Karnataka's Citizens' Charters
A Preliminary Assessment

Anuradha Rao

Public Affairs Centre
Bangalore
2005
Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the cause of improving the quality of governance in India. PAC’s focus in this regard is primarily on areas in which the public can play a proactive role in improving governance. PAC undertakes and supports research on public policy and services, disseminates research findings, facilitates citizen action support for collective action and provides advisory services to state and non-state agencies.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The idea of an 'Audit on Citizens’ Charters in Karnataka' was put forth by Mr. K.K. Misra, Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka during a meeting with the KRIA Katte, a forum working to energise the Right to Information, in late 2004. In response to the Katte’s demand for greater voluntary disclosure of information by the government, the Chief Secretary requested the delegation, led by Dr. Samuel Paul, Chairman, Public Affairs Centre, to undertake a desk review of eight citizens’ charters selected at the meeting. The objective of the exercise was to ascertain whether charters in Karnataka live up to their intended objective of informing citizens about the standards of service provided by a department.

The Audit consisted of two components: (1) A Desk Review - to establish whether charters conform to the universally established principles of a citizens’ charter and (2) A Field Assessment - to supplement the findings of the review and to assess whether criteria mentioned in the charter are actually being implemented in offices in Bangalore.

How ‘Good’ are our charters?

The Desk Review was undertaken in the following departments/agencies:

1. Bangalore City Police
2. Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC)
3. Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB)
4. Commercial Taxes Department
5. Karnataka State Police
6. Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department
7. Stamps & Registration Department
8. Transport Department

The Katte was unable to review the Hospitals charter of the Health Department, as the Department did not provide a copy of its charter, despite repeated requests.

The desk review is a critical evaluation of charters based on four broad criteria: (1) Basic information about department/agency
(2) Standards of service (3) Grievance Redress System and (4) 'Citizen-friendly' Criteria.

- The desk review shows significant variability in terms of quality and completeness of charters across agencies. None of the charters fully comply with the guiding principles of a citizens' charter. Four charters score more than 2/3rds of points, one charter scores more than ½ the points and four charters fare poorly in the review.

- None of the charters contain a compensation clause

- The Commercial Taxes charter is merely a single-sheet statement of the department’s mission & vision

- The RDPR charter is more of an outline of schemes - it does not detail the beneficiaries, sanctioning authorities, eligibility requirements, etc. The charter is also Bangalore centric - there are no details of departments, key functionaries, services, etc at the Gram, Taluk & Zilla Panchayat levels.

- BWSSB is the only charter that mentions the year of publication

- None of the charters are priced except the BWSSB charter (Rs. 15)

- Charters are silent on various aspects of the grievance redress system. Most charters only mention where to complain and details of the Nodal Officer. The BWSSB charter provides the most information regarding the grievance redress mechanism

- Based on scores assigned for compliance with each feature of a charter, BWSSB scores the highest (26 out of 35 points), Stamps & Registration comes a close 2nd (24 points) and Transport Department and BMTC come a joint 3rd scoring 23 points respectively. The Commercial Taxes Department fares the worst (3 points)

- Some charters fail to mention crucial information. For example, there is no mention of the quality of water to be supplied or regular testing conducted to maintain prescribed quality in the BWSSB charter
The problems highlighted above suggest that citizens’ charters have been prepared in the absence of clear guidelines, compensation provision and strong motivation at the highest levels of government.

Are our charters working?

The Field assessment was a limited effort to supplement the findings of the Desk Review and to assess the following criteria in head and local offices of the eight departments/agencies: (1) Levels of staff awareness (2) Courtesy and helpfulness of staff (3) Availability of charters (4) Display of charters on a Notice Board. It must be mentioned that the real test of the implementation - of actual users testing the working of the charters - has not been attempted.

- The field assessment reveals that the design of a charter in itself is no guarantee that it will be properly implemented by an agency. For example, while the BWSSB charter scores the highest in terms of its design, it fares the worst (along with the Karnataka State Police) in the local office field assessment.

- The assessment shows variability across agencies. For example, the Head Office findings show that the BWSSB, Commercial Taxes, Transport Department and RDPR scores three points, whereas the Bangalore City Police gets a score of just one point. None of the head offices fulfil all the criteria.

- Interestingly, there is also variability across Head and Local offices of agencies. Among local offices, the Transport Department scores the highest (four) points and BWSSB fares the worst, with zero points. Whereas the Head Office findings show that BWSSB and the Transport Department perform equally well (each with a score of three points).

- Overall there is a relatively high level of awareness of the existence of citizens’ charters in all offices surveyed. Staff behaviour, too, was recorded to be courteous and helpful as far as information regarding citizens’ charters is concerned.

- Most offices, however, fare poorly with regard to display of salient feature of a charter on Notice Boards.

- Both Head and Local offices also fare poorly in the availability of charters to the public. In two out of eight Head Offices and in
only one local office (the Transport Department) are copies of charters available for citizens to procure

- While the BWSSB charter specifies that charters are available in all Asst. Executive Engineers’ offices of Maintenance Division, the field visits revealed that (limited copies of the) charter are only available in the Head Office

- With regard to availability, it can be concluded that although charters have been printed, the dissemination leaves much to be desired

- A random survey shows that grievance redress systems mentioned in charters are not being implemented. Many offices do not even provide a register for citizens to record their grievances

The assessment concludes that if citizens’ charters are drafted mechanically and put in place merely as a response to external pressures, they will neither contribute to improved services nor to control of corruption. Concerted efforts by the government in this direction, in association with civil society organisations, can result in more responsive and citizen-friendly governance.
INTRODUCTION

A citizens’ charter is a public written statement made by a public service organisation that spells out, in simple language, the entitlements of a citizen to a specific service. It sets out the standards of the service, the conditions to be met by users, and the remedies at their disposal in case they are dissatisfied with the service provided. Typically, it is a pledge of service made by public service bodies such as government departments or statutory boards and corporations that provide services like water supply, electricity, housing, transport, etc.

The concept was first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom by the Conservative Government of John Major in 1991 as a national programme with a simple aim: to continuously improve the quality of public services for the people of the country so that these services respond to the needs and wishes of the users. The programme was re-launched in 1998 by the Labour Government of Tony Blair, which re-christened it “Services First”.

In 1992, the UK Government introduced the Charter Mark, a scheme for recognising and encouraging excellence in public service. To win a Charter Mark the organisation has to demonstrate excellence against nine Charter Mark criteria (nine principles of service delivery). In India, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has issued guidelines for formulating charters, as well as a list of ‘do’s’ and ‘don’ts’ to enable government departments/organisations to prepare focused and effective charters. The Indian citizens’ charter is primarily an adaptation of the UK model.

The UK’s citizens’ charter initiative aroused considerable interest around the world and several countries, including Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Jamaica, Malaysia, Portugal and Spain, have implemented similar programmes.
The six guiding principles of a citizens' charter are:

1. **Published standards** - or quality parameters that users can reasonably expect from each service

2. **Openness and Information** - in simple language about how public services are run

3. **Choice and Consultation** - with users, whose views are to be taken into account in final decisions on standards or time frames

4. **Courtesy and Helpfulness** - from public servants to all users

5. **Redress when things go wrong** - users are entitled to an apology and swift and effective remedy

6. **Value for Money** - expenditure control and review of costs, including administrative overheads should be undertaken periodically and published for public review

In India, the origin of citizens’ charters dates back to 1994, when representatives of consumer organisations raised the issue at a meeting of the Central Consumer Protection Council in Delhi. A committee was formed to draft a Charter for Health Services. Thereafter, in 1996, the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda, announced the Government’s decision to introduce citizens’ charters in all departments. This was ratified at the Conference of Chief Secretaries and Union Territories, where participants took the decision to give top priority to citizens’ charters to improve public services for all citizens. In 1997, the Conference of Chief Ministers, which considered measures to strengthen administration and services, decided to adopt the concept of citizens’ charters.

In India, while the Centre and many States have brought out citizens’ charters, there is little knowledge on how these charters are being implemented. Studies by various civil society organisations (CSOs), including Transparency International India, show that most governments have not made attempts to spread awareness about

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1 These principles have been extracted from the following sources: (1) Government of UK (1999) A Guide to Quality Schemes for the Public Sector. London: Service First Unit, Cabinet Office (2) Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India (3) UNDP Paper on Citizen’s Charters - Selected Examples.
these charters. Consequently, a vast majority of citizens are unaware of the existence of charters, and therefore, of their rights and obligations vis-à-vis the service provider.

In Karnataka, a few studies, such as Public Affairs Centre (PAC)'s Report Cards, have attempted to measure the impact of citizens’ charters on quality of public service delivery. PAC’s Report Cards are an assessment of public services from the perspectives of citizens or users of a service. Since 1993-94, PAC has prepared two Report Cards on public services in Bangalore, with a view to provide service providers with useful feedback on quality of services, and to assess whether the Report Card findings can assist public agencies to take remedial action. The findings of the 3rd Citizens’ Report Card (forthcoming) reveal low levels of awareness about charters and their contents in Bangalore. The Report Card findings point to the fact that in the present scenario, the key elements of a citizens’ charter - information and openness - are sorely missing.

Table 1: Awareness of Citizens’ Charters in Bangalore

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Awareness of charter (%)</th>
<th>Awareness of contents (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BESCOM</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSNL</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTO</td>
<td>19.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Background of the Study

There have been many studies on the concept and potential benefits of citizens' charters in India. The India Corruption Study 2005 issued by Transparency International (TI) India and conducted by Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi focuses on the corruption experienced by the ‘Common Man’ in getting services from various service providers i.e. government departments. TI India pins its hopes on "a potent Right to Information Act and faithfully implemented citizens' charters to empower the common man to refuse to pay a
bribe.” The report also states: “This is the only way that this malaise can be combated. The service providers will then get used to doing their duties honestly without extracting any consideration.”

The present study reviews a handful of charters in Karnataka to ascertain firstly, whether charters have been framed keeping in mind certain criteria that are universally accepted and secondly, whether even the basic guidelines mentioned in citizens’ charters are enforced. It is universally acknowledged that citizens’ charters are a powerful tool in the hands of citizens and service providers to usher in transparency and accountability in public services. However, unless properly implemented and adequately publicised, they remain as mere paper tigers and do not serve the needs of the intended beneficiaries. Strong political and bureaucratic will is required to frame good charters and to ensure that systems are put in place for effective implementation of citizens’ charters. It is with this objective that the KRIA Katte, a forum for energising Right to Information in Karnataka, (see Annexure I for Note on KRIA Katte), led by PAC undertook a review of citizens’ charters in Bangalore.

The idea of the audit was put forth by Mr. K.K. Misra, Chief Secretary, Government of Karnataka during one of his meetings with the Katte (Forum) in late 2004. In response to the demand for making information available in the public domain, the Chief Secretary requested the Katte to undertake a desk review of eight citizens’ charters selected at the meeting, to ascertain whether charters in Karnataka live up to their intended objective of informing citizens about the standards of service provided by a department.

Members of KRIA Katte, who volunteered their time and effort to make this study possible, conducted the desk review and subsequent field study. The Desk Review critically evaluates charters based on four broad criteria: (1) Basic information about department/agency (2) Standards of service (3) Grievance Redress System and (4) 'Citizen-friendly' criteria. The departments, on PAC’s request, provided copies of the charters. After discussions with volunteers on the scope and objectives of the desk review, the draft questionnaire prepared by PAC was revised in light of the suggestions received.
The Field Assessment is a limited effort to supplement the findings of the Desk Review and to assess whether the following criteria are being adhered to: (1) Levels of staff awareness (2) Courtesy and helpfulness of staff (3) Availability of charters (4) Display of charters on a Notice Board. The assessment began with the training of volunteers, who then identified the offices they would assess. Each volunteer had to visit both the head office and at least one local office of the department/agency they were assessing.

Section II gives the overall desk review findings and Section III gives the agency-wise desk review findings. The field assessment findings are presented in Section IV. Section V provides a break-up of the findings of the field study and compares the findings of head and local offices. Section VI gives the conclusions and recommendations.

We hope that the findings of the study provide necessary feedback to the government to breathe life into citizens' charters in the State, thereby empowering its citizens and ushering in a more open and accountable government.
SECTION I - DESK REVIEW FINDINGS

In order to assess whether citizens’ charters in Karnataka have been framed keeping in mind guiding principles of such charters, KRIA Katte undertook a Desk Review of citizens’ charters in the following departments/agencies:

1. Bangalore City Police
2. Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC)
3. Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB)
4. Commercial Taxes Department
5. Karnataka State Police
6. Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department
7. Stamps & Registration Department
8. Transport Department

The Katte was also asked to review the Hospitals Charter, of the Health & Family Welfare Department. In spite of repeated reminders, however, the Department did not respond to the Katte’s requests to provide a copy of the charter.

The review critically evaluates the contents of charters, and thereafter makes a comparative assessment. The criteria for assessment were: (1) Basic information about department/agency (2) Standards of service (3) Grievance Redress System and (4) 'Citizen-friendly' Criteria.

The real test of a citizens’ charter is whether it is working on the ground. A systematic attempt to collecting and analyse feedback from the actual users of services would serve as a testimony to the implementation of a charter. This component has not been attempted in this exercise. The study assesses whether a select number of citizens’ charters have been prepared according to guiding principles, and thereafter, whether certain conditions related to the effective implementation of a citizens’ charter exist in the departments.
Key findings

Basic information about department/agency

A citizens' charter should clearly list the key functions and functionaries of the department relevant to the public. It should also list the key services provided by the department and the duties of each functionary. This would dispel confusion regarding the basic functions and responsibilities of offices and functionaries, thereby saving citizens much time and energy in ascertaining the same.

Criteria for review:

Whether the charter contains information on:

- The department, its duties, mission and vision (basic information)
- Location of key offices connected with provision of services
- Names (with address & telephone no.) of the offices
- Key functionaries of departments relevant to the public by designation & role
- Functions/services of the department used by citizens
- Legal provisions (Act and Rules) under which service is mandated

Table 2: Basic Information about Department/Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Basic information</th>
<th>Location of key offices</th>
<th>Names of offices</th>
<th>Key functionaries</th>
<th>List of services</th>
<th>Act under which service mandated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMTC</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDPR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;R</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note: The following abbreviations - BCP stands for Bangalore City Police, CT for Commercial Taxes Department, KSP for Karnataka State Police, S&R for Stamps & Registration Department and T. Dept for Transport Department.

Table 1 shows how many charters (out of eight) contain basic information about a department/agency. It is clear that most charters contain basic information such as names, addresses, telephone numbers, as well as key functionaries of, departments. Only the Commercial Taxes charter does not list the role and responsibilities of its department.

The BMTC, BWSSB, RDPR, Stamps & Registration and Transport charters mention the location of offices connected with delivery of services.

The BMTC, BWSSB, Stamps & Registration and Transport charters fully list the functions/services of departments that are used by citizens. Bangalore City Police, Karnataka State Police and RDPR charters partially list services.

Only the Transport and Stamps & Registration charters fully specify legal provisions (Act and Rules) under which service is mandated, whereas the Bangalore City Police, BMTC and Karnataka State Police charters specify the legal provisions to some extent.

Standards of service

Explicit standards, or quality parameters, should be published for users to know how much to reasonably expect from each service. It would also enable citizens to monitor and gauge performance for each service against these standards. Standards also refer to specific time frames within which a particular service must be completed.

Criteria for review:

Whether the charter contains information on:

- Procedures for availing each service, including steps to be followed by the user (and whether the steps are clear)
- Forms required for each service, if applicable
- Where forms are available, whether they are available across the counter and if they are priced
- Prescribed timings of offices connected with provision of services
- Time limit for provision of each service
- Cost for procuring/using a service
- Conditions to be complied with in relation to a service

**Table 3: Standards of Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full list of procedures</th>
<th>Clear list of steps</th>
<th>Timings of offices</th>
<th>Time limit for service</th>
<th>Cost for service</th>
<th>Conditions to be complied with</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDPR</td>
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<tr>
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The BWSSB and Transport charters fare well as far as complying with standards of service is concerned. That the other charters fare poorly can be observed in Table 2, where only half the charters fully spell out procedures for each service, and half do not mention prescribed timings of offices connected with provision of services. Commercial Taxes, RDPR, Stamps & Registration, Bangalore City Police and Karnataka State Police fare poorly in this aspect.

Bangalore City Police, BMTC, BWSSB, Karnataka State Police and Transport Department charters fully list procedures to be followed for a service.

Only BWSSB and Transport charters mention the forms required for each service, where forms are available and whether they are available across the counter.

BMTC, BWSSB, Stamps & Registration and Transport Department charters clearly mention the time limit for provision of each service.
The Karnataka Police charters too mentions this, albeit not too clearly. Conditions to be complied with in relation to a service are listed in BWSSB, the Police and Transport charters.

Grievance Redressal

A grievance redress system that assures proper and prompt attention to citizens’ complaints is one of the six broad principles behind a citizens’ charter. The charter must provide information on the appropriate authority to approach, the time needed to address the complaint and the next person in the hierarchy who may be contacted, should the complaint still persist.

Criteria for review:

Whether the charter contains information on:

- When (i.e. under which circumstances) to complain
- Where to lodge a complaint (name and address of office)
- Designation of the Nodal Officer (Grievances)
- How to complain (format for complaint)
- Time limit for response
- Assurance of action taken provided to complainant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>When to complain</th>
<th>Where to complain</th>
<th>Details of nodal officer</th>
<th>Format for complaints</th>
<th>Time limit for response</th>
<th>Assurance of action taken</th>
<th>Acknowledgement given</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
The BWSSB charter puts in place the most comprehensive system for effective grievance redressal, followed by Stamps & Registration and KSP charters. Although the BMTC charter does not provide a format for complaints, it is the only one to mention that a registration number would be provided to the complainant.

- Four charters - The Police Charters, BWSSB and Stamps & Registration - contain information about when to complain
- Only BWSSB provides a format for complaints (facilitates writing a complaint)
- Only BWSSB and Stamps & Registration mention the time limit for response
- BMTC, BWSSB, Karnataka State Police and Stamps & Registration and Transport charters provide assurance of action to the complainant
- BMTC and Karnataka State Police are the only charters that issue an endorsement/acknowledgement regarding action taken to the petitioner

'Citizen-friendly' Criteria

Transparency International India has recommended that every citizens' charter should contain a clause that compensation would be payable if the promised service is not delivered in time. Such a clause already exists in several charters in the UK. A charter should also contain a feedback mechanism to ensure proper implementation. Regular consultation with users to gauge their satisfaction is one method to do so. Charters should be reviewed and updated once a year. The Head of the department should carry out the review, based on citizens' inputs. Courtesy and helpfulness to staff is also a guiding principle of a citizens' charter. As citizens' charters are meant for the common citizens, the language should be simple and the document should not be too lengthy. Ideally, a charter must be available in both English and the local language.

Criteria for review:

Whether the charter contains:

- A compensation clause
- A provision for consultation with users to gauge their satisfaction
- A provision for updating the charter
- A commitment of staff courtesy & helpfulness towards citizens
- Description of the role/obligations of citizens
- Periodic review to ensure proper implementation of the charter
- Year of publication
- Information on where copies of the charter are available
- Availability in multiple languages - is the charter available in just the local language or English or both?
- Simplicity of language - is the language simple?
- Length of the charter - is the document too long?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Avble in Eng &amp; Kan</th>
<th>Simple language</th>
<th>Small document</th>
<th>Updating charter</th>
<th>Courtesy &amp; Helpfulness</th>
<th>Role of citizens</th>
<th>Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMTC</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDPR</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;R</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. Dept</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is an aspect that requires greater attention, as all the charters fare very poorly, except in the description of the roles/obligations of citizens. None of the charters contain a 'Compensation Clause' (although there have already been cases of compensation being paid in Andhra Pradesh and Delhi). Only the RDPR charter provides for consultation with users to gauge their satisfaction - as an optional feature. The Stamps & Registration
charter mentions that user feedback forms are available in all offices, in which citizens can furnish their opinion of the services rendered by an office to its controlling officer. Similarly, the Transport charter states that citizens can drop their suggestion/feedback into the suggestion box at the office.

Interestingly, only the BWSSB charter mentions the year of publication. None of the charters are priced publications except the BWSSB Charter (priced at Rs. 15). The BMTC and BWSSB charters provide for updating the charter. The Transport Department claims to have reviewed its charter based on suggestions and feedback from citizens, but does not contain any provision in the current version to incorporate citizens’ recommendations for updating the charter. Only BMTC and Stamps & Registration explicitly mention courtesy and helpfulness towards citizens as requirements for staff behaviour. The BWSSB, BMTC and Transport charters also mention where copies are available.

All charters are relatively small documents (ideally charters should not exceed more than 8-10 pages). The Commercial Taxes charter, however, is merely a one-page statement of the department’s mission and vision! Most charters use simple language except the Bangalore City Police and Karnataka State Police charters, which are rather technical and not too easy to understand.

Only the Bangalore City Police, Commercial Taxes and Stamps & Registration charters are available in both Kannada and English.
SECTION II - DESK REVIEW
AGENCY-WISE FINDINGS

Weightage & Ranking

In order to rate charters according to how well they have been prepared, and to provide a comparative picture, charters have been assessed and ranked according to their compliance to the features of a 'good charter'. Each response in the questionnaire has been given a weightage according to its compliance to the requirements of a charter. A score of 0 has been assigned in case of non-compliance to the particular feature (e.g. compensation clause), while 1 has been assigned in case of compliance. In questions where three options have been provided in the questionnaire, 2 points are assigned for full compliance, 1 for partial compliance and 0 for non-compliance. The scores have been added horizontally to arrive at a composite score for the agency. The findings show that BWSSB scores the highest (26 out of 35 points), while the Commercial Taxes Department fares very poorly (managing just 3 points).

The ranking of the charters is as follows:

Table 6: Ranking of Charters: Desk Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Charter</th>
<th>Points (out of 35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stamps &amp; Registration Department</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Transport Department</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>BMTC</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Karnataka State Police</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bangalore City Police</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rural Development &amp; Panchayat Raj Dept</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Commercial Taxes Department</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It must be pointed out that the comparison is a relative one, and only serves to compare the quality of composition of citizens'
charters. It is a study of select charters chosen by the Chief Secretary of the State and is, in that sense, a limited assessment. While one can appreciate the difficulty in comparing the charter of an overarching department like the RDPR with a local service provider like the BWSSB, it is imperative that any citizens’ charter available in the public domain serves the needs of the clientele of a department. A skeletal/superficial charter serves no purpose whatsoever.

Areas for Improvement

The desk review reveals that most charters provide basic information about the department/agency and almost all fulfil the ‘essential features’ criteria of simple language and small documents. The desk review also shows that charters need to incorporate a provision for revision and updating, preferably with inputs from citizens/users of a service and NGOs. While the BWSSB, Stamps & Registration, BMTC and Transport Departments have published relatively good charters, none of the charters fully adhere to the guiding principles. The Commercial Taxes Department, in particular, needs to publish a comprehensive charter that serves the needs of its users. Merely stating objectives, with no real information, does not serve the purpose of a citizens’ charter.

The desk review clearly shows that most charters do not provide the following core types of information:

- Standards of service - time limits, costs and conditions to be complied with in relation to a service
- Details regarding the Grievance Redress Mechanism
- Provision for compensation in case of denial or delay in service

The agency/department sheets below provide details of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each charter.
Bangalore City Police

Basic Information about Department:

- The charter contains basic information about the department and specifies functions/services used by citizens and the various Acts under which service is mandated.

Standards of Service:

- Although it spells out procedures, language is technical and therefore procedures are not entirely understood.

- It does not list any other standards of service, except conditions to be complied with.

Grievance Redress Mechanism:

- The charter mentions when and where to lodge a complaint and the designation of the Nodal Officer (Grievances). It does not, however, mention how to complain or even the time limit for response.

Citizen-Friendly’ Criteria:

- There is no mention of compensation for failure to discharge their duties. The only provision mentioned is the role/obligations of citizens.

- The charter is available in both English and Kannada, and it is a relatively small document. However, the language is not simple.

Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC)

Basic Information about Department:

- The charter lists all the basic information about the department - however, this information is not complete. It does not give addresses of offices or role of key functionaries.

Standards of Service:

- There is no mention of forms required for each service.

- Timings of offices connected with delivery of services and conditions to be complied with are not fully listed out in the charter.
Grievance Redress Mechanism:

- The charter provides assurance of action to the complainant, but does not mention when and how to complain, or the time limit for response

'Citizen-Friendly' Criteria:

- There is no mention of compensation for failure to discharge its duties
- It also does not include provision for consultation with users
- It lists the three major bus stations and the Head Office as locations to obtain copies of the charter
- The year of publication is not mentioned
- The charter is available only in English. It is a relatively small document and the language is simple

Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB)

Basic Information about Department:

- The charter lists all the basic information about the department except the legal provisions under which service is mandated

Standards of Service:

- The charter incorporates all the standards in relation to each service

Grievance Redress Mechanism:

- The charter details all the aspects of the grievance redress system except provision of acknowledgement/docket number to the complainant

'Citizen-Friendly' Criteria:

- There is no mention of compensation for failure to discharge duties
- There is no provision for consultation with users to gauge their satisfaction
- There is no explicit mention of staff courtesy and helpfulness towards citizens
- Although it mentions that the charter should be revised and printed every year, the charter was last published in January 2002
- The charter is available only in English
- It mentions where copies are available for the public

**Glaring Omission:**
- There is no mention of regular testing conducted to maintain prescribed quality of water

**Commercial Taxes Department**

**Basic Information about Department:**
- Apart from its mission and vision, the charter does not contain any basic information about the department

**Standards of Service:**
- The charter does not mention any specific standards of service; it only makes some broad generalisations

**Grievance Redress Mechanism:**
- There are no details of how a citizen can redress his/her grievance

**‘Citizen-Friendly’ Criteria:**
- The charter does not adhere to any of the ‘good’ charter criteria, except that it is available in both English and Kannada, and has been drafted in simple language

**Karnataka State Police**

**Basic Information about Department:**
- The charter incorporates all the basic information about the department, except location of key offices
Standards of Service:
- Although the charter mentions the time limit and conditions to be complied with for a service, the steps are not clear
- Although it spells out procedures to some extent, the steps are not clear due to usage of technical language

Grievance Redress Mechanism:
- There are no details of how to complain or time limit for response

'Citizen-Friendly' Criteria:
- The charter only mentions the duties of citizens
- The charter is available only in English. The language is not simple, and therefore not easily understood

Rural Development & Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department²

Basic Information about Department:
- The charter lists details of offices located only in Bangalore. It does not make a mention of District, Zilla Panchayat and Gram Panchayat offices

Standards of Service:
- The charter does not mention any specific standards of service; it only lists the schemes available to the public. Further details are to be sought from the head office in Bangalore

Grievance Redress Mechanism:
- The charter mentions where to lodge a complaint and who is the nodal officer for grievances

'Citizen-Friendly' Criteria:
- The charter does not adhere to any of the 'good' charter criteria, except a passing mention of provision to update the charter
- The charter is available only in Kannada

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² The study is based on a copy of the charter provided by the Department itself. PAC was later informed that the charter was issued for the RDPR Secretariat, and that efforts are ongoing to prepare separate charters for Gram Panchayats
Stamps & Registration Department

Basic Information about Department:
- The charter lists all the basic information about the department, including the relevant Acts under which service is administered

Standards of Service:
- There are no steps mentioned for each service or details of forms required

Grievance Redress Mechanism:
- The charter does not provide any format for complaints
- It does include provision of assurance of action taken to the complaint

‘Citizen-Friendly’ Criteria:
- The charter does not provide for regular updating of the charter. Nonetheless, it does mention that user feedback forms are available in all offices (and attached as an annexure), in which citizens can furnish their opinion of the services rendered by an office to its controlling officer
- There is no mention of where copies are available for citizens
- The charter does not mention the year of publication
- The charter is available in the local language (Kannada) and English; it is a small document in relatively simple language

Transport Department

Basic Information about Department:
- The charter contains all the basic information about the department

Standards of Service:
- The charter mentions all details regarding standards of service

Grievance Redress Mechanism:
- There is no information regarding when to complain. The charter,
however, does mention that Public Grievances Registers are maintained at the Help Desk to enable the public to register their grievances

‘Citizen-Friendly’ Criteria:

- The charter does not specify staff courtesy and helpfulness
- Although the Preamble states that it is a revised version, the year of publication is not mentioned
- The charter fulfils the following criteria: language is simple and the document is relatively small
- The revised copy of charter is available in English only

Suggestion:

- There can be a jurisdiction map for each RTO

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3 The finding is based on the copy of the charter provided by the department itself. PAC was later informed that the Transport Department has also published a Kannada version of the charter, which was not brought its notice earlier.
SECTION III - FIELD ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Simultaneously, the Katte undertook a simple field assessment to supplement the findings of the Desk Review. The objectives of the field assessment were to test:

- Levels of staff awareness regarding the existence of citizens’ charters (and their responsibilities thereof)
- Courtesy and helpfulness of staff towards citizens
- Availability of charters - at head and local-level offices and ease of procuring charters
- Display of salient features of charters on notice boards

Between March-April 2005, each volunteer visited a head office and a local office of one of the eights departments. In all, volunteers visited 8 head offices and 13 field offices in and around Bangalore. A detailed list of the offices visited is provided in Annexure II.

Although citizens’ charters have been in force for some time (it is difficult to establish when charters came into existence in Bangalore as the desk review shows that most charters do even mention the date of publication), the assessment shows low levels of awareness and staff responsiveness regarding charters. Volunteers were asked to record their observations with regard to the four main criteria.

The assessment clearly throws up the following issues:

Awareness and Responsiveness

- Volunteers’ observations show that officials, especially in head offices, are aware of the existence of the citizens’ charter. The assessment also points to the fact that the local offices also fare quite well in this regard. However, line staff and staff that interact with citizens are not fully aware of the existence of citizens’ charters.

Courtesy and Staff Behaviour

- The field assessment was a limited exercise to evaluate staff behaviour - volunteers judged staff behaviour solely from the point of view of information regarding citizens’ charters. Staff
behaviour varies from one department to another, and even within offices of the same department. However, volunteers’ observations show that staff behaviour is better in head offices, and that, by and large, most departments fare well in this aspect.

Availability of Charters

- In almost all the offices, charters are not available for the public. Many offices have a lone copy in an office file that cannot ordinarily be accessed by citizens. Most staff were unable to procure a copy of the charter upon request.

Display of features on a Notice Board

- Very few head and local offices have citizens’ charters displayed on a notice board. BMTC charters, however, are put up in all BMTC buses. In the instances where notice boards do display salient features of a charter, volunteers reported that they are not immediately visible to the citizen/user upon entering the office, nor are the contents clear.

Table 7: Field Assessment findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Display on notice board</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Staff behaviour</th>
<th>Availability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head office</td>
<td>Local office</td>
<td>Head office</td>
<td>Local office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>√√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMTC</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.TAX</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>√</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDPR</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;R</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. DEPT</td>
<td></td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|        | 2 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 1 |

Total Head Offices visited: 8
Total Local/Field Offices visited: 13
Note: Two out of five police stations that fall under the Bangalore City Police jurisdiction have displayed salient features of the charter on the notice board. Similarly, policemen in three out of five police stations were aware of the existence of the charter and in two police stations only staff were courteous and helpful.

In both the local offices of the RDPR Department staff were courteous and helpful. In one office staff were aware of the charter.

The field assessment findings are presented in Table 7: only two out of eight Head Offices visited have salient features of the charter displayed on their notice boards. The situation is not much different in local offices, where only six out of thirteen offices have such notice boards. **BMTC is given a point for display on notice board as charters are displayed in all BMTC buses.** Two out of five police stations that come under the jurisdiction of the Bangalore City Police fulfil this criterion.

Volunteers noted that awareness of officials in head offices is particularly high (officials in all eight offices are aware of the charter). Local offices too fare quite well in this aspect; with eight out of thirteen local office staff being aware of the charter. Of these, three out of five police stations of the Bangalore City Police fulfil this criterion.

In almost all the offices, staff are courteous and helpful w.r.t information about citizens’ charters - in seven head offices (out of eight) and eight local offices (out of thirteen), volunteers are satisfied with staff behaviour. Staff behaviour in both the RDPR local offices is helpful and pleasant.

Very few offices have copies of the charter available for the public - copies are available in only two head offices and the local office of the Transport Department.
Head Office Findings

Table 8: Head Office Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Display on notice board</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Staff behaviour</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. TAX</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDPR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. DEPT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMTC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;R</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The ranking is based solely on the observations of volunteers and does not reflect the working of all offices.

Methodology for scoring - Head Offices

An attempt has been made to arrive at a composite (total) score for each of the agencies to rate their respective performance. A score of 0 has been assigned in case of non-compliance to the particular feature (e.g. display in the notice board) while 1 has been assigned in the other case. The scores have been added horizontally to arrive at a composite score for the agency. Table 8 shows the individual and composite scores across the agencies and parameters. The head office findings show that BWSSB, Commercial Tax, RDPR and Transport charters score the highest in terms of performance (3 points each) while BCP falls at the bottom of the list, scoring just one point.

Local Office Findings

Methodology for scoring - Local Offices

The methodology for scoring varies as more than one field/local office was visited in two departments/agencies, viz, Bangalore City Police and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.
Volunteers assessed two Panchayat offices and five police stations of the Bangalore City Police. With regard to local offices, the Transport Department scores the highest with 4 points, followed by the Commercial Taxes Department, Stamps & Registration Department and BMTC each with 3 points. BMTC is given a point for display on notice board as charters are displayed in all BMTC buses. With respect to the local offices, simple averages have been calculated for the agencies that have more than one local office. For example, for Bangalore City Police, 2 out of 5 offices display a charter on the notice board and thus get a score of 0.4. The score for awareness is 0.6 (3 out of 5 offices) while that of staff behaviour is 0.4. Adding the three averages it gets a composite score of 1.4. Similarly, RDPR gets a composite score of 1.5. Across local offices, the Transport Department gets the highest score and tops the list while BWSSB and Karnataka State Police score 0 and are at the bottom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transport Department</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Commercial Taxes Department</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stamps &amp; Registration Department</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>BMTC</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bangalore City Police</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Karnataka State Police</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>BWSSB</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The ranking is based solely on the observations of volunteers and does not reflect the working of all offices.

Salient Findings

It can be seen that the pattern of performance varies between head and local offices, as the ranks do not perfectly match
A comparison across the desk review and field assessment shows that agencies that fare well in the desk review do not necessarily perform as well in the field assessment.

BWSSB tops the list in the desk review. It also scores well in the field assessment of head offices. However, it fares the worst in the local office field assessment.

Similarly, the Commercial Taxes charter fares the worst in the desk review but performs well in the field assessment findings.

The findings show a significant variance between the desk review and the field assessment.
SECTION IV - FIELD ASSESSMENT
AGENCY-WISE FINDINGS

Bangalore City Police

Visited: Head Office & 5 Police Stations

- Salient features of the charter are not available on the notice board in the head office
- Charters are displayed on notice boards in two police stations
- The PRO in the head office is aware of the charter
- In three police stations visited, staff are aware of the charter
- Again, in two police stations staff are courteous and helpful. The volunteer attributes the pleasant attitude of the staff to his being a physically challenged person
- Charters are not available for the public in any police station. In one police station, the reason given for non-availability of charters was that they had already been distributed to the public (the volunteer did not believe the authenticity of this explanation)

Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC)

Visited: Head Office & 1 Local Office

- While charters are displayed in all BMTC buses, copies of charters are not available in the head office or local office, either as published documents or on notice boards.
- Charters in buses are only in Kannada
- Line staff, like drivers, conductors, inspectors, etc are aware of the existence of charters due to its display in buses
- At the HQ office, only supervisors are aware of the charter
- Staff were courteous and helpful in the head and local office
- Regarding the grievance redress system, the CMTO explained
that most complaints are received over the phone. The few that are received in writing are first acknowledged, and then redressed

- Majority of the complaints are regarding unpleasant behaviour of conductors/drivers
- Information sought is mostly regarding new routes
- Telephone numbers mentioned in the charter are working
- There is no system in place for providing a docket number/acknowledgement for complaints, which can be submitted on a plain piece of paper
- There is also no register to record complaints or to monitor the status of complaints

**Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB)**

**Visited: Head Office & 1 Local Office**

- Salient features of the charter are not displayed on a notice board, even in the head office
- While officials in the head office are aware of the charter, staff in the local office do not know about its existence
- The AEE is not aware of availability of the charter in his office
- While staff in the head office are courteous and helpful, staff in the AEE’s office were indifferent
- Copies of the charter are available (in booklet form) for the public in the head office
- The charter can be procured by paying Rs. 15 - however, no receipt is provided
- The telephone numbers, as mentioned in the charter, are not working
- The cost of a prescribed form for a service is Rs. 30, but no receipt is provided for the same
Commercial Taxes Department

Visited: Head Office & 1 Local Office

- Salient features of the charter are displayed on notice boards in both offices.
- In both offices, however, notice boards are not displayed in a strategic location. For example, in the Commercial Tax building in Koramangala, the charter is displayed on the 7th floor.
- Staff in both offices were aware of the charter, and were courteous.
- Initially, staff in the head office were suspicious, asking reasons as to why the volunteer wanted a copy of the charter. They also asked the volunteer to provide a letter to obtain a copy.
- In both offices, copies of the charter were not available for the public.

Karnataka State Police

Visited: Head Office & 1 police station

- There is no notice board in the head office with salient features of the citizens’ charter.
- The police station visited too does not display the charter on its notice boards.
- The PRO of the head office is aware of the charter and is helpful and courteous.
- The staff of the police station, however, are neither aware of the charter, nor helpful.
- Copies of the charter are not available for the public at the head office or in the local police station. Although the PRO is aware of the charter, she could not locate a copy.

Rural Development & Panchayat Raj (RDPR) Department

Visited: Head Office & 2 Panchayat Offices

- Charters are displayed on notice boards in the head office, but not in the Panchayat offices.
• Notice boards are displayed in a visible location in the head office, however content is not clearly visible, as it is merely a photocopy covered by other notices

• Although the notice board is framed, the charter is pinned to the felt background (and can be easily removed)

• Officials in the head office are aware of the charter

• In one Panchayat office the official is not aware of the charter

• By and large, only top-level officials are aware of the charter. Lower-level officials and staff are not aware of the existence of the charter

• Overall, staff are courteous and helpful

• Copies of the charter are not available in either the head or local offices

• In the head office, a single copy is available in the R&I Section. However, the official pointed out that the charter is available on the department’s website and that citizens can access it on the kiosk in the lobby, although they cannot take print-outs

• The charter is available only in Kannada

• Telephone numbers of the head office as provided in the charter are working. (No local office telephone numbers have been provided in the charter)

• No system of complaints/grievance redress has been implemented - there is no register to record complaints and action taken

Stamps & Registration Department

Visited: Head Office & 1 Local Office

• A notice board with features of the charter was available in only the local office. The volunteer was informed that citizens could access the charter through a touch screen kiosk available in the premises. He was also informed that the charter is available online
• In both the head office and local office, officials are aware of the charter, and staff are courteous and helpful
• In neither office, however, are copies of the charter available for the public

**Transport Department**

**Visited: Head Office & 1 Local Office**

• There is no notice board in the head office that displays contents of the charter. However, the local RTO office has salient features of the charter on a notice board
• This is a framed notice board, displayed in a visible location and with content clearly visible
• In both offices, officials are aware of the charter
• In both offices, staff are courteous and helpful
• In both head and local office, copies of the charter are available as booklets for the public
• Charters are available in both English and Kannada
• In both offices, there is no complaint register
• The local office maintains a suggestion register, in which no entry has been recorded since June 2004
• The local office has a complaint box available at the reception
SECTION V - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report throws up a number of important issues. The desk review shows that none of the charters fully comply with the guiding principles of a citizens' charter; some are merely statements of a department's mission and vision or a basic outline of services. The assessment concludes that none of the charters qualifies as a "citizens' charter" in the real sense of the term. Charters must go beyond being mere guides and truly empower citizens. While the Karnataka charters do provide information about a department/agency, they do little in terms of guaranteeing proper service delivery.

This is evident by the fact that none of the charters have incorporated the compensation clause. In Andhra Pradesh (AP), the Citizens' Charters for Municipalities provides for compensation of Rs. 50 per day of delay in services. Experience has shown that the compensation clause, which maintains that compensation has to be recovered from the salary of the employee, has been properly implemented. AP is one of the few states where compensation announced by a department has been provided to citizens for delay in delivery of services. Over 100 municipalities in AP are implementing this charter, which goes to show that political will, coupled with a vigilant civil society, can indeed empower citizens to demand efficient service delivery. Karnataka can emulate positive examples from AP in incorporating penal provisions if departments fail to deliver services mentioned in charters.

An issue that has been overlooked in the preparation of charters is defining the standards of service. This assumes significance in the context of a developing country like India, where the State controls the provision of basic services. In such a situation, who decides the quality parameters of service? In light of this argument, it is imperative that citizens' charters be drafted in consultation with various stakeholders like service providers, users, etc. Moreover, charters should have realistic and measurable action standards, and not just statements of intent.

The field assessment reveals relatively high levels of awareness of the existence of citizens' charters in all offices. Staff behaviour,
too, was recorded to be courteous and helpful as far as information regarding charters is concerned. However, most offices do not fare well in the display of salient feature of the charter on notice boards or in the implementation of grievance redress systems mentioned in charters. With regard to availability of charters in offices, it can be concluded that although charters have been printed, the dissemination leaves much to be desired. The low levels of awareness as reflected in the Third Bangalore Report Card by PAC point to the need to educate citizens about their rights and entitlements vis-à-vis charters. Merely printing charters is no guarantee that citizens will benefit from them. Information regarding the same needs to be disseminated so that there is better accountability from service providers.

It is vital that charters be prominently displayed and easily available to users, the intended beneficiaries. The urban-rural divide must be duly considered in this regard, as modes of information dissemination in an urban scenario vary significantly from a rural one. While the use of technology can greatly enhance information and communication, options like Internet access hold good only for a small population in urban areas. To reach out to the illiterate masses, agencies must think beyond the conventional modes of dissemination and reflect on how to animate citizens’ charters. For example, the puppetry movement in Africa successfully uses puppets as a medium of entertainment-education in its development programmes. The popularity and success of puppets in development programmes in Africa also links with the existence of the puppet, like other types of African sculpture from traditional non-literate societies, as an essential means of communication. The puppet as a visible symbol has been used to create meaningful interaction between performers and their audiences.

A comparison of the findings shows that the pattern of performance varies between head and local offices, as the ranks do not perfectly match. Another important finding is that there is a variance between the desk review and the field assessment, and that departments/agencies that fare well in the desk review do not necessarily perform well in the field assessment and vice-versa. This points to the gap between formulation and actual implementation of charters. Although India’s citizens’ charters have been modelled on the UK prototype, there have been little or no efforts to emulate the
framework that the UK government has painstakingly put in place for proper implementation of citizens’ charters. Senior bureaucrats, in consultation with cutting edge staff who will finally implement it, frame charters. Conditions for a responsive climate are also created through interactions, trainings, and a system of rewards and incentives for good performance. The report does not indicate such elaborate preparations in Karnataka.

**Recommendations**

The conclusions summarised above have important implications for both policy and action. The results of the desk review and field assessment clearly show that the government needs to take proactive steps to prepare ‘good’ charters and to properly implement the same. The State government should announce steps to introduce charters in all its departments and agencies. It is recommended that employees be involved in the preparation of the charters, which would create a sense of ownership. Citizens’ charters already in existence, which do not fulfil all the criteria, should also be revised to fill the gaps. This can be done in consultation with citizens and NGOs.

The field assessment, although a limited one, reveals the lack of implementation and monitoring of the working of the charter. The assessment points to the need to put into place a system for proper implementation of the charter in both head and local offices. Agencies should be reorganised and geared to properly implement charters.

The following are the recommendations based on the findings of the desk review and field assessment:

**Recommendations for preparation of a Charter**

1. Prepare charters according to the guiding principles

The immediate requirement is to prepare charters keeping in mind the universally accepted guiding principles. It is recommended that a department consult with service users, employees of the department dealing with the public, its officers and interested NGOs before preparing its charter. It must also conduct a survey to determine the perception of users, and to understand their expectations.
2. Incorporate provision for compensation

None of the charters contain a compensation clause. To make the citizens' charter exercise truly meaningful, it is recommended that each charter incorporate a provision for compensation, whereby the concerned officer is fully responsible for denial or delay of service, and a monetary compensation for each day of delay is recovered from his/her salary.

3. Incorporate customers'/users suggestions

Suggestions by users can be incorporated at the end of the charter for customers to cut out and post to the concerned agency.

4. Details of complaints

The charter must list the number of complaints received, nature of complaints and number attended to in the previous year.

5. Details of timings

A citizens' charter should mention specified hours for officials' interaction with the public. It is also recommended that a register is maintained to record citizens' visits and whether they were able to meet the official or not.

6. Charters as a bi-lingual document

A charter must be a bi-lingual document, i.e. it must be published in both English and Kannada. Similarly, forms for various services must also be made available in both languages. Volunteers observed that forms in RTO offices were available only in Kannada, leaving citizens not well versed in Kannada at the mercy of touts.

7. Citizens' duties

It is important that every citizen be aware of his rights under the citizens' charter, but also of his duties. Such duties have been spelt out in general in Article 51A of the Indian Constitution. In addition, charters should also spell out specific duties relevant to a department/agency.

8. Miscellaneous

- The citizens' charter must mention the number of copies printed in a particular year and also the details of the printer/publisher
• The charter should contain a Foreword by the Head(s) of the agency

• Each charter must list details of the designated authorities under the Right to Information Act

Recommendations for proper implementation of a Charter

9. Reorganise agencies to properly implement charters

It is recommended that departments create the necessary preconditions before announcing a citizens’ charter. This involves (a) categorising the services a department/agency offers to the public in order to understand their relative importance (b) undertaking a systematic exercise to determine how their design and delivery can be improved under given resource constraints (c) reorganisation or restructuring of an agency, to ensure that it is properly structured and staffed prior to deliver the charter’s promises (d) training and orientation of the staff group in charge of implementation of the charter.

10. Training on citizens’ charters

Lack of training on citizens’ charters is reflected in low levels of awareness of staff. It is recommended that officers and staff, especially those who interact with citizens, be provided the necessary training and orientation regarding the necessity for citizens’ charters, and their active role in the formulation and whole-hearted cooperation in their implementation. Training should also include courtesy and helpfulness towards citizens.

11. Ease of availability of charters

The success of the charter will depend, in no small measure, on the knowledge of its contents by ordinary citizens. Copies of the citizens’ charter (as booklets, leaflets, pamphlets, etc) must be made available at all offices of the public agency and not just the head office. Moreover, salient features of the charter should be made available on a notice board, at a prominent location in the office premises. Preferably, this should be laminated, to ensure that it is neither defaced nor worn out. Charters should be available online - on the website of the concerned agency. Efforts must be made to inform citizens in rural areas. To reach out to the illiterate masses,
agencies must think beyond the conventional modes of dissemination and think of how to animate citizens' charters.

12. Grievance redress system

Although all charters provide details of a grievance redress system, field experience has shown that there are hardly any proper mechanisms in place. Agencies should implement easy-to-use complaints procedures with independent review, wherever possible. The government of Andhra Pradesh, for example, has put into place an innovative mechanism to redress the grievance of users of municipal services. The mechanism operates through the service centres created in all the municipalities.

13. Periodic review of the charter

The citizens' charter must provide for an annual revision, in consultation with citizens and NGOs, and the year of publication must be mentioned. It is also suggested that a monitoring committee, consisting of non-partisan NGOs, eminent citizens, and top-level members of the government, be appointed to review the implementation of the charter on a regular basis. A separate advisory committee, headed by the Chief Minister or the Chief Secretary, should be constituted to monitor the implementation of the charter. Proper review of its working is essential to make the charter a success.

The recommendations summarised above have important implications for both policy and action. If citizens' charters are drafted mechanically and put in place merely as a response to external pressures, they will neither contribute to improved services nor to control of corruption. Concerted efforts by the government in this direction, in association with civil society organisations, can result in more responsive and citizen-friendly governance.
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1. Thampi, Gopakumar Krishnan and Samuel Paul, *Operationalising Citizen Charters in India: An appraisal*


4. *India Corruption Study 2005 To Improve Governance* (2005), Centre for Media Studies and Transparency International India, New Delhi

5. Website of Lok Satta, Hyderabad - [www.loksatta.org](http://www.loksatta.org)


ANNEXURE I

NOTE ON KRIA KATTE

Background

In recent times, India has witnessed increasing public debate and discussion regarding a Central Right to Information legislation. Though the Bill itself is under consideration, India will soon be one of the few nations in the world to have enacted a national legislation on the Right to Information. However, even when the Central Freedom of Information Act (now known as the Right to Information Bill, 2004) was still in the making, a few states, including Karnataka, took the initiative to enact their own RTI legislation. The Karnataka Right to Information Act (KRIA) was enacted in 2000, and came into effect in July 2002 when the Karnataka Right to Information Rules were notified. A comparison of RTI legislation across the country shows that KRIA is a relatively progressive legislation, providing reasonable scope for citizens to access information from the government.

Non-governmental organisations, consumer & human rights groups, and members of local residents’ associations have been actively working on the right to information cause in Karnataka. However, the experience of the past two years has revealed that KRIA has not been properly enforced. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizens reported similar barriers to information, viz, reluctance on the part of government officials to provide information, lack of awareness among government staff and the public on KRIA, considerable delays in cases where information was provided, and numerous lacunae in the provisions of the Act itself that act as obstacles to information access. These experiences pointed to the following irrefutable conclusion: the right to information was not working in Karnataka.

Against this backdrop, the 'KRIA Katte (Forum)' was created as an ideal platform for interested groups and individuals to meet, share experiences and spread awareness about the right to information in Karnataka. Furthermore, in light of the loopholes in the provisions of KRIA, it was thought that the Forum could devise strategies for effective implementation of RTI in Karnataka, and also serve as a nodal vehicle of advocacy. The idea of the Katte was mooted at a meeting jointly organised by Parivartan, Delhi and the Rejuvenate
India Movement (RIM), Bangalore on 2nd July 2004. Several civil society groups from Bangalore were present at the meeting. The decision to set up a platform was inspired by similar successful initiatives in Mumbai and Delhi, where groups have been active in enforcing citizens’ right to know.

Objectives

- To spread awareness about the right to information, and enable citizens and groups across the state to access information under the KRIA
- To disseminate and replicate positive experiences in using the Act
- To discuss problems encountered in using KRIA & devise strategies to overcome the same
- To act as a rallying point for advocating administrative and legal reforms with regard to KRIA

The Katte is open to any non-partisan individual, group, association, etc that has used the Act or is interested in using it. Public Affairs Centre (PAC) has been providing secretarial support to the Katte.

A yahoo group - kria@yahoogroups.com - has been created by RIM and managed by PAC. The yahoo-group seeks to provide a virtual forum for citizen activists in Karnataka to share their experiences on the use of the Karnataka Right to Information Act. At present, the group consists of 85 members.
## ANNEXURE II
### List of Agencies visited for Field Assessment

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<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Agency</th>
<th>Head Office</th>
<th>Local Office</th>
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</table>
| 1      | Bangalore City Police       | Office of the Commissioner of Police, Infantry Road, Bangalore - 1 | • Kamakshi Palya Police Station  
  
• Frazer Town Police Station  
  
• Hennur Police Station  
  
• Kengeri Police Station  
  
• Magadi Road Police Station |
| 2      | BMTC                        | BMTC Central Office, KH Road, Shanthinagar, Bangalore - 27 | Depot No. 20, Banashankari, Bangalore - 20                                   |
| 3      | BWSSB                       | Cauvery Bhavan, Bangalore - 9                          | Office of the AEE, BWSSB, Jayanagar 4<sup>th</sup> Block                    |
| 4      | Commercial Taxes Dept.      | Office of the Assistant Commissioner (General), Commercial Tax Department, Gandhinagar | Commercial Tax Department, Koramangala, (next to National Games Village)    |
| 5      | Karnataka State Police      | Office of the Director General & Inspector General of Police, Nrupathunga Rd, Bangalore-1 | Kolar Police Station                                                         |
| 6      | Rural Development & Panchayat Raj | Secretariat, RDPR Department, M.S. Building, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore - 1 | • Gram Panchayat - Manchanayakanahalli, Mysore Road, Biddadi Hobli, Bangalore Rural District, Bangalore - 562 109  
  
• Bangalore Rural Zilla Panchayat, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 9 |
| 7      | Stamps & Registration Dept. | BWSSB Building, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, B’lore - 1 | Sub-Registrar's office, BDA Complex, Domlur                                   |
| 8      | Transport Department        | Office of the Joint Commissioner for Transport (Admn), M.S. Building, Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi, Bangalore - 1 | Asst RTO (PR & Grievances), RTO West, Corporation Complex, Rajajinagar, Bangalore - 10 |
LIST OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE’S PUBLICATIONS

Public Interest Litigation: A Tool for Social Action and Public Accountability.
Anuradha Rao, 44p, 1999 Rs. 50

Monitoring the Quality of Road Works
C.E.G. Justo & S. Manjunath, 48p, 1999 Rs. 100

Strengthening Public Accountability & Good Governance:
Proceedings of the International Workshop on Report Cards
K. Gopakumar, 43p, 1999 Rs. 50

Voices from the Capital: A Report Card on Public Services in Delhi.
Sita Sekhar & Suresh Balakrishnan, 33p, 1999 Rs. 50

City Finances in India: Some Disquieting Trends.
Sita Sekhar & Smita Bidarkar, 37p, 1999 Rs. 50

Prometheus Unbound, or Still in Chains: A Report Card on Impact of Economic Reforms on the Private Enterprise Sector in India
K. Gopakumar, 32p, 1998 Rs. 50

Elections to Bangalore Municipal Corporation:
An Experiment to Stimulate Informed Choice
S. Manjunath, 31p, 1998 Rs. 50

Public Services and the Urban Poor in Mumbai: A Report Card
Suresh Balakrishnan & Sita Sekhar, 40p, 1998 Rs. 50

Bangalore Hospitals and the Urban Poor: A Report Card
Suresh Balakrishnan & Anjana Iyer, 36p, 1998 Rs. 50

Corruption in India: Agenda for Action
Samuel Paul & S. Guhan, 312p, 1997 Publisher: Vision Books, New Delhi Rs. 280

Corruption: Who will bell the cat?
Samuel Paul, 22p, 1997 Rs. 50

Public Services for the Urban Poor:
A Report Card on Three Indian Cities
Samuel Paul, 28p, 1995 Rs. 50

A Report Card on Public Services in Indian Cities:
A View from Below
Samuel Paul, 52p, 1995 Rs. 50

Strengthening Public Accountability:
New Approaches and Mechanisms
Samuel Paul, 28p, 1995 Rs. 50
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<td>Electoral Disclosure in Karnataka: A Reality Check</td>
<td>Samuel Paul, Poornima D.G., Anuradha Rao</td>
<td>25p</td>
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<td>Towards User Report Cards on Irrigation Services: Learning from a pilot project in India</td>
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<td>ABC... of Voting A Voter's Guide</td>
<td>(in English &amp; Hindi)</td>
<td>30p</td>
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<td>Holding The State to Account: Citizen Monitoring in Action</td>
<td>Samuel Paul</td>
<td>196p</td>
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<td>Samuel Paul &amp; Gopakumar .K.</td>
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