
Call Centre With Information Technology Application to Monitor Citizen Charter & Better Citizen Services in Municipalities A Case Study of Dharmavaram Municipality, Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

*In recent years, there has been an increasing attention in the information & technology on the possibility of analyzing data relating to expert and intelligent information systems applied in industry, government, and universities worldwide. In developing countries, like India, urbanization is increasing rapidly. Municipalities are increasingly rely on computer-based systems and data management, information technology which was traditionally done through human communications. This requires much more formal specifications and agreements to govern these data exchanges. The main purpose of the paper is to identify the current state of information technology use in the study area and range of information technology systems used to accomplish various work processes, a range of communication channels used to exchange information between various departments and citizen service. Municipalities are equipped with a variety of information systems that can readily manage assess the systems. In Andhra Pradesh citizen charter was provided by various sections in municipalities, which are **revenue section, engineering section, health and town planning section**. All the citizen services will be provide in these sections. Dharmavaram municipality is used to implement some schemes through online application. Municipal office introduced 'Athmiyatha' center in April 2010-12 for implementing the citizen charter properly through IT application in which costumer gets SMS to their mobile after entering the registered number. Service and 'e-Parishkar' were providing through the toll free number. Services like birth certificates, death certificates, income certificates, etc. now it is given to 'me-Seva.,' and also implementing the schemes like MEPMA, and SERF through online IT application.*

INTRODUCTION

Mainly municipalities relies on its revenue section, engineering section, health and town planning section etc. These are large, complex systems owned and operated by municipalities and other agencies. Our focus is on the information technology (IT) through which agencies use to manage their municipal systems and, in particular, the ways that information from these systems can be exchanged between organizations. As municipalities increasingly rely on computer-based systems to manage infrastructure data, much of the information that was traditionally exchanged through human-communications can now be exchanged electronically through computer-to-computer data exchange. This allows for more extensive, rapid, and error-free exchange of information, but it requires more formal specifications and

agreements to govern these data exchanges. It is only possible to use information technology (IT) application for transparency of data exchange and management.

OBJECTIVES

- To study policies, amendments, implementation of programmes for Urban Poverty Alleviation of Citizen Charter in India
- To Study the citizen charter servicing system in study area
- To facilitate that all (Urban Local Bodies) are kept clean and pleasant places to live in.
- To facilitate implementation of programmes for Urban Poverty Alleviation in ULBs.
- To study and development of all urban areas in respect of planning, development and regulatory actions.

METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on Call Centres with IT Application to Monitor Citizen Charter and Better Citizen Services in Municipalities a Case Study of Dharmavaram Municipality, Andhra Pradesh. The present study examines the various facts of Citizen's Charter in study area; to accomplish these objectives both primary and secondary sources of information have been used. The secondary data was collected from Citizen's Charter, consultation. Evaluate the existing various government reports, national & international journals & books have been followed

STUDY AREA

Dharmavaram municipality is located in the middle of the peninsular region and is confined to the south western part of Andhra Pradesh, India. The municipality is spread over an area of 40.45 Sq.km and has 40 election wards. The present chairperson of the municipality is Beere Gopala Krishna and the commissioner is B.Rama Mohan. According to 2011 census, the total population is 1,21,824 which is 62,250 are males while 59,624 are females as per report released by Census India 2011, with literacy rate of 71.07% and sex ratio of total population is 958.

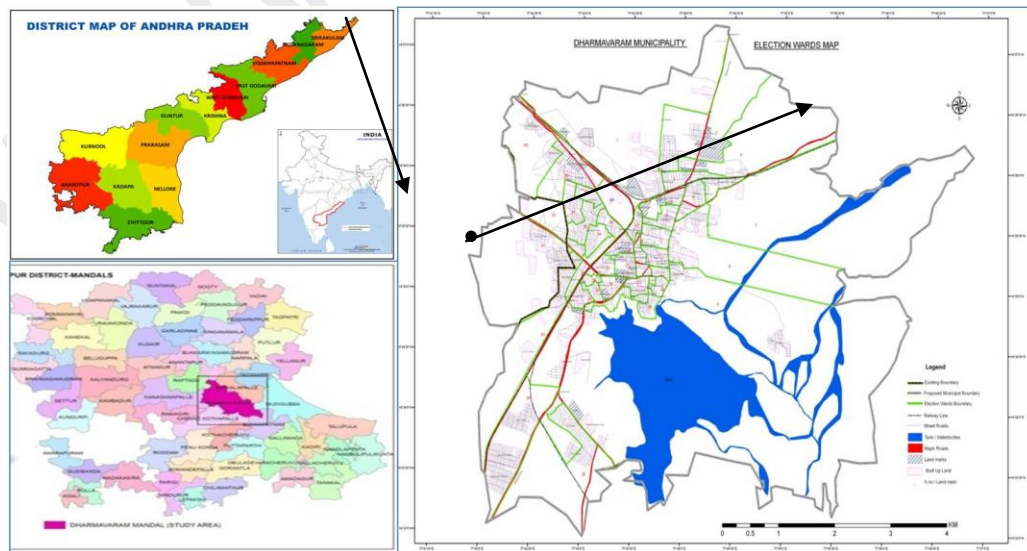


Figure 1: Location Map of Dharmavaram Municipality

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Citizen's Charter

The government of India implemented the Citizen's Charter Policy in 1997. With the aim to continuously improve the quality of public services India. The application of a Citizen's Charter it is anticipated to give power to the citizen with the principles of choice, standards, value, accountability and transparency of the rules, procedures and grievance redress system of an institution. The elements of Citizen's Charters include the following:

- Setting measurable standards for service delivery
- Specifying service delivery and timeframe
- Giving opportunity to choose alternate services
- Scope to complaint and provision for corrective measure
- Value for money. All citizens will be given equal treatment and the value or service renders shall be more than the fees to be paid.

Thus, the Citizen's Charter at the local level is an important tool of good governance. It is in this backdrop that the present study analyzes the Citizen's Charter of an urban body in Andhra Pradesh – the Dharmavaram Municipality. This is specifically done in the light of significant concepts of the Citizen's Charter which aim to enhance empowerment of the people, the timeframe of deliverance of services and to uproot corruption.

With the mounting pressure of deadlines set by the Government of India, Citizen's Charters have been prepared and it's not more than act of compiling earlier programmes relating to public services (Ghuman and Mehta, (2007). The document of a Citizen Charter is one example of this procedural transfer. On basis of enquiry, It was found that the Citizen's Charter is a document of less importance for the municipal corporation as the Charter is not displayed anywhere at service areas or even at service windows of municipal corporation Chandigarh. Even the employees of the government agencies are not well informed regarding the Citizen's Charter. The Citizen's Charter which is available at official website of Municipal Corporation is obsolete; the access to internet is not common to all the inhabitants of the city.

“The present Citizen's Charter is just a formality. There is no clause in it that makes anybody accountable if a department fails to redress public complaints” (Yadav, 2012), this practice is against the spirit of a Citizen's Charter.

Poor Design

Charter formulation should be a very systematic process involving clients, users, stakeholders and the staff of service providers. The very fact that Municipality charters include all the programs shows that there is little relation to the standardization or the quality aspects, but in the present study, these aspects have not been given importance." Covering only a few Municipalities departments in the charter shows the half-hearted approach of the civic body.).

Poor Display of Right to Information Act

Various inhabitants seeking information expressed anger at the Municipalities for supplying imprecise and belated information on filing information. The research project findings found that indeed, seeking information from a public office in Dharmavaram municipality is difficult and time consuming.

No Updating of the Charter

E-governance, which is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in Public Administration, means rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means (Monga 2008). The spirit of a Citizen's Charter aims to provide as many services as possible online and enable interface with citizens by creating online windows in this regard. The Charter must be made interactive and information about that should be provided to the citizens through the Charter. The Citizen's Charter found at the website of the Municipalities is obsolete and old. A majority of the contact numbers have been changed. Through email inquiries made by the researcher there were no responses for the information sought.

Ineffective Public Relations

The mere framing of a Citizen's Charters will not transform the mindset in the administrative machinery. There are a few other attendant measures that are required to turn a Citizen's Charters into true instruments of empowerment. Mass communication is a powerful mechanism and it should be used for increasing the awareness among people on a Citizen's Charters.

Poor Awareness among Citizens

From the very beginning the authorities stated that the rights of the citizens and the telephone numbers of their complaint redressed centres would be made public by installing notice boards carrying information in public places. The concept of a Citizen's Charter and the rest knew it as a document without any significance.

Lack of professionalism among the employees

A Citizen's Charter aims at providing specific location of 'Information Facilitation Counters' which require high standards of professionalism among employees for disseminating the right information which will equip citizens the knowledge of how they can get their queries and grievances settled. On the contrary, the findings show that the attitudes of the employees of the corporation added more trouble to the existing scenario. In a telephonic conversation regarding a particular complaint it was found that the official who dealt with that particular form of complaint was not at the workplace. This shows a lack of professionalism among the employees which, in turn, completely hampers the facilitation process.

CITIZEN'S CHARTER SERVICES IN DHARMAVARAM MUNICIPALITY

The functions which were transferred to municipalities under Article 243W, 74th CAA are urban planning including town planning, regulation of land use and construction of building, planning for economic and social development, roads and bridges, water supply, public health, sanitation, fire services, urban forestry, protection of environment and ecology, safeguarding the interest of weaker sections society including the handicapped and mentally retarded children, slum improvement and upgrading, urban poverty alleviation, provision of urban amenities and facilities which include parks, gardens and playgrounds, promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects, burials and burial grounds, cattle pounds, vital statistics including registration of births and deaths, public amenities including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences and regulation of slaughter houses. So in such a diversified field of public services the role of Citizen's Charter is very important to deliver the basic services in an efficient, effective and timely manner.

Table 1: Dharmavaram Citizen charter Servicing System¹

NO	Service Name	Service Days	NO	Service Name	Service Days
Administration			20	Non Availability Certificate(Birth/Death)	7
1	RTI Act	30	Revenue		
2	Others	7	21	Vacant Land Tax	15
Engineering			22	Owner Certification	2
3	Sanctioning of BPL Water Tap Connection	20	23	Property Tax Fixation	15
4	Tap Disconnection	15	24	Tax Revision Petition	30
5	Commercial Tap	7	25	Title Transfer/Subdivision/Mutation	15
6	BPL Water Tap Connection Verification	10	26	Valuation Confirmation(Solvency)	3
7	OYT Tap Connection	15	27	Tax Demand Extract	3
8	New Tap Connection-General	10	28	Council Resolution Copy	3
9	Tap Repair	2	29	Excess Payment of Property Tax / Water Tax	30
10	Tap Usage Conversion	15	30	Door no Changing	15
Public Health			31	Name Changing in Water Tax Demand Notice	15
11	Birth Certificate Application	7	Town Planning		
12	Death Certificate Application	7	32	Building Plan True Copy	7
13	Correction of Birth Certificate	10	33	Building Permission	15
14	Correction of Death Certificate	10	34	Insulation of Electrical Motor Above 5 hp	15
15	Late Registration(birth/death)	7	35	Insulation of Electrical Motor Below 5 hp	15
16	Sanitation Certificate	7			
17	Trade License	7			
18	No Objection Certificate	7			
19	Name Entry (Birth/Death certificate)	7			

The Charter informs the citizens about the area specific complaint centres of the various wings of the Dharmavaram Municipality. The information is available at the official website of the Dharmavaram Municipality (<http://dharmavarammunicipality.org/HomeNew.aspx>). The Citizen Charter is divided into various sections. Each section contains the information

¹ Citizen's Charter MA & UD Department Government of Andhra Pradesh.

pertaining to area specific divisions, officers, compliant centers and phone numbers of concerned officials. Also states the timeframe in which a compliant will be resolved (See Table 1).

Government schemes and their impact on people's livelihoods by using IT Application

Schemes introduced by the government will be more benefited to the target groups if they were strictly implemented. State Finance Commission, SC, ST, BC, Minority Corporations, NRLM, SHG's and IKP schemes were not reaching even half of the targets due to lack of coordination and communication between government authorities and banks. In this regards local government have to take necessary steps to fill full the targets. If the local government takes the issues seriously and take actions in identification, coordination and fulfilling the targets, then drastic changes will take place. NREGA scheme introduced and implementing successfully which created confidence on agriculture labour. As in the agriculture there was shortage of labour, if this NREGA scheme applied to individual farmers during cultivation time, it may improve the farmers working conditions. 'Right to Information' act was providing required information to beneficiaries regarding running schemes. IT applications to be used for all schemes to improve the transparency levels and also there was a need to improve the quality of IT techniques which were already using for some schemes, to avoid problems such as wrong entries, duplications and manipulations etc., to reach the total allotted amount to the beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION

A Citizen's Charter, as an essence, is a quality assurance strategy that offers a type of consumer guarantee in order to make providers more responsive to consumers by consultation and more accountable to government and the community through performance monitoring. Although a Citizen's Charter has been implemented by Dharmavaram Municipality, but it seems to be a procedural formality rather than an opportunity to introduce organized framework to boost quality of service delivery and enhance accountability. The study found that there were serious lapses in the implementation of the Citizen's Charter ranging from design and poor advertising to implementation, timely updates and evaluation. The net outcome is that end-users lack the awareness to apply for services or redress their grievances in time bound manner. It is perceived that only when these roadblocks are addressed, the spirit of a Citizen's Charter would yield the desired results. Developments in information technology may facilitate many benefits to people. They can be used for successful implementation of projects and also improve socioeconomic status. IT monitoring can be done to identify the conditions of drainage, roads, and housing etc. The socioeconomic Issues can be analyzed by using GIS and MIS techniques viz., bill payments, tax collection, control of illegal occupation, double registrations, corruption by officials etc. Monitoring, analyzing, easy reporting to the higher authorities also may become easy because of IT techniques. These may support public to work easy and fast.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A Citizen's Charter of local government services has been a gleaming initiative in the spirit that it has taken citizen centric governance to a new platform. Such an initiative creates a sense of quality governance.

- Measures should be taken to include all the services in the Citizen's Charter with a timeframe as the required time for any service is not unlimited.
- A Charter must indicate the specific quality standards to which the organization is committed. This will enable the citizens to exercise choice where available and raise voice where necessary to ensure that quality service is made available. A Charter should provide clear commitment on service delivery standards such as timelines, access, accuracy, reliability, affordability, responsiveness, fairness, sensitivity, and courtesy in the delivery of service.
- It is imperative that time frame for service delivery must be provided for each step at which explicit services are to be delivered, thus the involvement of staff also plays a crucial role in make Citizen's Charter a success, so there is significant need to train and sensitize all officials so that they can get familiar with the spirit of a Citizen's Charter.
- Effective communication to and involvement of citizens at all the levels of the Citizen's Charter plays a crucial role, Proper publicity is required to ensure the citizens are aware of the Charter. It is essential to understand the pivotal role of public relations and media in promoting Citizen's Charter among the masses.
- The language of the Charter should necessarily be the language of the users. For example, in Dharmavaram Municipality it is advisable to have the Charter in Telugu and English. In the research project it was found that the Citizen's Charter was solely in English, which could not be understood by all the inhabitants of the city.
- Further, the design of a Citizen's Charter should be such that it must be focused, simple and clear. Timely regulation, updating and evaluation of a Citizen's Charter hold the key to making it a fruitful endeavour.
- Remote sensing & GIS techniques and GIS & MIS integration should be used extensively in planning, implementing, monitoring and resolving the complicated issues.
- IT techniques should be used to all existing schemes to maintain transparency, information flow and control corruption.

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