's Charter is a document of commitments made by a Government organization to the citizens groups in respect of the services/schemes being provided to them or to be provided. Usually respective GoB agency prepares the charter having consultation with citizens groups.

Citizen charter is also an important tool that allows citizens to exercise their watchdog role and hold service providers accountable. It enhances good governance, improves the effectiveness of services by the respective department having measurable standards.

The basic objective of the citizen's charters is to empower citizens in getting access to public services.

The Cabinet Division issued circular on Citizen Charter in December 2017, where following framework for Citizen Charter was mentioned. In addition, the circular also mentioned relevant information and institutional arrangement for Grievance Redress System (GRS) if any citizen fail to get expected services as mentioned in the charter, then he/she can take advantage of GRS.

For making a gender sensitive citizen charter, women participation in formulation of the charter need to be ensured, at the same time gender need is to be considered and special attention for women focused public services is also required.

#### Six principles of the Citizens' Charter

- i) **Quality:** Improving the quality of services;
- ii) **Choice:** Wherever possible;
- iii) **Standards:** Specify what to expect and how to act [if standards are not met];
- iv) **Value:** For the public money;
- v) **Accountability:** Individuals and Organizations; and
- vi) **Transparency:**  
Rules/Procedures/Schemes/Grievances.

#### Contents of Citizen Charter

**Mission and Vision of GoB Agency:** Mission and Vision of a particular service provider is important to express its commitment to the citizen. For achieving that vision, the agency let the people know its service approaches in the charter.

**Legal Framework of Services:** The Citizen Charter includes the legal framework of the services, so that citizen's expectation cannot move beyond the legal framework.

**Standard and Quality of Services:** Nature of service delivery, target groups, time limitation for service delivery and fees for particular services are mentioned in the charter.

**Information on Service Recipients:** Criteria of service recipients and their required roles to get the service is an essential criteria of citizen charter.

**Improvement of Service:** For quality public services, the future steps are also mentioned in the charter. As a result the citizens can expect better service in future as a result of technological upgradation or any other reforms.

**Grievance Redressing System:** In case of deprivation from expected public services, or facing harassment in getting the service, the procedures of registering the complaint and time line for settlement –all these information are mentioned in the charter for redressing the grievance.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Information on the effectiveness of services, time based monitoring, report card survey and provisions for incorporating citizen's feedback are mentioned in the charter.

**Contact Information:** for any public query and information, the contact information of service provider organizations are mentioned in the charter. This provision also facilitates access to information.

**Civic Role for Public Services:** Expected citizen role and responsibilities are also mentioned in the charter, so that civic role can enhance the public service delivery more effectively.

**Charter Revision Process:** For ensuring smooth public service delivery, information on required changes and revision process also sensitize the citizen to be accommodative in change options.

**The Citizen Charter Guideline mentioned following GRS framework**

SL	When contact is required	Contact person	Contact address	Time frame
01	If responsible officer fails to settle the grievance	Grievance Settlement Officer	Name Designation Email Web address	30 days
02	If GR officer fails to settle the grievance	Appeal Officer	Name Designation Phone Email	20 days
03	If Appeal Officer fails to settle the grievance	Complain cell at Cabinet Division	Cabinet Division	60 days

MJF assisted Khulna City Corporation for hoisting Citizen Charter in 2006. From thereafter, it has been supporting 100s of LGIs and local level public institutions in formulation and public disclosure of Citizen Charters. MJF has gained different experiences and expertise in facilitating participatory citizen charters for the public institutions.

**Key Challenges**

- i) Participatory formulation of citizen charter requires orientation to the citizen groups and the employees of the institution prior to go for the related activities.
- ii) Formulation of Citizen Charter for the institutions having diversified activities, viz. LGIs, is difficult than those for the single service delivery institutions.
- iii) Popularizing Citizen Charter requires mass mobilization and continuous dissemination through different Medias.
- iv) Citizen engagement in monitoring and regular updating of the citizen charters is difficult for the concerned institutions.
- v) Common people have less access to the social and electronic media; that’s why dissemination of Citizen Charter depends on traditional media like- Billboard and printing, which are costly.
- vi) Grievances to deal timely and neutrally.
- vii) Lack of skilled human resources within the institutions for facilitate Citizen Charter process.

**MJF experience on citizen charter for better service delivery in agriculture services**

Kahaloo Upazia under Bogura district is an agro-based economic zone and usually farmers are accustomed to multi-crop framing. The field monitoring visit of Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer and their advisory support to the farmers were not up to the mark. These issues were identified while respective citizen forum applied social accountability tools especially the social audit and community score card in the respective areas.

The social monitoring team also found that marginalized farmers especially who stayed in the remote areas were unaware about most of the public services. Farmers were not accustomed to communicate with Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer for required agricultural information. As consequence of such findings, most of the forum members recommended to develop and install participatory citizen charter with most relevant information and duty of all actors for the agriculture services. The required information of citizen charter have been checked and verified by the stakeholders and installed accordingly at public places.



This initiative for citizen charter contributed for effective access to agriculture information and strengthened interaction between the farmers and field staff of the agriculture department.

**Policy Recommendations**

- In order to include citizen feedback and expectations to the Citizen Charter formulation process, several prior discussions are needed with different sections of the society.
- Local Government Institutions should have monitoring mechanism to ensure effectiveness of the citizen charter.
- Dissemination of the Citizen Charter should be done through mass mobilization, social and electronic media and the traditional media as well.
- Degree of following the Citizen Charter can be included one of the indicators of organizational performance.
- Third party (local NGO/CSO) can work better for supporting institutions for developing and monitoring Citizen Charter.
- Ensure budgetary allocation for Citizen Charter
- NGOs can be advised by NGO Affairs Bureau for practicing citizen charter during project implementation It can be mentioned in project approval letter by the bureau.