Polity & Governance · GS - II

The Citizens' charter has been a landmark initiative in ensuring citizen-centric administration. But it is yet to reach its full potential. Identify the factors hindering the realisation of its promise and suggest measures to overcome them.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2024	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

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Answer Hint

Citizen's Charter, citizen-centric governance, service standards, accountability, grievance redressal, awareness, enforceability, Sevottam, stakeholder participation, administrative responsiveness

Model Answer

Introduction

A Citizen's Charter is a public commitment by a government organisation regarding service standards, timelines, grievance-redress mechanisms and citizens' entitlements. It seeks to make public administration more **citizen-centric rather than supply-driven**.

Factors Hindering Its Potential

1. Lack of awareness: Citizens often remain unaware of service standards and entitlements.

2. Poor consultation: Charters may be drafted by senior officials without adequate participation of frontline staff and service users.

3. Non-enforceability: Traditional Charters generally lack strong legal enforceability.

4. Unrealistic standards: Promises may not correspond with available personnel, infrastructure and institutional capacity.

5. Weak grievance redressal: Failure to connect the Charter with effective remedies reduces accountability.

6. Poor monitoring: Lack of measurable indicators and periodic evaluation weakens implementation.

7. Administrative culture: A hierarchical and procedure-oriented bureaucracy may resist citizen-centric approaches.

Measures

- Prepare Charters through **citizen and frontline-staff consultation**.
- Specify realistic, measurable service standards and timelines.
- Link non-compliance with effective grievance-redress mechanisms.
- Use digital platforms to track service delivery.
- Conduct periodic independent evaluations and social audits.
- Strengthen **Sevottam**-type quality-management mechanisms.
- Create awareness through local-language communication.

DARPG guidelines themselves emphasise simplicity, user interaction, service standards and remedies for non-adherence.

Conclusion

The Citizen's Charter can become an effective instrument of administrative accountability only when it moves from a **declaratory document to a measurable, monitored and citizen-enforceable service commitment**.

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