

Implementation of the Citizen's Charter of Frontline Service Providers in the 4th District, Camarines Sur, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The passage of RA 11032 or Ease of Doing Business for Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 aims to improve services by re-engineering, simplifying requirements and procedures, and promptly responding to the needs of the public. However, its passage did not result in salutary gains. The study evaluated the Citizen's Charter compliance of the Local Government Units in the 4th District of Camarines Sur. Specifically, it has two objectives: 1) to evaluate the compliance of the local government units in 4th District, Camarines Sur with the information requirements of the Citizen's Charter as provided by RA 11032, 2) to obtain feedback on its implementation in terms of visibility, clarity of content, usefulness, and actual compliance. The study is Descriptive-Evaluative. Participated by 161 respondents composed of the key officials, frontline service providers, and service recipients from the Local Treasury, Business Permit and Licensing, and Engineering Offices of Tigaon, Goa, and Lagonoy, Camarines Sur. Purposive sampling technique was used in choosing the key officials and frontline service providers while convenience sampling was used in choosing the service recipients. The study used site observation scoring guide, 4-point Likert scale questionnaire and interviews. The study found that the required information in the Citizen's Charter of the study areas did not meet the CSC Report Card Survey passing mark of 8.4 or 70% using the scoring rubric. Conversely, the three groups of respondents strongly agree that the Citizen's Charter is implemented in terms of visibility, clarity of content, usefulness, and actual compliance of the Citizen's Charter. Thus, a disparity between the Likert survey results and interviews during the validation of data was found. Service recipients are not aware of the Citizen's Charter. The routine procedures of doing business with the service providers enable the service recipients to transact even without knowledge about the same. The study recommends LGUs, CSC and other line agencies to strengthen the implementation of the Citizen's Charter through awareness programs, capacity building, updating of the Citizen's Charter, monitoring of its implementation, and continuous research and extension undertakings of academic and field practitioners.

Keywords: Citizen's Charter, Frontline Services, Service Providers, Service Recipients, Local Government Units

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic red tape has been long embedded in the Philippine culture. Service recipients are required to follow lengthy procedures, approach several frontline providers, patiently stay in queues, deal with voluminous requirements and pay transaction costs to simply secure certificates or licenses.

In fact, study shows 75 percent of families with at least one member is supply driven or voluntarily gave the money, gift, or favor in exchange for ease in the transaction, while the other 25 percent were demand driven. Less than one percent of those who did not voluntarily give pecuniary reported the incident" (Hays, 2018; Romero, et al, 2019).

Citizens who opt and afford to give money in exchange for ease in the transaction could get the document

effortlessly, but how about those who are financially challenged? Is it fair to wait in queues and follow redundant procedures just to get a piece of document? Should these bureaucratic procedures outwardly obstruct public service delivery?

These issues prompted the Philippine government to implement a number of initiatives to lessen too much red tape in government agencies. In fact, since the 1990s, the Philippine government has improved the provision of public services and created business-friendly legislation. The Citizen's Charter is one of the policies the Philippine government established to reduce bureaucracy and encourage a citizen-centered approach to the provision of public services.

Subsequently, RA 9485 or Anti-Red Tape Act (ARTA) of 2007 was enacted and later amended by RA 11032 or Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 to improve services by re-engineering, simplifying requirements and procedures, and promptly responding to requests and relative transactions of clients. It generally aims to promote transparency and accountability to both business and non-business transactions in the delivery of government service.

Specifically, Section 6 of Republic Act No. 11032, states:

All government agencies including departments, bureaus, offices, instrumentalities, or government-owned and/or controlled corporations, or LGUs shall set up their respective most current and updated service standards to be known as the Citizen's Charter in the form of information billboards which shall be posted at the main entrance of offices or at the most conspicuous place, in their respective websites and in the form of published materials written either in English, Filipino, or in the local dialect, that detail: (a) A comprehensive and uniform checklist of requirements for each type of application or request; (b) The procedure to obtain a particular service; (c) The person/s responsible for each step; (d) The maximum time to conclude the process; (e) The document/s to be presented by the applicant or requesting party, if necessary; (f) The amount of fees, if necessary; and (g) The procedure for filing complaints.

Government organizations utilize Citizen's Charter to give the public the comprehensive details of their service offerings which also defines how organization's objectives are achieved.

Unfortunately, the passage of these twin laws did not meet salutary gains. These were affirmed in various studies:

Ua-O (2022) found that the formulation of the CC was not compliant with RA 9485. Re-engineering of agency's systems and procedures were not implemented. Problems were identified by customers regarding the improper posting of Citizen's Charter, accessing Frontline services, and the physical working conditions of the office.

Similarly, Pathirana (2022) confirmed that the implementation of the charter in Sri Lanka, Balangoda Council was not successful because of many challenges such as: lack of awareness of the CC with less publicity, rigid rules and regulations, loss of relationship between officers and citizens and political capacity, and inadequacy of supervision and monitoring mechanism.

Saguin (2013) also revealed that the Citizen's Charter was formulated with the absence of stakeholder's involvement. The study also found varying levels of compliance on the required information of the Citizen's Charter, inconsistencies in the information provided, and lack of customization and innovation of the LGUs in terms of form and content.

De Leon (2009) also affirmed that the Bureau of Customs Port of Clark and the Clark Development Corporation did not comply with the required information on the procedure for filing complaints, the

allowable extension period for unusual circumstances, and the contact numbers for giving feedback.

In truth, the results of the 2022 Report Card Survey (RCS) in Philippine government agencies revealed that 35% of the agencies require RA 11032 review, 25% is satisfactory, both 12.5% are very satisfactory and compliant, while 15% needs improvement.

These empirical findings affirm that the implementation of RA 11032 does not guarantee agencies compliance with the mandates of the law. Therefore, government programs and policies must be consistently monitored by authorities. Researchers has also vital role on this. Feedback from stakeholders is also crucial to properly address issues and problems in the implementation of government programs and policies.

Objectives of the Study

The study evaluated the compliance of the local government units in the 4thDistrict, Camarines Sur on the implementation of the Citizen's Charter.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Evaluate the compliance of the local government units in 4th District, Camarines Sur comply with the information requirements in the Citizen's Charter as provided by RA 11032.
2. Obtain feedback in the implementation of the Citizen's Charter in terms of:
 - Visibility
 - Clarity of content
 - Usefulness
 - Actual compliance

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored by Good Governance Theory. Good governance theory develops from a set of principles or policies first introduced by the World Bank in relating with and in assisting developing or third world countries. The World Bank usually requires good governance practice, among others, as a condition from the developing countries. Good governance is about how the public sector in third world countries can be developed. It has been realized that a modern form of government is not just only about efficiency, that governing is also about accountability between the state and its citizens (Bjork and Johansson, 2001; Ekundayo 2017).

Good governance is about how people are treated not merely as customers or consumers (as in the new public management approach) but as citizens, who have the right to hold their governments to account for the actions they take or fail to take (Ekundayo, 2017).

The United Nations (UN) is playing an increasing role in good governance. According to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration." To implement this, the UN follows eight principles namely: participation, rule of law, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness (Pacific Judicial Conference, 2005).

Moreover, good governance refers to the public administration process that maximizes public interest. One of its essential features is that it is a kind of collaborative management of public life performed by both the State and the citizens. The perspective of good governance has six essentials: legitimacy, transparency,

accountability, responsiveness, and effectiveness (Keping, 2018)

Apparently, the implementation of the Citizen's Charter ensures four of the principles of good governance as mentioned by the UN Secretary-General namely: Effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness. Effectiveness and Efficiency mean processes and institutions should be able to produce results that meet the needs of their community while making the best of their resources. Accountability also connotes that governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders. Transparency means information should be accessible to the public and monitored. More so, Responsiveness means institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders.

The principles of good governance as mentioned above are explicitly anchored to the current study because the ultimate goals of creating the Citizen's Charter are to improve services by re-engineering, simplifying requirements and procedures. These goals can be achieved with the elements of good governance namely: 1) transparency—information and services are accessible to the public, 2) accountability—responsible persons are reflected in the charter; people have the right to hold the governments to account for the actions they take or fail to take 3) responsiveness—being responsive to the needs of the people within the prescribed time in the Citizen's Charter, and 4) effectiveness and efficiency—produce results that meet the needs of the public by maximizing the best of resources.

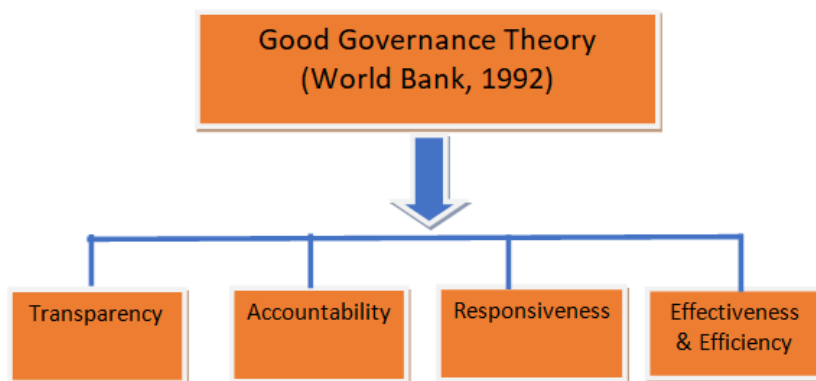


Figure 1. Good Governance Theory

METHODOLOGY

The study is Descriptive-Evaluative participated by 161 respondents composed of key officials, frontline service providers, and service recipients from the Local Treasury, Business Permit and Licensing, and Engineering Offices of the LGUs of Tigaon, Goa, and Lagonoy, Camarines Sur. Purposive sampling technique was used in choosing the key officials while convenience sampling was used in choosing the service recipients.

A site observation scoring guide was used in evaluating the compliance of the required information in the Citizen's Charter of the LGUs. A full point of (1) to an office for every required piece of information that it has included in the Citizen's Charter. A half point (0.5) for every required piece of information that it has only partially included in its Citizen's Charter, while No Point (0) for every required piece of information that it has failed to include in its Citizen Charter. The maximum total number of points that each agency could gather was 12. Out of this total, each of the three LGUs must get at least 8.4 points to pass the assessment. This minimum passing score was based on the CSC's 70% passing mark in the Report Card Survey (RCS).

A 4-point Likert scale questionnaire was used in obtaining the feedback of the three groups of respondents in terms of the Citizen’s Charter visibility, clarity, usefulness, and actual compliance. The survey questionnaire utilized in the study passed the reliability test with an Alpha Cronbach of $0.8973 \approx 0.90$.

The data gathering was conducted for fifteen days in July 2022.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the discussions and tabular presentations of the study. Literatures affirm as well in the findings of the study.

Table 1 Compliance of LGUs on the Required Information of the Citizen’s Charter

Required Information	Tigaon	Goa	Lagonoy
Vision and mission of the office/agency	1	1	1
Frontline service offered	0	0.83	1
Clients	0	0.83	1
Step-by-step procedure to obtain a service	0	0.83	0.67
Officer/employee responsible for each step	0	0	0.67
Maximum time to conduct the process	0	0.33	0.67
Documents to be presented by the clients and why are they needed	0.67	1	0.67
Amount of the fees	0	0.33	0.67
Procedure for filing complaints	0	0	0.33
Names and contact details of the officials whom the clients can file a complaint to	0	0	0.33
Allowable period for extension due to unusual circumstances	0	0	0
Contact numbers to call for recommendations, inquiries, suggestions, and complaints	1	0	0.33
Total Points	2.67	4.15	7.34

Table 1 shows the compliance of the LGUs on the required information of the Citizen’s Charter. A site observation scoring guide was used in evaluating the compliance of the required information in the Citizen’s Charter of the LGUs. A full point of (1) to an office for every required piece of information that it has included in the Citizen’s Charter. A half point (0.5) for every required piece of information that it has only partially included in its Citizen’s Charter, while No Point (0) for every required piece of information that it has failed to include in its Citizen Charter. The maximum total number of points that each agency could gather was 12. Out of this total, each of the three LGUs must get at least 8.4 points to pass the assessment. This minimum passing score was based on the CSC’s 70% passing mark in the Report Card Survey (RCS).

Data revealed that not one LGU obtained the maximum point of 8.4 or 70% of the CSC’s Report SurveyCard passing mark. The Local Government of Lagonoy was a step closer to the passing rate of 8.4 points. It was noted that the Municipal Treasurer and Business Permit and Licensing Offices of LGU Lagonoy obtained an average point of 10 and 9, but because of the low rating obtained by the Municipal Engineering Office, the average arrived at 7.43 only. Conversely, LGUs Tigaon and Goa obtained 2.67 and 4.15 respectively. This means that the required pieces of information on their citizen’s charters are not fully reflected in three municipalities.

Notably, LGU-Tigaon Municipal Treasurer’s Office (MTO) and Business Permit and Licensing Office (BPLO) do not post the services offered in the Citizen’s Charter, only the Philsys procedures are posted on

the wall. Contact numbers to call for recommendations, complaints, and inquiries are not also posted but, the hotline numbers of the MDRRMO, mayor, and vice mayor are posted instead. Likewise, at the Engineering Office, a workflow chart is only posted in lieu of the step-by-step procedure to obtain a service. It was likewise noted at LGU-Goa Treasurer’s Office. The officer or employee responsible for each step was not reflected in the Citizen’s Charter.

Apparently, LGU-Lagonoy obtained a higher rate (7.43) compared to Tigaon and Lagonoy. MTO and BPLO respectively were rated 1 in every required piece of information in the Citizen’s Charter. Conversely, procedures for filing complaints were not evident at the Engineering Office. The contact details where to file a complaint were not also reflected in the charter, only the names.

Similar findings were noted in De Leon (2009). Two case agencies, the Bureau of Customs (BOC) Port of Clark and the Clark Development Corporation (CDC) did not comply with the required information on the procedure for filing complaints and the allowable extension period for unusual circumstances, and the contact numbers for giving feedback.

Likewise, Saguin (2013) in “the Critical Challenges in Implementing the Citizen’s Charter Initiative: Insights from Selected Local Government Units,” concluded that there is non-compliance regarding the maximum allowable period of extension and the principle of providing feedback for any deviations from the published standards. The charter describes the relevant “windows” or places to go to for specific steps in the application process, but the accountable frontliners were not readily identified. Not all information by the law can be found in the charters. There were inconsistencies of information in the charters.

Table 2 Feedback on the Implementation of the Citizen’s Charter

Indicators	Weighted Mean
Visibility of the Citizen’s Charter	
1. The Citizen’s Charter is posted at the main entrance of the office or the most conspicuous place.	1.5
2. The font size and style are readable for viewing distance.	1.6
3. The texts and background are eye- friendly.	1.6
Clarity of Content of the Citizen’s Charter	
1. The Citizen’s Charter is posted in the form of published materials written either in the local language or Filipino.	1.7
2. The Citizen’s Charter contains the vision, mission, objectives, and core values of the institution/agency.	1.7
3. The Citizen’s Charter enumerates the comprehensive checklist of requirements needed for each type of request.	1.6
4. The Citizen’s Charter enumerates the step-by-step procedure to obtain a particular service.	1.8
5. The Citizen’s Charter determines the person responsible for each step.	1.8
6. The Citizen’s Charter determines the maximum time to conclude the process.	1.8
7. The Citizen’s Charter enumerates the documents to be presented by the requesting party if necessary.	1.7
8. The Citizen’s Charter determines the number of fees needed.	1.8
9. The Citizen’s Charter determines the procedure for filing a complaint.	1.1
The Usefulness of the Citizen’s Charter	

1. The clear procedures of the Citizen’s Charter brought a smooth flow of transactions in the LGU.	1.6
2. Boosts accountability and transparency in the delivery of public services.	1.6
3. Responsive and fast delivery of public services.	1.6
4. Improves the effectiveness of the LGU by having measurable standards.	1.6
Actual Compliance of the Information on the Citizen’s Charter	
1. The checklist of requirements in the Citizen’s Charter is followed during actual transactions.	1.6
2. The step-by-step procedures in the Citizen’s Charter are the same with the actual transactions.	1.6
3. The officer responsible for each step as mentioned in the Citizen Charter is always available and promptly performs the task.	1.5
4. The actual processing time of a document/request or transaction is consistent with the Citizen’s Charter.	1.7
5. There are other documents needed not mentioned in the Citizen’s Charter.	1.8
6. The number of fees is consistent with the Citizen’s Charter.	1.6
7. Procedures of filing a complaint are consistent with the Citizen’s Charter.	1.7
General Weighted Mean	1.6 Strongly Agree

Legend: (1) Strongly Agree-1.00-1.75; (2) Agree-1.76-2.50; (3) Disagree-2.51-3.26; (4) Strongly Disagree 3.26-4.00

Table 2 envisages the feedback from the three groups of respondents on the Implementation of the Citizen’s Charter in terms of visibility, clarity of content, usefulness, and actual compliance with the information on the Citizen’s Charter. The data was drawn by means of a 4-point Likert survey questionnaire. It was noted that the weighted mean in all areas ranges from 1.8 to 1.1 with a verbal interpretation of agree and strongly agree.

Specifically, the three groups of respondents professed that the Citizen’s Charter enumerates the step-by-step procedures, persons responsible for each request/transaction, the concluding time of processing documents, and other requirements are also reflected in the Citizen’s Charter. These indicators obtained a weighted mean of 1.8. Similarly, as to the visibility of the Citizen’s Charter, they strongly agree that the Citizen’s Charter is visible or eye-friendly. As to clarity, it is written in a form of published materials and in Local language or Filipino, posted at the main entrance or conspicuous places reflecting the vision, mission, objectives, and core values of the institution/agency. It has a comprehensive checklist of documents and the amount of fees needed for each request or transaction. The same strongly agree that the Citizen’s Charter resulted in a smooth flow of transactions, transparency, responsiveness, and efficiency of service. It has also improved the effectiveness of LGUs by having measurable standards. Moreover, the respondents also professed that the Citizen’s Charter is followed during actual transactions.

Overall, the respondents professed that the Citizen's Charter is implemented with a weighted mean of 1.6, interpreted as strongly agree.

Similarly, Romero, et al., (2019) found that the Nueva Ecija Dep Ed Division "always observes" the implementation of the three components of RA 11032 (citizen's charter, access to government services through front-line services, and report card survey). Romero further purported, "when paired with a change in behavior on the part of both front-line service providers and public clients, policy implementation can be beneficial."

However, an opposing result was found during the validation of data generated from the Likert survey questionnaire. The interview results show that clients are not aware of the Citizen's Charter. They do not even know what Citizen's Charter is. They have been transacting the same business for long years like paying real property/business taxes, securing business permit, community tax certificates, and the like. They directly go to the concerned office during actual transactions without noticing the Citizen's charter.

As Ahsan and Huque, 2016; and Pathirana, 2022 confirmed that some of the weaknesses in the implementation of the CC are lack of publicity or citizen awareness, inaccessibility, and dissatisfaction with the quality of service, rigid rules and regulations, and loss of relationship between officers and citizens.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are generated from the study:

The required information reflected in each of the Citizen's Charter of the study areas did not meet the CSC Report Card Survey passing mark of 8.4 or 70% using the scoring rubric during the site visit. Conversely, the three groups of respondents strongly agree that the Citizen's Charter is implemented in terms of visibility, clarity of content, usefulness, and actual compliance of the Citizen's Charter. There is a disparity between the Likert survey results and interview during the validation of data. Service recipients are not aware of what Citizen's Charter is. The routine procedures of doing business with the service providers enable the service recipients transact even without knowledge about the Citizen's Charter. However, to conform with the mandates of RA 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business for Efficient Government Service Delivery, the following are recommended:

1. The Local Executive Department through the Human Resource Management Office must ensure that therequired information is reflected in their Citizen's Charter.
2. Service providers must regularly update their respective Citizen's Charter based on the services offered.
3. The Citizen's Charter must be properly posted in conspicuous places written in Filipino or local dialect.
4. LGUs could use other media to disseminate the information of the Citizen's Charter such as a televisionor monitor in the lobby or area of transaction where clients could view it while waiting to be served. This would reduce clients being impatient in the queuing.
5. The LGUs must ensure that well-trained frontline service providers are in place.
6. The LGUs in partnership with academic institutions and other line agencies (both private and public) must conduct more capacity building on the implementation of RA 11032 and need-based extension projects to the stakeholders.
7. Academic practitioners shall continue to conduct more research on managing public affairs.

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