

# **SERVICOM SERVICE CHARTER AND SERVICE DELIVERY IMPERATIVES IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MDAs**

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## **Abstract**

*The growing call for qualitative service delivery for nation building through the adoption of internationally recognised service improvement benchmarks by Nigerian citizens, non-governmental organizations, civil society and advocacy groups and professional organizations made this paper imperative. This paper highlights the importance of service delivery and policy directives in the attainment of service objectives by ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) at all level of governments. Thus the paper carefully examined the contributory role and effect of the SERVICOM service delivery charter 13 years after its formulation by the administration of former president Olusegun Obasanjo. The review identified the strong points of the SERVICOM charter, its achievements and areas of policy review for effective service delivery at all levels of governments in Nigeria since effective service delivery by MDAs is a sine qua non for national development, creating trust in the people for the acceptance of government programmes and policies and above all repositioning the country in good light before the international community to attract foreign investments and high ranking in the global competitive index for quality service delivery. The review concludes that for any service delivery mechanism like the SERVICOM charter to satisfy service expectation, it must be people service centered, have a minimum benchmark for service delivery throughout the entire public*

*service, be adequate timed with a clear definition of each and have a sustainable reward systems in place that can motivate the people towards attainment of service objectives of the government.*

## **Introduction**

Issues of poor and ineffective service delivery in the Nigerian public service have often called for policy changes, reforms and executive directives by successive governments at the state and federal levels of governance. These issues have also been matter of discourse in professional forums, symposia and commentaries in both the social and mass media. No day passes without calls and submissions for the need to have an effective service delivery scheme with which the performance of public sector workers and the public sector parastatals can be measured and rewards apportioned in line with international standards and best practices (Alamieyeseigha, 2002; Mamah, 2016). It is also true that as governments' aims to achieve effective service delivery in ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) so also is the organised private sector which seeks to achieve effective service delivery through their motivated workforce.

To achieve effective service delivery to customers' government MDAs sends their workforce to refresher courses, seminars and other forms of in-house training for them to acquire relevant skills and competencies that will engender effective

service delivery. On the other hand, most private sector organisations strive to achieve effective service delivery through service differentiation by providing their customers with exceptional, unique and personalized experiences which is lacking in the public sector. ‘The customer is king’ maxim is the ultimate in their operations as most staff who do not align themselves to this business ideal is either sacked or disciplined with suspension without pay (Galloway and Ho 1996; Yavas, Bilgin and Shemwell, 1997; Halvorsrud, Kvale, and Følstad, 2016).

In the public service, especially at the federal level, the issue of quality service delivery that meets the expectation of the citizenry has found its way into most ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) as they search for ways to provide superior and qualitative services in return for taxpayers’ ‘money’. This is in line with what is obtained in western societies and which most developing countries are rising up to as a challenge for offering each citizen a better customer experience. For example, some countries have adopted a ‘customer is champion’ approach, while others embark on explicit customer satisfaction surveys to evaluate the performance of their public sector parastatals (Schneider and White, 2004). In order to have an embracive and standard for service delivery in the Nigerian public sector, former President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2004 instituted the SERVICOM Policy Charter for all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to drive service delivery practices and bring satisfaction to customers (the Nigerian citizens) in all ramifications.

The SERVICOM service delivery mechanism as a policy directive gives Nigerians the right to demand better service from government officers in the MDAs without been asked for bribe, kickbacks, files ‘transportation fees’ and delays in rendering effective public sector services to Nigerians (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). This became necessary because public service is the only contact that most people have with government. Thus SERVICOM becomes the link through which the people feel the impact of service quality in governance (Faseluka, 2015).The SERVICOM charter holds that service

is doing what we are employed to do, service is what we offer ourselves for, and service is what the Nigerian people are entitled to and expect from the government. Therefore service delivery is promoted as the primary purpose of government which is towards improving quality of life of citizens. For the citizenry, public institutions are in a social contract and under obligation to render qualitative service and therefore have a legitimate right and expectation to be provided with quality service that meets standard of performance without additional obligation. It is often observed that because public institutions in Nigeria have no real competition, the nature of services they provide is rather not desirable and the citizen has no choice but to use such government services no matter how cheap, epileptic and undesirable the service have been.

One thing to note is that service delivery practices in their composition is paramount for creating utility, measuring productivity, growth, customer satisfaction and above all profitability of firms. The attainment of service delivery goals by private sector organizations has often seen constant changes in line with competition and other environmental dictates in policy, procedure and strategic management practices by their management with the basic view of profit (Milton and Johnson, 2012.)

It should however be noted that the attainment of effective service delivery objectives do not just happen. Its occurrence does not solely depend on policy directives or constant reforms but on managing the people and re-orienting them as they act as agents of service delivery in the public sector by changing their perception, motivating them through effective reward system (Yayale, 2007) and making them commit to the ideals of the SERVICOM service charter. Thus, a re-orientation of the value system and misconception held by public sector workers that effective public service delivery is not their fathers’ work and even if it is their fathers’, they don’t need to worry themselves over it. If well instituted and managed, an effective value re-orientation scheme for quality service delivery can benefit the people, the government, and the workers especially in this era changing global trends (Solomon, 2015). There is also need

for effective reward and incentive scheme to enable public sector workers respond quickly to the ideals of the SERVICOM service delivery initiative (Amah, Nwuche and Chukuigwe, 2013)

### **Service and Service Delivery**

Service and service delivery is the hallmark of any public service all over the world (Fogli, 2006). Service is the set of benefits delivered by government and its agencies to the service consumer been the citizens. It may be coaching, teaching, banking, consultancy and other modes to meet customers' aspirations. According to the Business Dictionary (n.d) a service is a "valuable action, deed, or effort performed to satisfy a need or to fulfill a demand. It is also a type of economic activity that is intangible, is not stored and does not result in ownership". Services are consumed at any point of sale. Service is one of the two key components of economics, the other being goods. Services are required by people from time to time in various forms, categories and from different organizations. Services are rendered for a pecuniary benefit by individuals, for profit by profit making organizations and rendered free as part of a social obligation or subsidized obligation by the government to meet the demand of the citizenry through its various MDAs.

For value to be created in the service chain, service must be effective in nature. An effective service is therefore one that has a standard of performance, culture of rendition, is cost effective to the provider and receiver and delivered at the appropriate time. Thus an effective service is one that meets the expectation of the receiver in fulfilling the need for the service. Therefore, service in its various forms must be delivered timely to meet the expectation of the receiver qualitatively thus the need for quality service delivery. Quality service delivery is a system or arrangement of periodical performance of supplying service to meet public needs (Ijeoma, 2013). As noted by Helmsing (1995) public sector service delivery is a deliberate obligatory decision by the elected or appointed officials to serve or deliver goods and services to the recipients. Heskett (1987) defines service delivery as an attitudinal or dispositional sense, referring to the

internationalization of even service values and norms.

Therefore service delivery as a generic term is used to discuss the idea that government agencies exist to provide effective services to meet the expectations of their 'customers'. This starts with the need to introduce service improvement initiatives intended to encourage a public service culture in which service standards are defined, service performed against service standards and measured continuously. The concept of service delivery is very wide and ranges from basic standards for the delivery of specific services to citizens to agreements for the provision of services between ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) which may include but not restricted to only timely publication of accounts, educational services, budget releases, quantity and quality of training carried, customer satisfaction, service accessibility, data sourcing, provision of information and handling of one complaint or the other.

### **Factors Affecting Service Delivery in the Public Sector**

Poor service delivery especially in governance and among other service providers remains an overwhelming challenge and can be attributed to such factors as:

- a. Service reforms without a corresponding enforcement mechanism
- b. Lack of political will to enhance service delivery schemes
- c. Lack of adequate infrastructures and policy summerraults
- d. Lack of strong will and knowledge to request for quality service
- e. Non-enforcement of institutional frameworks for the quality service delivery
- f. Failure of government regulatory agencies in educating and enforcing service regulatory standards
- g. Corruption
- h. Risk of Integrity
- i. Lack of enough Finance
- j. Challenge of getting the right service provider
- k. Poor Communication Attitude
- l. Financial mismanagement and non-Compliance with financial Legislation

- m. The availability and shortage of the required skills
- n. General Indiscipline
- o. Misplaced Priority

Certain factors serve as indicators of quality service delivery. These according to Hernon and Whitman (2001) and Hernon and Nitecki (2001) include (1) accessibility (having access to the use of service and service incompatibility with need), (2) **reliability** (the probability of a service failing within a specified time period with emphasis on the average time to first failure, the average time between failures, and the failure rate per unit time), (3) completeness (containing all the features that satisfy the customers' expectation) having all the primary operating characteristics with all the measurable attributes so as to be ranked as high service, (4) timeliness (promptness, ability to meet on demand). In this regard, service should be offered in time before it becomes irritating to the consumer because services which are delivered in time are said to be effective service and those that are not delivered in time are said to have poor service, (5) conformance (the extent to which a

service design and operating characteristics meet established standards). Effective service is therefore equated with that which operates within a level of tolerance and meeting the core purpose for which it is intended, (6) safety (been able to protect users before, during and after use). Services that are not safe to use are considered poor services and those that are safe to use are looked at as expected services.

For service to meet the quality required of it, it must contain certain attributes. These attributes as enumerated by Prasannakumar (2013) include reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication, understanding the customer. While the principles for effective service delivery include: people centeredness, equity, inclusiveness, rationality, efficiency, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, fairness, convergence, grievance redress, effectiveness, sustainability, integrity, continuous improvement, changing attitudes and skills Improvement, right to service delivery, holistic approach and timeliness.

### SERVICOM as Service Delivery Mechanism in the Public Sector of Nigeria



**SERVICOM** standing for service compactable with all Nigerians is a set of service delivery rules embedded in a charter which confers right to customers (citizens) to demand for quality service from government officers in ministries, department and agencies (MDAs) without asking for bribe, kickbacks, file 'transportation fees' and delays in rendering public sector services to Nigerians. It is modeled after the United Kingdom government model of service improvement and is intended to ensure that the major aim of public-service service delivery scheme of the federal government is for

effective service delivery is achieved. The SERVICOM policy charter was instituted by the former president Obasanjo administration in 2005. In setting up the SERVICOM policy directive, Obasanjo (2005) noted that:

*"For without a transparent and effective civil service, government business and service delivery to the public will be crippled and mired in dishonesty and graft. I am convinced that an efficient, transparent and accountable civil service in service*

*delivery should be the hallmark of our democratic transformation and development. The Nigeria people deserve nothing less.”*

The SERVICOM Policy thrust was established within the Presidency to manage and effect government commitments to the people in the area of service delivery. It is a social contract between the Federal Government of Nigeria and its people. According to Eneanya (2009) SERVICOM and its objectives as a policy direction of the federal government in MDAs is empowered to co-ordinate, implement and operationalise the SERVICOM service charter; monitor and report to the president on the progress made by ministries and agencies in performing their obligations under SERVICOM; carry out independent surveys of the services provided to citizens by the ministries and government departments, their adequacy, timeliness and customer satisfaction; conduct SERVICOM compliance evaluation services provided by government departments; award SERVICOM index; and view SERVICOM books and relevant documents.

In specific terms, the SERVICOM charter was designed to: Achieve high quality services to meet customers' requirements and expectation; set out citizens' entitlements in ways they could readily understand how to go about obtaining service using such tools as the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA); commit public sector organizations to provide services within realistic time frames and limit; specify officials to whom complaints could be addressed and be rest assured that such complaints are handled promptly at no extra cost; make service information (including fees and complaints arrangements) accessible to the public; conduct and published periodic surveys of customer satisfaction and service improvement schemes.

### **The SERVICOM Charter**

SERVICOM charters are the operational day-to-day implementation of SERVICOM: They are in place by 1 July 2004 and every Government Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) is expected to display one. The policy directive of the SERVICOM charter is that SERVICOM gives

Nigerians the right to demand good service from government officers in Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) without asking for bribe, kickbacks and delays in rendering public sector services to Nigerians. The SERVICOM charters are the basis for:

1. Customers' expectations of quality Service Delivery
2. Customers' demand of their rights to good service
3. Customers' recourse when services delivery fails
4. Customers' involvement in the Service Delivery Programme

The SERVICOM charter contains the following information for adherence in delivering quality service by public service personnel and information as a right of the public.

**SERVICOM** is about service: “doing what we’re employed to do, Service is what we offer ourselves for, and service is what the people are entitled to expect from us”. Public service is the only contact that most people have with Government, SERVICOM focuses on the quality of that contact or the lack of it.

**COMPACT-** “The Compact” states that: “We dedicate ourselves to providing the basic services to which each citizen is entitled in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner...”

SERVICOM is hinged on four main principles:

- i. Affirmation of commitment to the service of the Nigerian nation
- ii. Conviction that Nigeria can only realize her full potential if citizens receive prompt and efficient services from the state
- iii. Consideration for the needs and rights of all Nigerians to enjoy social and economic advancement
- iv. Dedication to deliver services to which citizens are entitled, timely, fairly, honestly, effectively and transparently

**Customer Expectation: The SERVICOM Index**  
Every customer that requests services from any MDA has a right to expect;

- To be treated with courtesy, respect, honesty and professionalism.
- That the staff attending to them will listen to their request or question, ask for clarification if necessary and provide complete, accurate and precise information.
- That the staff attending to them will ensure that they receive services related to the functions of the establishment, fairly, efficiently and promptly.
- To be told in advance, how much the service will cost, what standard of service to expect and how long it will take to be served.
- Accurate financial transactions with a receipt or verification of the transaction.
- To be told how to obtain redress for poor service, especially where the standards of service are not met.
- To receive appropriate directions, via signs, notices or other means, on how to obtain service or information.
- A timely and courteous acknowledgement of their presence when they arrive at a staffed information point.

**Customer Satisfaction: The SERVICOM Index**  
SERVICOM determined that customers will be satisfied if government establishments pay attention to:

- Service delivery - willingness to help customers and to provide promised service.
- Timeliness –delivering prompt service.
- Professionalism – people prefer to be served by knowledgeable, courteous, and confidence-inspiring staff.
- Information – Customers like to be told where, how, when and how long it will take for service to be delivered.
- Staff attitude – customers like to be valued and want caring, individualized attention. They also notice the physical (non-verbal) communication that indicates that the staff is happy to give service

**Moment of Truth, Service Monitoring and Sanctions**

- The Servicom National Coordinator usually monitors the performance of MDAs/MDUs in the Country.

- Conducts Regular Evaluation and Ratings of Service Delivery Level to measure excellence
- Relative Sanctions and Penalties are usually imposed on MDAs/MDUs found wanting in this regard
- The Servicom Team of Inspectors may pose like a regular or unusual customer
- Sometimes to provoke your reaction and test your patience.
- Conducts Spot Checks on Security gatemens /Receptions and how polite/courteous they are. ....But always remember... Customers have the right to be served right!!!!

**Strategies for effective SERVICOM Service Delivery**

In order to make the public service result oriented through quality service delivery, it needs to become more skilled, less bureaucratic and more unified. Therefore, leaders at every level of the public service are to support their staff to build their individual skills and competencies while also accepting and adjusting public service operations to public criticism and scrutiny will help reposition the public service for effective service delivery with the SERVICOM charter as the benchmark for service delivery not only at the federal level but also at the states level.

Another strategy for the effective implementation of the SERVICOM charter public service is to boost the morale of workers and make them productive. To achieve this, government at all level needs to provide public servants with the requisite tools and equipment necessary for the attainment of service delivery imperatives. This is because nothing can be more frustrating to a skilled and enthusiastic worker who knows what to do, willing to do what he/she is expected to, but have no tools and equipment with which to carry out the assignment. This is likened to the Second World War stated of Winston when he stated that: “Give us the tools and we will finish the job”.

Again, we wish to state that there is need to institute an oversight team of independent citizenry who will act as trained agents for monitoring service quality in the MDAs. This is because over the years, the public service has lacked effective monitoring leading to

unprofessional conducts and anti-service acts and behaviours in the service delivery. The oversight function by independent citizenry like non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and policy advocate and other people drawn from the different strata of the Nigerian society including students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, businessmen, former police officers and licensed private security practitioners as Obi-Anike, Ekwe, and Ogbo, (2014) noted will go a long way in monitoring and bringing about effective service reforms and patronage.

Another strategy to enhance service delivery in the public service is to organize frequent in service training courses for the capacity building of all categories of workers in the service. In addition, and more importantly, there should be discipline based on set benchmark of service attainment. There is also need to restore confidence and morale among the working force in the public service and give the public servants a sense of pride in their work and career thus creating in them a feeling of belonging and foster a sense of active participation and involvement in the task of nation building through qualitative service delivery.

### **Conclusions and the way forward**

From the forgoing discussions it can be concluded that:

Service delivery as a sustainable development approach in the public sector and a sustainable competitive advantage strategy for business entities is achievable when effective reward systems are put in place to effectively motivate the workforce towards service delivery imperatives. That service delivery in the public service can be enhanced through an evolving service delivery policy directives backed up with a strong political will for the enforcement and implementation of any service delivery scheme. Again, the SERVICOM service delivery charter as noble as it is; is not fully working as a result of corruption, poor supervision and ignorant attitude of most Nigerians to demand for service quality from the government through its MDAs.

In the light of the above discussions, it is necessary to call for:

1. A sustainable reward systems in the public service that should be tied to the attainment of service objectives of the government through proper evaluation rather than the current payment method where public servants get paid for non performance and neglect of service delivery as their primary call or duty.
2. A service centered objectives of government tailored towards enhancing the quality of life of the citizens through an effective supervision, feedback and modification of policy statements and directives where necessary.
3. A review of the SERVICOM service delivery charter to serve as the minimum benchmark for service delivery throughout the entire public service whether at the federal, state or local government levels instead of its present enforcement at the federal level of governance only.
4. Adequate timing clear definition of each service and ensuring that appropriate standards are reflected in service users' priorities within each MDAs resources and capacity. MDAs must resist the temptation of over-ambitiously trying to tackle too many services at the same time, making too many service commitments, or setting unattainable service standards while political heads of each MDA should resist the temptation to make high profile commitments and over-promise improvements in service delivery but work with minimum benchmarks in line with international best practices.

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