



Implementation of Citizens’/Clients’ Charter of Central Departments: An Independent Audit

Mr Alok Srivastava, has extensive years of experience in social development research. He is a trained Development Programme Evaluator from The World Bank and Carleton University (Canada) and holds a post graduation in Rural Development and Management. He has been involved in a number of research and evaluation studies in the area of education, employment and livelihood, labour (including child labour), and governance. He can be reached at: alok@cmsindia.org

Government of India’s ministries/department’s are mandated to develop Citizens’/Clients’ Charters (CCC). This exercise, in fact, marks the culmination of a process whose origin can be traced to the Conference of Chief Ministers of States and Union Territories held way back on May 24, 1997, in New Delhi and presided over by the then Prime Minister of India, Shri I.K. Gujral. In this Conference, an ‘Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government’ at the Centre and State levels was adopted. One of the major decisions taken in the Conference was that Departments would formulate Citizens’ charters starting with those sectors that have large public interface. However, overall not much progress was made in this direction. Given the unsatisfactory track record of the implementation of CCC and the uneven quality of CCCs, which were neither useful for measuring the performance of departments with respect to this important aspect of departmental performance, nor was there any consequence for ignoring the commitments listed in CCCs, the High Power Committee on Government Performance, chaired by the then Cabinet Secretary, in its meeting of May 28, 2010 decided to include “Development of Citizens’/Clients’ Charters” in Results Framework Documents (RFDs) as a mandatory indicator for all ministries/ departments.(Table 1).

Table 1: Mandatory Indicator in RFDs

ACTIONS	SUCCESS INDICATORS	UNIT	WEIGHT	TARGET/CRITERIA VALUE				
				EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
				100%	90%	80%	70%	60%
Independent Audit of implementation of Citizens’/ Clients ‘Charter (CCC)	% of implementation	%	2	100	95	90	85	80

Subsequently, departments have prepared CCCs and all CCCs that were found to be of acceptable quality have been published as a compendium and are also available on the website of Performance Management Division (PMD), Cabinet Secretariat (CS), GoI, which is the nodal agency for ensuring the approval of CCC by respective ministries and departments. CCC of respective ministries and departments are also available on their websites.

Independent Audit

An independent audit of implementation of CCC under the leadership of Dr. Prajapati Trivedi, Secretary, Performance Management Division, Cabinet Secretariat, was carried out by the Centre for Media Studies (CMS) in mid-2013. Fifty nine (59) ministries/departments of the Central Government, whose CCCs have been approved by PMD were included in this audit. The exercise was intensive which included physical visit to each ministry/department's office, interacting with nodal officers of 2-3 services provided by the respective ministries/departments, observing the display of CCC, making the phone calls for checking the response rate and accurateness of contact details of the nodal person and analyzing the quality of self-assessment report of each ministry.

With the expectation that a shared understanding of the proposed methodology and the process would ensure transparency, objectivity and fairness of the proposed independent audit, all the ministries and departments were informed well in advance about the audit methodology and process. The Audit was participatory in nature as it included not only ranking of ministries/departments on the basis of visits by CMS audit team members (Success indicator A to E in Table 2); but equal weight was given to Self-assessment reports of respective ministries/departments (success indicator F in Table 2). Being the first year of audit, it was decided to restrict the audit process only to assess the preparedness and practice of ministries and departments as far as CCC is concerned. The indicators, weights assigned and target/criteria value used for audit of ministries/departments status on CCC is shown in the Table 2:

Table 2: Independent Audit Indicators

	SUCCESS INDICATORS	UNIT	WEIGHT	TARGET/CRITERIA VALUE				
				EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
				100%	90%	80%	70%	60%
A.	Degree of visibility of CCC in relevant area	%	10	100	85	75	60	50
B.	Awareness of departmental officers/staff about CCC	%	10	100	85	75	60	50
C.	Degree of accuracy of the numbers and names of the contact persons mentioned in CCC	%	10	100	85	75	60	50
D.	Response rate for the phone calls made to contact persons	%	10	100	85	75	60	50
E.	Quality of the self-assessment report	%	10	100	85	75	60	50
F.	CCC Score as calculated by the ministry/ department	%	50	100	85	75	60	50

Overall Score/Performance-Ministries/Departmental Rating

The composite score of the Ministries/Departments on the six success indicators of Independent Audit present a not so satisfactory picture (Table 3).

Table 3: Performance Rating of Ministries/Departments vis-a-vis Implementation of CCC

DEPARTMENTAL RATING	COMPOSITE SCORE RATING (IN %)	NUMBER OF MINISTRIES/ DEPARTMENTS
Excellent	100-96	1
Very Good	95-86	14
Good	85-76	14
Fair	75-66	9
Poor	Below 65	21

Some Insights

- * Considering the fact that in case of most of the ministries/departments, the implementation of CCCs has completed about an year or so, the efforts made by departments/officials to make CCC visible is encouraging.
- * At the same time it is observed that CCC is yet to sink in among different level of functionaries functionaries, including the reception desk. Orientation of staff is desirable to give the message that CCC is for bringing both transparency and accountability in service delivery. It is more for self-assessment and improving departments' performance and less as an additional burden.
- * The perception that ministries/departments do not interact directly with public but has more inter-departmental interaction at centre and as a partner with states, hence there is no need for CCC, has to be addressed for making CCC more effective.
- * Regular, may be every six-month update of designated officials' name and contact details in CCC uploaded on respective ministries/departments' websites is desirable. As most of the clients are state departments and institutions, they will be a 'virtual visitor' to the ministries/departments through the websites for required information.
- * Last but not the least, this round of audit, due to paucity of time, did not take the feedback of service seekers. Next round of audit should factor in the experience of service users (institution/individuals) as well as assess the implementation of the CCC, in spirit and in action.