

Assessment of Citizens' Charter Implementation Status in Oromia Region of Ethiopia: The Case of Selected Regional State Bureaus

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Abstract

It is believed that a citizen charter is necessary to bridge governance dynamics with citizen interest. The Ethiopian government has introduced the citizens' charter (CC) scenario as a new reform to improve the civil service delivery. However, some empirical evidences indicate that though the new reform is introduced, the civil service delivery effectiveness is inhibited by many administrative bureaucracies. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the concrete contribution of the citizens' charter to enhance the quality of service delivery in the selected bureaus of Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. Relevant data were collected both from primary and secondary sources. Findings indicate that the citizens' charter contribution to service delivery in the selected regional state bureaus was found low. Majority of service providers do not have enough knowledge of CC contents and capacity building was not organized on regular bases. Even though office supplies are found sufficient, there is still lack of adequate skilled personnel. It also indicated that service delivery transparency and accountability were ineffective. Feedback mechanism was found inadequate. Concerning the service quality, service processing time was not maintained as the stated service standards of the charter and better performers are not rewarded, Celebration of success is almost not practiced. Hence, the reality of the citizen charter concepts and goals need to be well communicated, follow-up should be in place to make uniform the application of the new practice, civil service leaders and process owners have to internalize and play their active role in leading the practice of CC.

Keywords: Citizen's charter, Public Service Delivery, Service Provider, Customer

1. Introduction

Public service delivery is the execution of policy objectives via planning and programming of operations and projects so that the set of outcomes and desired impacts are achieved (Savitch, 1998). Public service delivery was criticized for several years for its poor service provision systems, which were characterized by ineffective, inefficient, and often hostile to the people they are supposed to serve (Osborne and Plastnik, 1997). Consequently, many countries of the world have experienced deferent public service delivery reform, and come up with new, effective and efficient method of services provision system to the citizens via shifting the focus from the service providers to service receivers.

Citizens' Charter (CC) is one of the organizational tools and techniques with the primary objective of improving the eminence of service offered to citizens thereby ensuring better citizen satisfaction. Citizen's Charter was developed first in the United Kingdom in 1991 as a program showing commitment to public sector reform (Falconer and Ross, 1999). Right after UK initiative, a number of charter-like initiatives in many other European Countries have followed. For instance Public Service Charter in France, Quality Charter for Public Services in Portugal, Public Service Users Charter in Belgium, Service Standards Initiative in Canada, Citizen's Charter in India, Client Charter in Malaysia, Public Service Guarantees in Sweden and Service Charter in Australia (Madell, 2005). Regardless of differences in naming, its purpose points out the same thing, that is improvement of system and quality of public service delivery so that enhancing effectiveness of public sector management and citizen's satisfaction (ibid).

Citizens' charters have positive impacts on public service delivery. Many scholars have been writing about the contribution of Citizen's Charters implementation in the area of public service delivery both in developed and in developing countries. Scholars argued that the importance of CC implementation in public sectors improve quality of public service delivery via realizing transparency, efficiency and accountability. Adoption of CC within public service delivery organizations enhances the quality of service delivery by helping service providers to do their job effectively. Because of this the role of CC for effective public service delivery is becoming more important in contemporary world, which is moving into more customer oriented service provision system (Kickert, 1991).

In Ethiopia, series of reform program initiatives have been launched and implemented since 1991. In 1991 the government launched structural adjustment programs including civil service reform program (CSR) as one of the programs. The program focused on restructuring the government institutions. However, the implementation levels of these sub-programs were not successful as desired because of lack of committed political

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leadership (Mesfin, 2009).

In 2004, Public Sector Capacity Building Program was also launched comprising of six programs (Civil Service Reform, Tax System Reform, Justice System Reform, and Decentralization, Urban management capacity building and Information and communication Technology development) under Capacity Building Strategy. In this program, Improving efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery, empowering citizens to participate in decision making and promoting good governance were the main purpose of the program (Mesfin, 2009).

In February 2012, Ministry of Civil Service launched Citizens' Charter with the aim of enabling civil servants to serve the community in an improved manner. The Charter was expected to ensure participation and transparency as well as government's accountability to the public (MoCS, 2012). Based on that, Oromia regional state government has adopted Citizen Charter in public service delivery in 2012. Oromia is one of the nine ethnic based regional states of Ethiopia, covering an area of 353,006.81 square kilometers. According to CSA, population number in 2016 projected as Male 17,345,000, Female 17,230,000 and total 34,575,000 (CSA, 2013). This Citizen Charter has been introduced to the regional bureaus as a device to improve public service delivery system. It was launched as a tool to enhance transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness of the public service delivery institutions. Even though, CC is introduced and implemented in the regional state bureaus; there is no empirical study conducted regarding the contribution of the charter on public service delivery improvement. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine the contribution of the charter for public service delivery improvement. Then the following research question will guide the study: What are the concrete contributions of CC in enhancing the quality service delivery?

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Review

Along with the emergence of New Public Management principles and thinking, CC has been introduced as an effective public service delivery initiative. Citizen's charter is a document that outlined the commitments of service providers towards service seekers through clearly specified standards of public service delivery (Ghuman and Sharma, 2002, Tritter, 1998, in Beniwal, 2005). Under the umbrella of good governance, citizen's charter is a recent instrument that aimed at promoting effectiveness and efficiency in the public service delivery system (Beniwal, 2005).

Moreover, citizen's charter is a document indicating the rights and services available to the citizens; and procedures on how the services are delivered as well as available measures in case of failures (Haque, 2005). Therefore, CC can be considered as an instrument to ensuring transparency and accountability in public service delivery. According to pollitt (1994), the CCs have been developed as an instrument to improve the public services delivery, by setting clear standards of performance.

Principles of Citizen's Charter

The objective of citizen's charter practice is to build bridges between citizens and administration and to streamline administration in tune with the needs of citizens. The major principles of Citizen's Charter are: setting standards, access to information and openness, choice and consultation, courtesy and helpfulness, putting things right and value for money

Based on the above principles, the regional state adopted components in its citizen charter. According to Oromia Bureau of Civil Service and Good Governance, the components include:

1. Vision and mission of the government office or agency,
2. Identification of services offered and the clientele/customers,
3. The step by step procedure to obtain a particular service,
4. The officer or employee, responsible for each step,
5. The maximum time to accomplish the process,
6. Documents to be presented by the customer, with clear indication of the relevancy of said documents,
7. The procedure for filing complaints in relation to requests and applications, including the names and contact details of officials/channels to approach for redress,
8. Feedback mechanisms for recommendations, suggestions, comments as well as complaints.
9. Grievance redress mechanism

Governance includes mechanisms, procedures and institutions through which citizens and groups exercise and protect their rights and interest, meet their responsibility and solve their differences (UNDP, 2003). More over UNDP (2003) defined those constituting elements of good governance as follow:

Transparency is free flow information that where processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned. Accountability described as answerability public service organization to the public or the requirement that officials answer to citizens and accept responsibility in case of failure and incompetence. Effectiveness and efficiency refer to producing results that meet needs while making the best use of resources. Equity pertained as existences of opportunities for all to improve or maintain well-being. Responsiveness is trying to serve all citizens impartially. Participation citizen's involvement in decision making, directly or indirectly issues concerned them. Rule of law is legal frameworks that are fair and enforced impartially. The, Citizen's Charter is

being viewed as an instrument to instill the values of accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness in providing quality public service delivery.

3. Research Methodology

The study focuses on the contribution of CC in improving public service delivery in selected Oromia regional state bureaus. It employed mixed research approach that is quantitative and qualitative for collecting data. The primary data were gathered using questionnaires from service providers & customers and interview from core process owners and civil service reform program focal persons. Secondary data were obtained from citizen's charter document as well as from review of comments, opinions and suggestion provided by customers about the service delivery in the comment and suggestion boxes and archives. Various books, publications and journals were also engaged as secondary data. Both primary and secondary types of data were employed to achieve validity and reliability of the study.

The article emphasized on the effects of the charter to service delivery improvement using both probability and non-probability sampling methods. Sample size was taken using the accepted formula of Kothari. According to Kothari (2004), if the total number of the target population is less than 10,000 using the following

formula is essential to determining the sample size. $\frac{z^2pq}{ME^2}$ And $fn = \frac{n}{1+\frac{n}{N}}$ Where N is population size, n is desired

sample size, z is standard normal at required confidence level, P is estimated characteristics of target population, q is 1-p and ME is level of statistical significance of target population. Accordingly, N = 6821, z = 1.81, p = 0.5, q = 1-p = 0.5, ME = 0.07 (93% confidences is assumed because of the constant time limitation of the study).

Therefore, $n = \frac{1.81^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5}{0.07^2} = 167$. If N < 10,000 the formula is $\frac{n}{1+\frac{n}{N}}$ **fn** is the desired service provider's sample

size. Based on this formula the service providers sample size of this study is $n = 167$, N = 6821 $fn = \frac{167}{1+\frac{167}{6821}} =$

163.

Therefore, 163 service providers, 12 process owners 2 from each bureau, 6 civil service reform program focal persons, 1 from each bureau and 20 customers 4 from each the five selected regional state bureau, total 201 were respondents of this study.

Data collected through interviews, questionnaire and document review were analyzed using thematic data coding. Thematic coding is a descriptive approach that facilitates the search for patterns of a qualitative data (Given, 2008).

The quantitative data were analyzed using variety of statistical methods and tests. The descriptive statistics was used to produce frequency distribution, percentage, test of proportions and means while tables, crosstabs, column graph and pie charts were generated for the presentation of quantitative data results.

To ensure the integrity of the data collected from the questionnaires, interviews, document analysis triangulation was used to confirm the findings. Triangulation is used as a cumulative substantiation of research results, and as an extension of perspectives that permit a fuller treatment, description and explanation of the subject area (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke,). Thus, all the data were organized and analyzed as a final research report.

4. Discussion and Results

The data were collected from service providers, customers, civil service reform program, process owners. This is the respondents' profiles or demographic characteristics, which is followed by data presentation, interpretation and analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample of Service Providers

Items	Respondent		
	Frequency	Percent (%)	
Sex	Male	92	57
	Female	68	43
	Total	160	100
Age categories	20 – 30	85	53
	31 – 40	57	36
	41- 50	17	10
	51 and above	1	1
	Total	160	100
Educational level	Diploma	0	0
	Degree	124	77
	Masters and above	36	23
	Total	160	100
Work Experiences	5&below	11	7
	6 – 15	17	11
	16 – 25	103	64
	26 – 35	19	12
	36 & above	10	6
	Total	160	100

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Many of the service providers (64%) have 16 to 25 years of work experiences. This shows that majority of the respondents have long work experience and helps to get objective evidence. The assessment was also carried out using service provider’s survey to determine the effects of the charter on service delivery.

4.1 Formulation and Implementation of the Citizen’s Charter

Civil service reform program focal persons were asked if each core process has developed its own citizen’s charter. Focal persons’ response:

Full document of CC that includes all legitimate criteria was developed at sector level. At the same time each core process developed service standards that incorporate the type of service, the necessary time to process that service, responsible person and service getting requirements. At present, all core processes are applying the stated standards.

Similarly the interview conducted with Civil Service Reform Program Director at Oromia Civil Service and Good Governance Bureau indicates the following:

First full document of citizen’s charter was developed by the bureau. Then after all regional government sectors were trained on the newly developed CC document, the document was dispatched to all sectors. Based on this document, almost all regional state government sectors developed their own CC, and implementing it. However the newly restructured government sectors status was not known. DCSRFP.

The responses of all focal persons for the processes of CC formulation in their bureaus were similar.

First task forces that were composed of representatives of all core processes were established. The task forces indentified their customers, stakeholders and the services to be provided to determine the service standards/output to be provided by the sector. Having completed identification, the first draft of the charter was developed and circulated to all staffs members for comments and suggestions to be provided. By including the comments and suggestions provided the task forces amended the formulated CC. The amended document was presented to management committee for the second time. Finally, the task forces finalized the charter with inclusion of comments and suggestion given by the committee and delivered for publishing. CSRFPF

Concerning the evaluation and monitoring system both interviewee groups were asked if they have instituted or not. The interviewee respondents stated:

Independent internal monitoring and evaluation system for managing the charter implementation was instituted, and being carried out by technical committee assigned for this purpose. However, the program was not carried out constantly because of some seasonal duties interference. But the implementation process was assessed at core process level and management level regular meetings with other annual work plan evaluation. SRFPF

The director also stated the following regarding CC monitoring and evaluation program:

At bureau level, technical team was established for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of CC at all regional state government sectors. The team conducts monitoring and evaluation twice a year. Based on the result obtained from evaluation, necessary capacity building and technical support were provided by the bureau to enhance their effectiveness. DCSR

The result of CC document review also indicated that monitoring and evaluation have been included in the CC as means to manage the charter implementation.

The director was also asked if the bureau has instituted incentive system to motivate the regional government sectors who are successful in CC implementation and show practical change on service delivery. Concerning this, the director stated the following:

Reward and punishment system was instituted to motivate regional state government sectors that implemented the charter effectively and bring observable service delivery improvement in their offices. To identify the sectors for award, the bureau carried out assessment based on the standards for effective implementation of CC. Then based on this, the bureau awarded those that have met the standard. Accordingly, so far nine regional state government sectors were awarded. DCSR

Table 2: Responses of service providers whether they have knowledge about their office’s CC or not

Level of awareness about CC			Frequency	Percent
1. Awareness about CC existence	Response	Yes	156	98
		No	4	2
		Total	160	100
2. Knowledge level about CC content	Response	Full knowledge	60	38
		Medium level knowledge	95	59
		Not at all	1	3
		Total	156	100

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Majority (98%) of service providers have adequate information about the existence of CC in their office. Regarding, their level of knowledge, only 38% of the respondent service providers have full knowledge about CC of their offices.

Table 3: Responses of customers on their level of knowledge about CC

		Awareness about CC			knowledge level on CC		
		Yes	No	Total	high	low	Total
Customers	Frequency	17	3	20	8	11	19
	Percent	85%	15%	100%	45%	55%	100%

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Regarding knowledge and awareness about CC, large number of respondents has agreed that they have information about the existences of CC. In addition to that 45% of them have detail knowledge about the contents of CC.

Table 4: Attitude of service providers towards over all CC

Attitude	Agreement Level					median
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. I believe that effective service to Customers has a valuable contribution to bureaus effectiveness	11 7%	7 4%	4 2%	57 36%	81 51%	5
2. I simply have no choice, I fulfill my part because I am obliged to	54 34%	75 47%	28 17	3 2%	0 0%	2
3. I am interested to work when I see my officemates working carefully	46 29%	83 52%	15 9 %	13 8%	3 2%	2

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Their response was recorded according to the level of agreement. According to Saunders (2007), the likert scale is the level of agreement (strongly agree, agree undecided, disagree and strongly disagree). In this case the agreement level was represented weight from 1-5 (Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1). To determine the central tendency of response median was performed.

Consequently, respondent service providers were asked if they believe their service provision has value to the customers, and contribute to effectiveness of their bureaus. The respondent’s response for this question was with the median value (5) that is they strongly agree. In the second statement, service providers were asked if they have no choice to fulfill their responsibility because they were obliged to. The respondents disagreed on this statement because the response for this item was with the median value (2). In the third statement, service providers

were inquired if they are interested to work when they saw their officemates working carefully or not. The median value of this statement was (2). The median value indicates that majority of service providers disagreed with the statement. The result shows that Service providers have passion towards their work because the service they rendered have value for their customers. Generally, the finding portrayed acceptance of CC by service providers.

Table 5: Service providers on capacity-building activities practice by their bureaus

Capacity Building Statements		Frequency	Percent
1. Attending on cc orientation and introductory training	Yes	140	88
	No	20	12
	Total	160	100
2. Frequency of Refreshment Training	Often	64	40
	Some times	72	45
	Rare	24	15
	Never	0	0
	Total	160	100
3. Gained knowledge from training is relevant to particular responsibility	Yes	70	45
	No	84	55
	Total	154	100

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

According to the above table, Majority (88%) of service provider respondents have attended the CC introductory orientation and training and 45% of the service providers confirmed that refreshment training programs were organized and offered rarely. At the same time, 55% of the participants have agreed that the training provided was relevant to their specific tasks or responsibility.

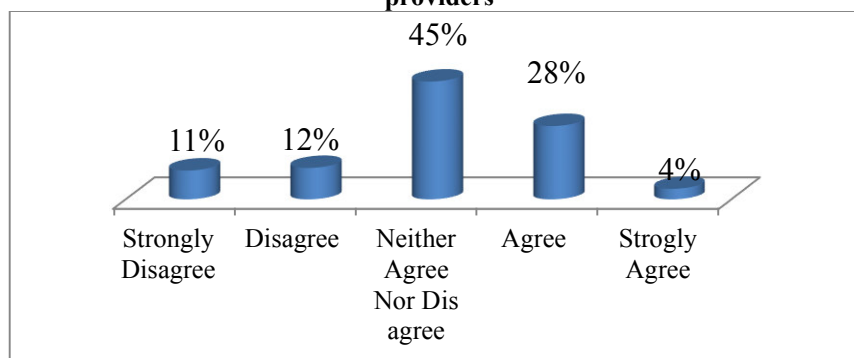
Table 6: Responses of service providers if reward and punishment exist

System employed		Frequency	Percent
1. Existence of punishment when committing mistake at job	Yes	115	72
	No	45	28
	Total	160	100
2. Existence of reward when one achieved his/her responsibility	Yes	10	6
	No	150	94
	Total	160	100

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

In the table above, High proportion (72%) of service providers have claimed that punishment in the form of reminder/warning and salary deduction is functional if one committed mistakes on his/her responsibility. Similarly, majority (94%) of service providers responded that there was no any reward at all.

Figure 1: Service providers' response on communication between offices heads/process owners and service providers



Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Communication between leaders and staff members is an indicator to measure the institutionalized implementation process. In this regard, the median value for this was (3). This indicates that service providers are not sure of their process owners/office heads do consult, support and motivate to their activities. As shown on the column graph above about 45% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. This shows that there is problem in communication.

4.2 Contribution of Citizen’s Charter on Service Delivery

Table 7: Service providers’ & customers’ response on presence of feedback mechanism cross tabulation

		Procedural mechanism for complaint services		Total
		Yes	No	
Respondent Types	Frequency	122	38	160
	Percents	76%	24%	100%
	Frequency	14	6	20
	Percent	70%	30%	100%

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

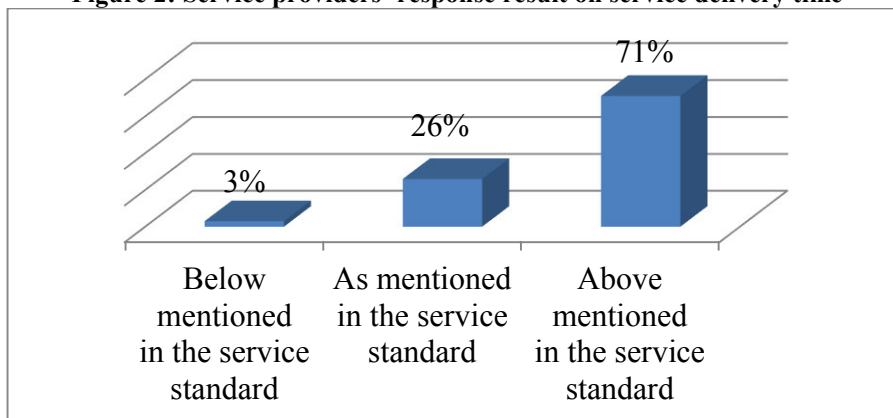
Regarding the feedback mechanism, the result shows, majority (76%) of service providers and 70% of informant customers have asserted that the bureaus have placed feedback mechanisms for receiving suggestions, comments, opinions and complaints.

The interviewee respondents also stated as follows:

Installing feedback mechanism in an organization has paramount importance for the reason that comments, opinions, suggestions and complaints received from customers are used to measure the status of an organization on implementation. On the other hand, comments, opinions and suggestions given regarding service delivery help as an input for any remedial action to be taken. Therefore, to this end, the offices placed suggestion boxes and suggestion archives to receive any information on service delivery aspects.

4.3 Service Delivery Quality in citizen’s charter

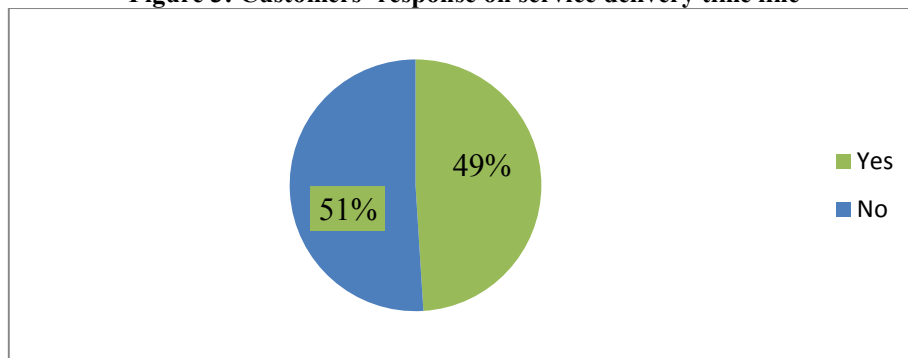
Figure 2: Service providers’ response result on service delivery time



Source: Own Survey, April 2016

As shown above one dimension of service delivery improvement is service time-line. Accordingly, the CC document has clearly stated the required time necessary for each service to be delivered. Thus, in the above Column Graph, 71% of the respondents of service providers have confirmed that service delivery time was improved above the stated service standards.

Figure 3: Customers' response on service delivery time line



Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Regarding the stated time-line, 51% of the respondents' customers claimed that service delivery was not following the stated time line on the service standard. But many of the interviewee groups noted as follows: "As much as possible service provision is in line with the CC declared time-line. And even Sometimes service provision is completed before the stated time".

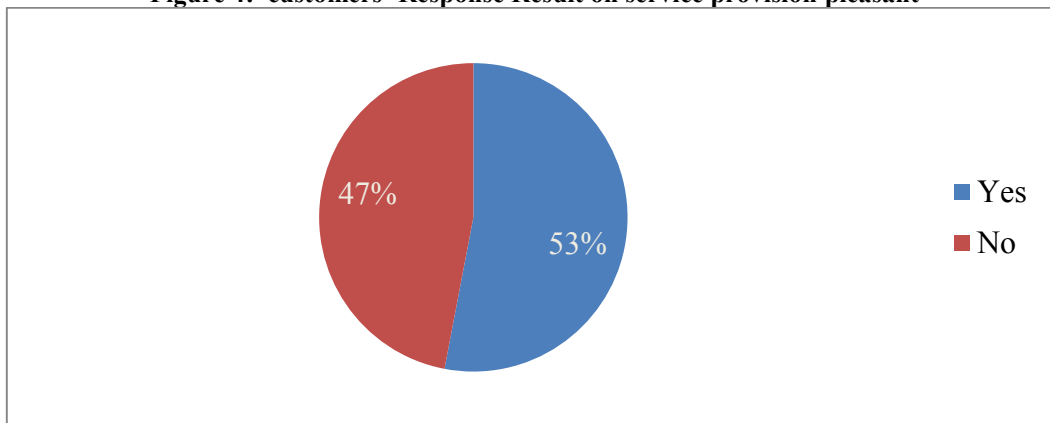
Table 8: Service providers' response on the perception of service delivery improvement

Statements	Agreement Level					Median
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Customers are provided with adequate information about services	2 1%	69 43%	53 33%	26 16%	10 6%	2
2. Service provisions have become more punctual and on time	2 1%	52 33%	81 51%	15 9%	10 6%	3

Source: Own Survey, April 2016

The first statement in the above table indicates median value of (2). This shows, the service providers disagreed on the provision of adequacy of information to customers. Regarding the service provision punctuality the median value is (3). This reveals, that service providers were not sure whether the service provision is in line with the defined standard or not. Therefore this finding shows, customers have no adequate information on the service provision.

Figure 4: customers' Response Result on service provision pleasant



Source: Own Survey, April 2016

Regarding the service provision pleasantness, 53% of the customers have agreed that service providers are polite, friendly and accommodating. On these issues, most the focal persons and core process owners have responded the following:

Accurate service outputs and pleasant service provisions are positive indicators of improvement. Moreover, providing accurate services with polite and cooperative spirit are what the sector always strived to achieve. Basically most of the service providers are cooperative and friendly. However, still there are some who are not cooperative and friendly in their service provisions.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the concrete contributions of CC in enhancing the quality service delivery. Hence, the service providers and customers are assessed of the extent to which they have awareness about the existence and knowledge of CC. It was found that few service providers and customers have detail knowledge

about the charter's contents. This revealed that the Charter is not well entrenched in the cognition of all service providers and customers. The analysis result on the capacity building activities of those regional state bureaus is found to be insufficient. The refreshment trainings are not organized on regular bases and this makes the effects of earlier training would not long last and slowly service providers could lose competency. Current office supply and equipments are sufficient to deliver the service effectively, but there is shortage of manpower that is said to be the decisive element in service delivery.

The other critical measure of transparency is the clarity and understandability of the requirements stated in the charter. Findings reveal that almost all bureaus have clear and understandable service getting requirements. All bureaus clearly stated the service getting requirements in their CC documents and these service getting requirements are posted at a place where anyone can access, except in (MoFED and COPA. In many bureaus, names of room in which the service transaction is carried out with the assigned responsible personnel are appropriately posted in a place where anyone can read and identify. Conversely, service providers do not wear their identification cards (badge) in almost all bureaus. Significant number of service providers and customers has confirmed that there are feedback mechanisms for receiving and/or giving suggestions, comments, opinions and complaints in all bureaus. Based on this, redress mechanism is institutionalized. But the feedback mechanism was found insufficient, because only suggestion boxes and archives are prepared with weak follow up and response. It is obvious that the prerequisite to redress complaints is to document complaints on the appropriate format. But in almost all bureaus, complaint presentation format are not readily available. This indicates that the redress mechanism is not fully integrated.

The service delivery quality improvement is perceived differently by various respondents. With regard to time for service delivery, significant number of service providers and customers has argued that service delivery time is not parallel with the stipulated time on the service standards. In contrast, civil service reform program focal person and core process owners responded that service is carried out according to the stated time line. The service output of the selected bureaus was also perceived by majority customers as accurate, that is free of mistakes/repetition. But civil service reform program focal person and core process owners argued that there are some occasions where it loses accuracy from unhealthy attitude of few service providers. Furthermore Service provision pleasantness also is rated good. The customers have characterized the service providers as polite, friendly and accommodating.

An institutionalized incentive system is another fuelling factor for the implementation of CC to become successful. When the service providers are rewarded they would be passionate towards their works as well as to be creative. But the incentive system was not properly integrated. Service providers were punished for mistakes they commit. In contrast, they were not rewarded for their effective and efficient task accomplishment and service provision. Therefore the objective of citizen's charter practice was to improve service delivery and streamline administration in tune with the needs of citizens but the practical application of the regional bureaus is not satisfactory. Though it is a good start, the presence of charter, by itself, cannot be taken as adequate for service improvement.

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