LOK SATTA

People Power

Service Quality : Indian Experiment with Citizen’s Charter

7th November, 2002 - IIAS, New Delhi
True Swaraj

The real *Swaraj* will come

not by the acquisition of authority by a few,

but by the acquisition of the capacity by all

to resist authority when abused

- Gandhiji
Why is Governance Vital?

• Governments spend Rs. 1800 crores every day
• Out of 27 million organised workers, government employs 70%
• Fiscal deficit (Union and States) remains at 10 % GDP
• 50% Union tax revenues go towards interest payment
Is Money the issue?

Sanitation

- 140 million toilets needed
- Cost: Rs 35000 crores
- Equals just 20 days expenditure

School Education

- 1.6 million class rooms needed
- Capital cost: Rs 16,000 crores – 9 days govt. expenditure
- Recurring expenditure: Rs.8000 crores – 5 days govt. expenditure
In a Sane Democracy

- Political process should resolve the crisis
- Parties, elections and public office are the route to reform
- In India a vicious cycle operates
Failure of Political Process

- Parties
  - Autocratic and unaccountable
  - Repel the best
  - A problem, not solution
  - Choice - Tweedledom & Tweedledee

- Elections
  - Change of players
  - No change of rules of game
  - Criminalization
  - Money power
  - Flawed process
    - Electoral rolls (40% errors)
    - Bogus voting (22%)
Campaign Expenditure – Vicious Cycle

- Illegitimate expenses are often 5-10 times the ceiling or more
  
  (Assembly ceiling: Rs 6 lakhs
  Lok Sabha ceiling: Rs 15 lakhs)

- Every crore spent illegitimately

  Rs 10 crore returns
  (to cover ROR, Interest, personal upkeep, supporters, family’s future, next election costs)

  Rs 100 crore collected through bureaucracy
  (for every legislator, there are 2000 employees who need to collect ‘rent’)

  people suffer ten times more.
  Payment extorted, on pain of delay, harassment, humiliation, anxiety and greater loss.
Irreducible Role of Government

- Public order
- Rule of law
- Justice
- School education
- Healthcare
- Infrastructure
- Natural resource development
Way out

- Assert people’s sovereignty
- Fundamental democratic transformation
- People centered governance
Need of the Hour

Informed Citizenry with the capacity to:

- Resist mis-governance
- Check corruption
- Influence public discourse
- Channelize resources
- Enforce better services

All these require information
Key Governance Reforms

- Comprehensive electoral reforms
- Empowerment of local governments
- Instruments of accountability
- Speedy and efficient justice
Instruments of Accountability

- Right to Information
- Independent crime investigation
- Independent appointment of constitutional functionaries
- Independent and effective anti-corruption agency
- Term limits for public office
- Strict penalties for abuse of office
- Citizen’s Charters
- Stakeholder empowerment
What can Civil Society do?

- When political process fails, the ball is with citizens, the ultimate sovereigns
- Local assertion
- State-level reforms
- National platform for larger reforms
What can Citizens do?

- Resist misgovernance
- Check corruption
- Influence public discourse
- Channel resources better
- Enforce better services
- Bring pressure for reforms
Approaches to Citizens’ Action

- Collective, informed assertion
- Wide dissemination of information
- Effective mass communication
- Strategic intervention
Where will Citizens’ Charters Succeed

- Clearly defined services
- Quantifiable goals
- No supply scarcity
- Well-established procedures
What Should a Citizen’s Charter Contain

- Clearly defined responsibility for the service
- Precise procedures (citizen’s obligations) to get service
- Well-defined and quantifiable performance standards
- Compensation for non-performance
- Instant redressal mechanism
When will Compensation Work?

- Delegation to the local authority/agency
- No scarcity of supply
- Flexibility to improve speed/rate of delivery
- User fee for service
### A model Charter – UK Electric utility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Guaranteed standard performance level</th>
<th>Penalty payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplier’s fuse failures</td>
<td>With 4 hours of any notification during working hours</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restoring electricity supply after faults</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
<td>20 (domestic customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>50 (non domestic customers, plus 10 for each further 12 hours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimating charges</td>
<td>Within 10 working days for simple jobs or 20 working days for most others</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice of supply interruption</td>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>10 (domestic customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 (non domestic customers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltage complaints</td>
<td>Visit or reply within 10 working days</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meter problems</td>
<td>Visit or reply within 10 working days</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charges and payment queries</td>
<td>A substantive reply within 10 days must be kept</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments</td>
<td>All appointments to visit on a day must be kept</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Citizen’s Charters – AP Experience

- People’s charter released on Oct 2, 1998
- Massive public education campaign 1998
- Complete cessation of short delivery –99 (Rs 10m saved per day)
- Citizen’s charters announced in 9 departments - 2000
Path Breaking Charters

- Municipalities in AP
- 5 services
  - Birth certificates – 5 days
  - Death certificates – 5 days
  - Water connection
  - House-building permission
  - Tax assessment
- Compensation of Rs 50/day’s delay
- Now being enforced with citizens’ vigil
Panchayats’ Charter on the Anvil

- 20 services
- Time frames – 1 to 30 days
- Compensation of Rs 10 per day
Other Local Reforms with Synergies

- Right to information
- Empowerment of local governments
- Stakeholder empowerment
- Local courts for speedy justice
“The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to live under the government of bad men”

- Plato