

## **Effectiveness of Citizen’s Charter in Public Service Delivery: A Study on Trishal Municipality and Boilor Union Parishad**

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**Abstract:** Citizen Charter (CC) plays an important role in providing public services which is conceived as most effective tool in implementing values of New Public Management (NPM). It was first introduced in Bangladesh in 2008 following the recommendation of Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC). Every government office is supposed to display Citizens Charter highlighting what services that particular office is supposed to provide at what price and when. Afterwards, attention has been given to make second generation CC. This study has been undertaken to see the implementation of CC with special focus on generations, time, cost as well as availability and recipients’ perception of some particular services at local level. Currently, there is no second generation CC in the study area. However, both studied local government institutions will take initiative to materialize it within the next year. On the other hand, service seekers and providers are satisfied to some extent regarding some services. In some cases, service recipients demand proper attention for timely and effective services and wider publications of CC to aware mass people.

**Key Words:** Citizen Charter, Public Service Delivery, Local Government, Effectiveness.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The concept of Citizen’s Charter is relatively new which has gained popularity among governance practitioners and were experimented with local adaptation and varying degree of success in countries like France, Spain, Belgium, Portugal, Canada, Australia, Jamaica, Malaysia and India. In the process, the Citizens Charter has come to be generally known to as “the expression of understanding between the citizens and the providers of a public service with respect to the quantity and quality of service the former receive in exchange of their taxes”. It is a legally non-binding document – resembling a social contract between the service provider and service recipient about the right and obligation of both. The degree of democratic and accountable governance depends on the collective strength of the national integrity system which is the sum-total of a set of institutions and practices. Parliament strives to ensure citizen’s rights which includes its oversight role on the Government, Judiciary, Executive, Auditor General, specialized watchdog bodies like the Anti-Corruption Commission and Ombudsman, the Election Commission, law-enforcing bodies, public service, civil society, media, private sector, etc. This process of ensuring public accountability encourages greater promise of effective service delivery in every sphere of government including local government.

A hugely important prerequisite for this structure or hardware to be effective is the software, namely, the democratic practice. Strengthening democratic governance, especially where conventional institutions and processes of accountability fail to deliver effectively, requires non-conventional tools of social accountability - voice and demand for change. Social accountability is about strengthening the demand side of good governance, to build capacities of the citizens to raise voice and demand for accountable, transparent and pro-people governance. It is also essentially a set of tools and processes for building effective bridges of the public officials and public representatives with citizens, a sense of collective ownership and responsibility. It is a non-conventional process of holding the power-holders accountable and responsive to the people on whose mandate they exercise the power. Citizen Charter is a vital player in ensuring encouragement of public and social

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accountability of public institutions, specially municipalities and union parishads which will eventually ensure good governance through efficiency and effectiveness.

**Conceptual Framework:**

Citizen's Charter is an effort made by public organizations to inform its clients/users of their service types, standards, time frame of receiving particular service and introduce a complain procedure to let the users complain if service is not provided according to the stipulated time without any real explanation [1]. In Bangladesh, the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) recommended Citizen's Charter in 2000 followed by an official order issued by the then Caretaker Government to introduce Citizens Charter in public offices including ministries and departments which led to the introduction of Citizen Charters in a large number of public institutions. The Charters, later coined as the "first generation Citizens Charters", introduced as they were by the officials (service Providers) in most cases without any participation of citizens (service recipients) had their obvious limitations.

According to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh "all powers in the Republic belong to the people" and "every person in the service of the Republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people" [2]. The election manifesto, prepared before the Elections in 2008, of the present AL Government contained a clear and specific electoral commitment that the second generation Citizen's Charters will be introduced in every office. The Sixth Five Year Plan also makes a similar commitment of introducing and institutionalizing Citizen's Charter by the ministries and agencies to 'provide regular feedback' and 'enhance accountability'. The Government has already taken a significant initiative under the Ministry of Public Administration to introduce what is now known as the second generation Citizen's Charter aiming at a fundamental qualitative transformation of the tool to ensure citizen's participation in its preparation and implementation.

Local Government system is a century-old practice in Bangladesh (Amin 1989) [3]. Local government is a public organization which is authorized to decide and administer public policies within a small territory acting as an autonomous body. By definition, local government means an intra-sovereign governmental unit within the sovereign state dealing mainly with local affairs, administered by local authorities and subordinate to the state government (Jahan and Momtaz, 1997:92) [4]. According to the article 59(1) of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, "Local Government in every administrative unit of the Republic shall be entrusted to bodies, composed of persons elected in accordance with law" (GOB, 1993:43) [5]. Currently, there are two types of local government institutions in Bangladesh- rural local government and urban local government. The rural local government comprises of three- Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad and Zila Parishad. Whereas, urban local government represents two tiers, such as- Pourashava (municipality) and City Corporation.

Effectiveness refers to achieving anticipated outcomes. This approach is output oriented which is very important to the better service quality of local government institutions like Union Parishad and Pourashava or Municipality. Citizen Charter's effectiveness is crucial to achieving a holistic drive of development practice among people of a locality who are generally deemed to be largely unaware, uneducated and poor. Provisions of the Charter are required to be effective in nature so that it ensures participatory and responsive governance in Union Parishad or Pourashava,

**Table 1**

**Objectives of the Study**

Objectives	
<b>Broad Objectives</b>	Determine the effectiveness of the charter's (first and second generation) in terms of (time, cost and visit) services delivery by the local government institutions (Municipality and Union Parishad).
<b>Specific Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess the scenario during the first generation of the Charter</li><li>• Assess the current scenario under the second generation of the Charter</li><li>• Identify prospects and constraints of both the charters</li><li>• Make recommendation(s) to customize the charter while taking into consideration of Bangladesh (level of development, culture, values and traditions).</li></ul>

## II. METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection Methods

Relevant data have been collected using both primary and secondary sources of information. As a means of Secondary Sources all relevant and available documents having bearing upon the focus of the current assignment have been reviewed to develop a thorough understanding about the study.

The study aims at applying following data collection methods.

- Questionnaire and Content Analysis
- KII (Key Informants Interview)
- Case Studies (Strong and Weak cases of both initiatives)

### Sampling Area:

A municipality and a union parishad of Mymensingh (Bangladesh) district have been selected as sampling area. The municipality is Trishal municipality and the union parishad is 2 No Boilor Union Parishad, Trishal.

### Limitations of the Study:

The sampling area and sampling populations are relatively little because of time and cost constraints.

### Findings of the Study:

The study tried to make a meaningful comparison between first and second generation citizen charters. Unfortunately it found out that both the two institutions perform their functions with citizen charter of first generation. The real scenario is as follows.

### Implementation of First Generation Citizen's Charter: Trishal Municipality

**First Generation Citizen Charter:** Every municipality has been asked to formulate its own citizen charter. It was done under access to information (A2I) project of government. Under this program government provided direction to include different types of service.

**Second Generation Citizen Charter:** Next generation citizen will be made in June 2017. Through which one will be able to know about services by going through a web portal. There will be a clear explanation about the time and cost of each service. It will be available in Municipal Information System.

In first generation citizen charter, four services have been studied with special references to time, cost and visit.

**Table 2: Perceptions on service of service recipients**

	Trade License		Birth and Death Registration		Immunization		Water Supply	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you get service within a reasonable time?	4	0	4	0	4	0	3	1
Do you think cost of service is reasonable?	4	0	3	One complained that price of service varies from person to person	Service is provided at free of cost	0	4	0
Actual time of service	1-2 days		1-2 days		Defined time in the card		7-10 days	
Total N=16								

**Source: Survey conducted in February 2017**

From the table it is seen that in case of trade license every service recipients are satisfied in terms of time, cost and visit. In case of birth and death registration 4 is satisfied with time and visit where as one is dissatisfied with money. In case of immunization every service recipient is happy in all segments. In water supply service everybody is happy except one in time.

**Table 3 Perception of service providers**

	Birth-Death	Administration	Health Dept.	Engineering Dept.
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	registration Dept.	Dept. License	Trade	
How many days are written for the service?	Immediately	1 day	2 days in field in a week. Every Tuesday is in office	It is determined according to service
Actually how many days does it take?	1-2 days	1-2 days	10-12 days for covering whole area	3-4 days
Do you maintain registrar book?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
What are the causes of delay in providing service?	Excessive use of rules and regulations and manual work	Lack of manpower and consciousness	Lack of manpower, lack of coordination, lack of transport	Problem of server and power.
What are your suggestions for increasing the quality of service?	One stop service is essential. Rules and regulations should be made flexible.	Recruitment of sufficient manpower. Consciousness should be increased.	Recruitment of sufficient manpower. Consciousness should be increased.	Internet facilities should be maximized.

**Source: Survey conducted in February 2017**

In table 3, respondents were asked about the provisions of charter and their reality. It shows that there is a delay in every services and are not provided according to given time. Health department delays most of 10 to 12 days when it was supposed to take only 2 days. As the respondents are service providers, they suggest some important steps to increase the quality of services and their delivery. It is stated that one stop service is essential and rules and regulations should be flexible. Concurrently, awareness raising, recruitment of sufficient manpower, speedy internet facilities are necessary to improve services.

**Table 4 Perception on service of Panel Mayor**

What is your opinion about the citizen charter of this municipality?	Good, because people can know about service and service sector.
Is this local government body functioning well?	Yes
Do you call any coordination meeting?	Yes
How many times do you call this meeting?	Generally once in a month. But due to emergency it may change.
Do you give any reward for effectiveness and efficiency?	Yes
Do you provide punishment for inefficiency?	No
Do service seekers or providers bring any complain to you?	Yes
What should be done for providing timely service?	A help line should be introduced.
What should be done for giving providing quick service?	E service system should be introduced.

**Source: Survey conducted in February 2017.**

**Note: Mr Ajharul Islam, Councilor (Word No. 4) and Panel Mayor has been interviewed due to unavailability of honorable mayor.**

According to table 4, Panel Mayor suggests that this local government body is functioning really well. He also suggests Citizen Charter is beneficial to people. When asked about coordination, effectiveness and efficiency, he states that the UP is working for them. Sometimes people complain about services and, as a result, they realize that a help line and e-service system should be introduced.

**Implementation of Citizen Charter in 2 No. Boilor Union Parishad, Trishal, Mymensingh.**

There is no citizen charter in this Union Parishad (UP). But the UP chairman said that the services provided by Union Information Digital Center (UIDC) are considered services under citizen charter. Union Parishad determines types of services in line with the direction of the upper tier. It also coordinates with UIDC about the services. A positive news is that the UP will display citizen charter by June 2017 because it has to face

question during the visit of Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). But the UP chairman does not know about second generation citizen charter.

**Table 5 Perception of service recipients**

	Birth-Death Registration		Nationality Certificate		E-mail		Document of land	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you get service within a reasonable time?	4	0	4	0	4	0	3	1
Do you think cost of service is reasonable?	3	1	2	2	1	3	2	2
Actual time of service	3-4 Days after application		It depends on the availability of UP chairman		Immediately, if the server is functions		7 working days	
Total N=16								

**Source: Survey conducted in February 2017**

The abovementioned table states that recipients get birth/death registration, nationality certificate and email service in reasonable time. But document of land is little difficult for some people. Major portion of respondents think cost of services are reasonable and some of them think it is not. Birth/death registration, land documents follow a timeline of delayed or swift days. But the other two services depend on the availability of officials which means it might take long time.

**Table 6 Perception of service providers**

Questions	Entrepreneur (Male)	Entrepreneur (Male), There is no woman entrepreneur	UP secretary
What are the causes of delay in delivering services?	Attestation is needed for every document from UP chairman. But he remains ill most of the time. Server problem	Illness of UP chairman, Server problem	Illness of UP chairman, Server problem, lack of skilled manpower
What should be done to improve services?	Recruitment of skilled manpower, Frequent supply of electricity and internet, Awareness building among people is essential	Access to internet is essential, Decoration should be made, sufficient materials like laptop, photocopy machine and furniture should be provided	Recruitment of skilled manpower, Frequent supply of electricity and internet, Awareness building among people is essential
Total N=3			

**Source: Survey conducted in February 2017**

According to service providers, which are depicted in this table 6, causes for service delay are required attestation of UP Chairman, lack of skilled manpower and slow internet connection. They have identified some steps to be necessarily taken such as- recruitment of skilled manpower, speedy internet connection, digitalization, uninterrupted electricity supply and , most importantly, awareness raising.

**Table 7: Perception on service of UP Chairman**

What is your opinion about the citizen charter of your Union Parishad?	Positive, because people can know about the service and service sector.
Is this local government body functioning well?	Yes
Do you call any coordination meeting?	Yes
How many times do you call this meeting?	Generally once in a month. But due to emergency it may differ.
Do you give any reward for effectiveness and efficiency?	No
Do you provide punishment for inefficiency?	Warning is given orally

Do service seekers or providers bring any complain to you?	Yes
What should be done for providing timely service?	People should be made aware. Skill manpower is needed. Internet access should be increased.
What should be done for giving providing quick service?	Server problem should be solved. Frequent supply of electricity is vital. Skilled manpower should be recruited.

**Source: Survey conducted in February 2017**

In table 7, perception of UP Chairman of studied institution on service is stated. In his opinion, the UP is functioning really well. He calls coordination meeting once in a month. His institution does not give any reward for effectiveness and efficiency but warn orally those who perform inefficiently. Both service seekers and providers complain to him on concerning issues. He suggests that skilled manpower, speedy internet connection and interrupted electricity supply is important for better service.

### **III. LIMITATIONS**

Lack of proper awareness about citizen charter among residents is a great barrier in fruitful implementation of citizen's charter. If we turn a look into the studied services we see that in case of trade license all are not treated equally. Businessmen perceive fees higher than their ability. Renewable fees are also high according to them. In case of birth and death registration people go to take services in most of the time at the age of 5, 6 and 7 of their babies. They are not conscious about the registration of their new born babies. People do not get services in accordance with citizen charter because of the server problem. Sometimes concerned officials also showed ignorance. In immunization, lack of manpower hampers quick implementation. As the key stakeholders of this program are mothers and children, so unconsciousness among them played a negative role. One particular day is also a great barrier in this way. Water supply is also hampered due to frequent load shedding. Concerned officials also always do not pay proper attention. Operation of water pumps get disrupted frequently. There is no alternative in this regard. Nepotism is common in giving water supply line. Impure water is supplied. High rise buildings do not get water in normal flow.

### **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Citizen's Charter (CC) is a mutual agreement between citizen and service providers about the kind of services that a citizen can expect from the service providers which is considered as one of the most popular tools of New Public Management (NPM). Through this tool administration comes closer to the recipients. However in the present studies along with success, some limitations have been identified. Hence, addressing to these shortcomings properly demands serious attention from the policy shapers. These are taking stakeholders concern before formulating CC. In terms of trade license, services should be made easily available and user friendly by reducing time and cost. In case of birth and death registration, proper use of internet should be ensured. Officers and stuffs should maintain a friendly relation. For immunization, women need to be made aware of about services as well as time and manpower should be increased to provide better and quick service. In water supply people should be treated equally. Solution to problems of water pumps demands special attention. Local government is an integral part of overall governance process of any country. Like the central government, local government institutions at different levels perform many of the similar functions such as, agriculture, health, education and infrastructure development etc. within their jurisdictions. The scale and scope of these activities are however limited. But being closer to the community, the development activities and services provided by the local government institutions can have immediate impact on their lives [6].

Therefore services provided through local government institutions are very vital. Managers/ personnel's must be held accountable and must show transparency in work and conduct because there are aspects of the job that can lead to misconception of the public interest, corruption and subversion [7]. In the local government level, capacity building or development in Bangladesh is a very crucial area [8]. Hence in the area of CC, it deserves special treatment. The majority of the common people, however, remained disillusioned for they could see no sustainable positive gains for them [9]. In this regard, awareness building is critically important. Though there has been little disagreement among development planners and administrators as to the crucial role of decentralization in the overall development of a developing country still the thing has conveyed different meanings to different people [10]. Civil society can play a very vital role in proper implementation of CC. Rules and regulations have to be amended to broaden the scope to local resource mobilization and to ensure adequate flow of resources from the center to local levels according to local demands [11]. Services should be made citizen friendly. Though there is a lot of debate in the academic circles as to the meaning and constituting elements of civil society there is little doubt that it plays a crucial role in molding public opinion and protecting

public interest [12]. On top of everything state-of art technology is critically important for effectiveness and efficiency of CC. In this respect there is no alternative to expeditious implementation of second generation of CC

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