



POLICY BRIEF ON ENHANCEMENT OF USE OF CLIENT SERVICE CHARTERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A customer/client charter publically sets out a number of minimum standards that citizens/clients should expect when accessing public services and how to access the services. This is expected to empower the citizens and lead to improvement in the quality of public services. However, it was observed in the 20th Policy Analyst Cadre meeting that there are many cases of poor customer service in public offices despite the fact that they were introduced in 2005. In the meeting, good practices, benefits, challenges and suggestions to enhance use of client service charters were identified. The Cadre noted that enhancement of use of client service charters in all Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) will go a long way in empowering the citizens, raising awareness of the need for accountability among public servants, and cultural change towards a more customer-focused approach that will lead to improvement in the quality of public services.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A customer/client service charter is a set of standards that an organisation promises to uphold when dealing with customers. A customer/client charter publically sets out a number of minimum standards that citizens/clients should expect when accessing public services. The clients' Charters greatly help to focus the work of the public sector on citizens'/customers' needs, transparency and promoting efficiency. This further improves and modernises public services and the way citizens relate to public service providers. It also empowers clients to hold public officials to account as directly as possible.

In the 20th Policy Analyst Cadre meeting, members observed that there are many cases of poor customer service in public offices despite the fact that client service charters were introduced in 2005. This has led to high citizen dissatisfaction, low citizens' expectations from government, low patriotism and apathy.

This policy brief is based on the report on the 20th Policy Analyst Cadre, where good

KEY ISSUES

- A customer/client charter publically sets out a number of minimum standards that citizens/clients should expect when accessing public services.
- There are many reports of poor customer service despite the fact that client service charters were developed for those offices.
- Most Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies have not effectively used the client service charters.
- Effective use of client service charters in all Government MDAs will empower the citizens

practices, benefits, challenges and suggestions to enhance use of client service charters were identified. It is also based on the Public Service Code of Conduct where its last paragraph states that: The next stage in implementing this Code of conduct and Ethics is for Ministries, Departments and Local Governments to

examine the services they provide to their customer, and develop a service charter that would specify the standards to be provided to the customers and members of the Public.

2.0 FINDINGS

2.1 Current situation

The Policy Analyst Cadre noted the following about Uganda's Public Service delivery which must be addressed:

- a. There are many cases of poor customer service in public offices and several cases of outright mistreatment or harassment of clients for example there are many complaints in the media about the police, immigration, revenue collection and national registration.
- b. There is high corruption and impunity in Uganda's public service with public servants doing the exact opposite of the service's core values and getting away with it.
- c. Most Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies have not effectively and efficiently used the client service charters despite the fact that they had them developed. The public service standing orders and code of conduct are generic and not widely disseminated to all stakeholders, which leaves many loopholes for the public servants to give poor services to the clients and get away with it.
- d. Most citizens are not aware of their rights and obligations in receiving services from public offices. They are not empowered to demand for good quality services, which leaves them vulnerable and sometimes they perceive a public servant doing their work as doing them a favour.
- e. Inadequate information sharing and communication between Government MDAs due to inadequate collaboration and synergies and the widespread collusion and silo and mandate mentality many a time leads to poor customer service to the citizens.

2.2 Good practices

- a. Aside from customers/clients charters, some countries also have service charters. This is a public service reform which helps to improving citizen trust by making Government more transparent and accountable while providing quality service to the citizens.
- b. Generally, service charters are focused on particular services or sectors, such as accessing healthcare services or local government services, where their provisions can be better tailored to the specific circumstances of delivery. The charter should state the customers' rights and obligations, the organisation's promises and standards, and must be shared widely with employees and customers.
- c. To be effective and successful, the charter has to be a living document managed according to the guidelines provided by ISO 10001:2007, and according to the best international practices in the respective fields. Thus the charter is a product and the embodiment of the good governance to be maintained with the clients, stakeholders and staff.
- d. Stakeholders are given a feedback mechanism within the charter to enter into a constructive dialogue with the respective organization to review and improve the quality of service delivered.

2.3 Benefits

Effective use of client service charters has the following benefits for public agencies:

- a. Helping public agencies to manage the expectations of service users by making them more transparent through telling the public about the standards they can expect and how agencies have performed against those standards.
- b. Providing a framework for feedback and consultations with service users to review and improve the quality of service delivered. This has an additional benefit of increasing satisfaction of service users.

- c. Encouraging public agencies to measure and assess performance and pushing them to improve performance where promised standards have not been achieved.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The concept and implementation of service charters has strong impact in improving the quality of public service. It should be made part of the regular monitoring, evaluation and learning structure of Government to have a significant impact in helping to raise standards of services and of expectations of stakeholders, and raise awareness of the need for accountability. It should be used as a tool to drive cultural change towards a more customer-focused approach throughout the respective organization leading to enhanced customer satisfaction.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations need to be undertaken by Government through all its MDAs and Local governments to improve on the quality of service offered to the citizens using client service charters:

- a. All MDAs and Local Governments should effectively use the client service charters and have them disseminated widely and conspicuously displayed at all service points and on the MDAs' websites such that any deviation can be easily noticed. This should be backed by a stronger sanction system for officers who breach the standards and a reward system for those who consistently uphold the standards. Benchmarking with organisations that have registered success in this endeavor can come in handy.
- b. All MDAs and Local Governments should use the client service charters as part of the monitoring, evaluation and learning system and to commit to report annually, both to the various stakeholders and to parliament, on performance against the client service charter.

- c. Ministry of Public Service should improve the training and orientation of public servants to instill in them the core values and train them in customer service. The public service culture should be revamped towards a more customer-focused approach throughout the various MDAs and Local Governments to enhance customer satisfaction.
- d. Government should enhance sensitization and awareness creation among citizens/clients about their rights and obligations when accessing services from public offices to empower them to demand for quality services and to manage the expectations of the clients, stakeholders and staff.

Government should enhance and encourage continuous innovation in public service delivery to improve on service quality for example through online services and self- service using technology to improve speed of service and transparency.

This can be done by benchmarking with public service providers in other countries and local success stories like Public Service Commission, Uganda Revenue Authority, National Social Security Fund and other private companies.

REFERENCES

1. Report on the 20th Policy Analyst Cadre Meeting, Department of Policy Development and Capacity Building, Office of the President, Republic of Uganda.
2. Public Service Code of Conduct, Ministry of Public Service, Republic of Uganda.
3. Client Service Charter, Ministry of Finance and Planning, The United Republic of Tanzania. Available at <https://www.mof.go.tz/index.php/about-us/client-service-charter> (Accessed: 14th April, 2020 10:01 am)
4. Rwothungeyo, B. Public Service Standing Orders to be revised, The New Vision. Available at <https://www.newvision.co.ug/new-vision/news/1443956/public-service-standing-revised> (Accessed: 14th April, 2020 11:37am)
5. Word Report 2019: Uganda, Human

Rights Watch. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/worldreport/2019/country-chapters/uganda> (Accessed: 14th April, 2020 11:37 am)

6. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS). 2016. National Service Delivery Survey - 2015 Report. Kampala Uganda; UBOS.

CONTACTS

For further information and feedback, please contact:

Commissioner,
Department of Policy Development and
Capacity Building,
Office of the President-Cabinet Secretariat,
Parliamentary Buildings, Western Wing
Tel. 256414343331/342743,
Email: policy@cabinetsecretariat.go.ug,
policy@op.go.ug
Website: www.cabinetsecretariat.go.ug,
www.op.go.ug