



Mains Practice Question

Q. Despite the emphasis on the Citizen Charter in day-to-day administration, there are many shortcomings attached to it. Discuss. **(250 Words)**

22 Sep, 2022 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about the Citizen Charter.
- Discuss the shortcomings of the Citizen Charter.
- Discuss the reforms to be brought into the Citizen Charter (CC).
- Conclude your answer by giving a way forward.

Introduction

A Citizen Charter is a **document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the Organisation towards its Citizens** in respect of Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievance Redress, Courtesy, and Value for Money.

Principles of Service Delivery

The concept of Citizens' Charter enshrines the trust between the service provider and its users. Six principles of the Citizens Charter movement as originally framed were:

- **Quality** - improving the quality of services
- **Choice** - for the users wherever possible
- **Standards** - specifying what to expect within a time frame
- **Value** - for the taxpayers' money
- **Accountability** - of the service provider (individual as well as Organization)
- **Transparency** - in rules, procedures, schemes and grievance redressal
- **Participative**- Consult and involve

Main Body

Shortcomings of CC in India

- **Devoid of Participative Mechanisms:** In most cases, CC is not formulated through a consultative process with cutting-edge staff who will finally implement it.
- **Poor Design and Content:** There is a lack of meaningful and succinct CC and an 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 to communicate and educate 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.
- **No Proper Consultation:** 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.
- **Lack of Interest:** Little interest is shown by the organizations in adhering to their CC since there is no citizen-friendly mechanism to compensate the citizen if the organization defaults.
- **Uniformity in CC:** Tendency to have a uniform CC for all offices under the parent organization. CCs have still not been adopted by all Ministries/Departments. This overlooks local issues.

Reforms to be Brought in Citizen Charter (CC)

- **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.

Way Forward

- 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.drishitias.com/mains-practice-question/question-1375/pnt>