

## **Improving Delivery of Public Services**

### **1. Introduction**

Delivery of various public goods and services is one basic responsibility of the State. Though with expansion of the market many services are available in the private sector but some of the core services will continue to be delivered by the State only, because of nature of such services. Those include important regulatory services for maintaining order in the society by ensuring that adequate norms of public behavior are established through Acts and Rules, which everyone has to comply with (e.g. maintaining law and order, administration of justice etc). This is also important for protecting human rights as well as allowing everyone to enjoy certain freedoms and carrying on various social and economic functions for their earning and well-being. The basket of private goods and services one receives depend on his or her exchange entitlement and, therefore, many people having inadequate income are not in a position to satisfy all their needs. The State has a very important role to play in making available some essential public goods and services (henceforth to be called services only), which ensures certain minimum level of well-being to everyone in need of those. Financial and other resources under command of the State are always limited and, therefore, the services are to be delivered efficiently and effectively to ensure desired level of well-being to all the citizen and within as short time as possible. The society has various forms of discrimination and deprivations, which should be reduced and, therefore, the resources should be so allocated that there is justice and equity in the outcome of all public services. It is even more important to ensure that services are delivered effectively and efficiently for attaining desired outcome. So it is necessary to understand various aspects of delivery of public services. However, usual understanding success in delivering is through allocation as inputs and expenditure, with little assessment of output as to what extent that satisfies the service recipients and the outcome. Thus the focus is what the delivery system perceives what has been delivered and not what the citizen receives in meeting their needs. Assessing that requires change in mind set in developing citizen-centric way of looking at things and to see the success through them and in terms of outcome leading to better well-being of the citizen.

### **2. A New Approach to Delivery of Public Services – Putting the People First**

The bureaucracy in countries like India developed from the pre-independence days and relation between the bureaucracy and the citizen continues to be more or less that between the ruler and the ruled. The bureaucracy has expanded substantially after independence with introduction of many welfare activities for improving the socio-economic status of the citizen. However, the bureaucracy has failed in transforming itself by developing right attitude and responsiveness towards the citizen and in perceiving that they have obligation in reaching various public services to the citizen as their right. State interventions in transforming the society have, therefore, not achieved desired results when seen from the point of view of the outcome for the citizen. There is need to take a fresh look at the performance of the state in

delivering services to the citizen and analyse how services are delivered, the reasons for failure of reaching many of the desired services to the citizen as reflected in poor social and economic outcome and how the service delivery mechanism can be transformed for improving service delivery. This will require a change in mindset of the bureaucracy in coming out of their traditional perception of being a controller in administering various services for development of the people to a reversed role of being a facilitator for reaching public services to the citizen, which they should be receiving as their right. However, putting the people, particularly those who are the most marginalized and deprived, at the centre for assessing and understanding all aspects of delivery of public services is not easy and the same requires appropriate transformation of the delivery institutions.

### **3. Delivery of Services for the Poor**

Delivery of services to the poor needs special mention because of their dependency on public services for survival and coming out of the vicious cycle of poverty and poor human development. Quality of delivery of such services is adversely affected by the low level of awareness of the service recipients, particularly their inability to assess the quality of service delivered in absence of knowledge about what is their entitlement and there is lack of empowerment to articulate their grievances. Delivery of services continues to fail in such cases because of poor responsiveness of the service providers, who have been conditioned in the current bureaucratic environment of controlling and patronizing various welfare measures for the poor. Also, the institutional mechanism is such that they can continue to ignore the grievances of the poor. Experiences from other developing countries also show that service delivery to the poor normally fails leading to substantially worse outcome for the poor. Thus they continue to gain the least from economic development programme, have poor educational attainment and health outcome (in spite of having programme for universal coverage for health and education) because of services failing to reach them as well as other determinants of service outcome which affect them badly. Services may not reach the poor due to difficulty in accessing services including their failure to bear the implied cost, even for receiving free services. Thus treatment may be free in a health centre but that may be far away and reaching there may require money and time which the poor may not be able to afford. There may also remain hidden cost such as being compelled to buy medicines which are to be supplied free of cost due to non-availability of the same in the hospital store or even requirement to pay bribe. Such failures may be so chronic that people accepts that to be normal and adjust to get the best benefit out of the failing system instead of trying to rectifying the same. In fact service may continue to fail till that reaches a point which is no longer bearable leading to triggering of major protest. Many failures have associated vested interests leading to private gains if the services fail (the hospital diagnostic centre may stop functioning due to lack of maintenance of equipment forcing everyone to go for testing in private facilities). In cases where such failures affect every section of the society the voice of the higher echelon of the society may lead to taking corrective measures and some improvement may take place just to contain their voice without substantial transformation of the

delivery arrangement and the delivery of such services may have subjective outcome. In any case, share of the poor in receiving services which may be availed by anyone is generally much less compared to their share in the population. In fact, be it health or elementary education the lowest quintile of the economic class in a developing society normally gets much less share of the services compared to the highest quintile. This is so because the poor face more barriers in accessing even a free public service. Lack of social networking of the poor and subjectivity in delivery of services may add to such differential outcome. Services, targeted towards the deprived sections only is likely to be less efficient and corruption prone because of low voice, lack of responsiveness of the service providers and poor system for redress of their grievances. Sometimes services are provided to only those whose names appear in the list of targeted beneficiaries, such as the BPL list. Such services may totally bypass some of the poor families because of exclusion of the right beneficiaries (and inclusion of wrong beneficiaries who take away the benefit) or even misappropriation of the benefit due to ignorance and lack of transparency in the system (the poor may not know that there are ration cards in their name and the cards are with the dealer for his private gain). Many of the rural poor live in remote and difficult areas where they face additional barriers leading to failure of public services for the poor. The reasons could be such as difficulty in accessing the services because of poor transport infrastructure, high rate of absenteeism of staff, higher vacancies of posts and poor supervision by higher officials who avoid visiting those areas. Services involving technical and professional knowledge such as engineering or health related services are also likely to fail in such cases because of inadequate expertise of the persons serving those areas and inadequate or non-existing supervision. Providing services require interaction between the service provider and the client and the service provider should be responsive to the need of the people. However, the package of services tends to be more standardized while need of the target group could be diverse because of wide variation of their socio-economic status and the local context. Such variation between the clients and the service providers affects the services adversely (e.g. male extension workers working for the women SHGs). Mismatch between time slot the client has and when services are provided may also lead to failure in reaching the services to the poor. Existence of substantial social distance between the poor and the service providers is quite common. The service providers are from better socio-economic background and have much higher income than the people whom they serve, which enhances the psychological barrier. Language barrier could yet be another cause for not being able to reach the poor, particularly in areas inhabited by the linguistic minorities. Such barrier can be a problem due to both the difference of language of the service provider and the citizen as well as literature available for extension material and the language the people use. However, many of the poor could be illiterate or have limited literary skill which puts extra barrier between the service provider and the service recipients.

The positive thing is that, there are many instances where the public service delivery system works satisfactorily and services actually reach the poor. It is the responsibility of the

State to ensure that the same happens in respect of every service earmarked for the poor and everywhere. Commitment to change the institutional arrangement for transforming the delivery system is the urgent need for improving services to the poor. That requires proper understanding of how public services are produced and delivered and what are the institutional arrangements in maintaining quality of the services and reaching the same to the people.

#### **4. Framework of Relationships in Delivery of Public Services**

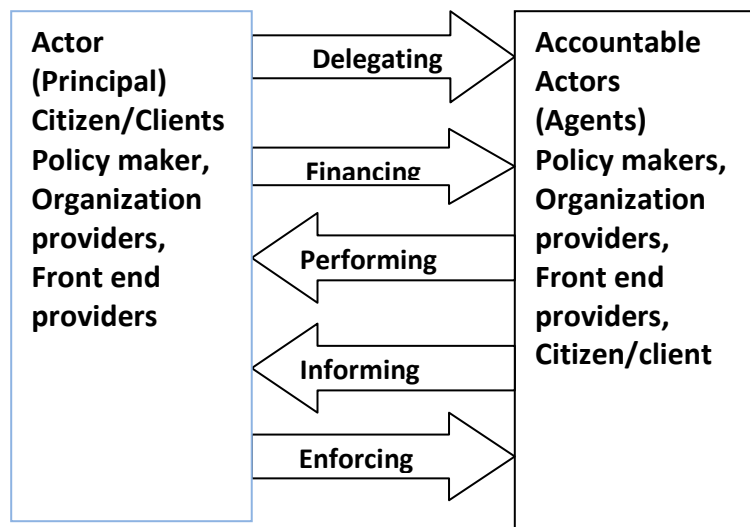
Delivery of public services is organized through assigning responsibilities of performing certain tasks to the bureaucracy and their ability to perform the tasks and motivation decides how efficiently the services will be delivered. Ensuring proper performance of any task can be analysed by the ETVX model used in management to document the processes involved. 'E' stands for the entry criteria which must be satisfied before a set of tasks can be performed, 'T' is the set of tasks to be performed, 'V' stands for the verification & validation process to ensure that the tasks are performed correctly, and 'X' stands for the exit criteria or the outputs of the tasks. This also applies to any task performed in the public domain by the bureaucracy. The entry requirement is related to assigning responsibility on some agent (employee functioning as frontline service provider) and providing resources for doing the task. In public domain the task is assigned by the political executives as per their goal as to what the government will do towards the citizen. That also requires provisioning of various resources like authority, fund, and manpower for taking up the task, which is done by the upper tier of the bureaucracy (management wing). The task related to delivery of public service is performed by the frontline employees (service providing wing); from whom the citizens receive the service. Depending on the nature of service the service provider can be an office at the lower level or even at a pretty high level including the secretariat, if any service is directly delivered from there. There is need to check or validate whether the task has been performed satisfactorily, which is the process of monitoring and evaluation. The same includes reports generated by the field offices and feedback and complaints received from the citizens who receive the service. The task can be said to have been performed satisfactorily only if delivery of the service meets the set norms of performing the task. In case, it is found after validation that the same has not been done satisfactorily the lapses are to be rectified which has to be done by enforcing necessary corrective measures. The same is done by using the authority of the management wing on the frontline service providers. Once that is ensured and the task is performed properly the process ends and exit from the task gets completed. If required, any task can be further subdivided and each subtask can be further analysed using the ETVX model to understand the process how the same is performed and the possible failures in any of the said steps.

A similar model has been proposed in understanding relationship in performing tasks related to delivery of public services in the World Development Report 2004. It has five features namely, delegation, finance, performance, information about performance and enforceability.

The report also identifies four broad roles by different actors in the chain of service delivery, which are:

- *Citizens/clients* - Anyone who receives service such as patients, students, ration card holder pensioners, traders etc;
- *Politicians/policymakers* – Political executives like ministers, elected office bearers of local bodies etc;
- *Organizational providers* –Civil servants at the management level who have authority and command on the frontline service providers; and
- *Frontline professionals* – The service providers who remain engaged in actual delivery of services like Block Development Officer, doctor, nurse, police officer, teacher, Inspector of Food, ICDS worker etc.

They play their roles based on their structured relationships. The overall relationship framework is the accountability mechanism which defines how the two actors, one being the principal actor and the other his agent are related in respect of the five features of any task (service) mentioned before. The same is illustrated in the diagram below



The relationship may be illustrated as follows. The policy makers, through the organization providers (higher bureaucracy), assign tasks (delegating) to be performed by the frontline provides and they also provides necessary resources like fund, infrastructure, training etc (financing). The service providers (employees at the delivery level) perform the task (performing) and submit report (informing) about the same to get validated by the principal actor whether the same has been performed properly. In case of any lapse the principal actor compels the service providers (enforcing) to take corrective measures to meet the service norms. On the

other hand the citizen becomes the principal actor when they install a government democratically by giving them the authority (delegating) and in providing resources through paying tax (financing). The political executives perform the governance function (performing) and the citizens get the report card about what the government does and also validate the same through their own experience (informing) and in case they fail to perform they negotiate/express their grievances and ultimately the political executives with unsatisfactory performance are not voted back to power (enforcing). The quality of service delivered is critically dependent on the accountability mechanism in terms of how the relationship works.

## **5. The Accountability Mechanism in Delivery of Public Services**

The four actors mentioned above are related to each other through exercising due authority and remaining responsible for performing as per norms (Act, Rules, laid procedures, economic and social rationale etc). Four relationships can be delineated in understanding the same as mentioned below.

**5.1 Citizen and the political representatives:** The citizens elect their representatives to form government and they also judge the performance of the government while receiving services provided by the government. The citizens, who are also clients when receiving a service, thus exercise their authority in electing or not electing any particular representative (normally representing a political party). They also express their dissatisfaction through various mechanisms to influence the governance function for pursuing their interests in receiving delivery of services required by them. The citizen/client power in influencing functioning of the government is called the voice mechanism, which has to be strong enough to make the public services work for their satisfaction.

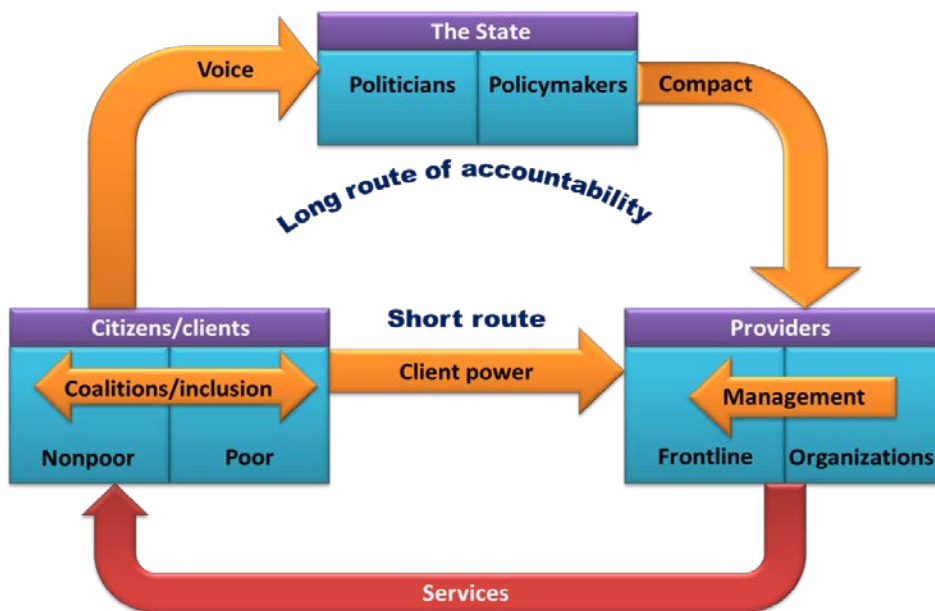
**5.2 Organization provider and the political functionaries:** The elected political functionaries through the legislative bodies and the executive functions of the government exercise authority to raise and utilize public resources and ask the organization provider in governance i.e., senior level permanent bureaucrats to deliver public services as they feel necessary to meet the requirement of the citizen. The said report (World Bank 2004) describes this relationship as Compact, which indicates the system of relationship between the political executives and the permanent civil servants who manages governance functions. The organization provider is accountable to the political executive to work as per their direction and the political executives are bound to exercise legitimate authority and give clear instruction to avoid any lack of understanding or confusion. They often interact with each other to decide the course of governance function and their compactness in thinking and action helps better delivery of public service.

**5.3 Frontline professionals and the organization providers:** This is the relationship of a typical management function. The organization providers have authority on the frontline service providers and they also have the responsibility of providing all resources for delivering services

and clearly define who will do what in providing the services as well as they will set the standards of the services to be delivered against which enforceability will be judged. The frontline workers are answerable to the management in acting as per instruction and existing norms as well as supplying necessary information on how the services have been delivered for being validated by the management.

**5.4 Service providers and the citizen/client:** Services are provided by the frontline professionals for consumption with satisfaction by the citizen. Only they, as client, can judge whether the quality of the services have met their expectations. They have to give feedback to the service providers and to negotiate for improving services (parents demanding better functioning of the schools or improving quality of cooked food in ICDS centres etc). They have the client power to ensure proper performance for delivery of services. In cases where the reasons of failures are such that the same can be addressed locally the redress is faster. This is the short chain of accountability which helps to get delivery of services improved quickly through client power. In case redress is not possible locally either due to lack of capability or adequate delegation the dissatisfaction is conveyed to the organization provider as well as the political executives directly by the citizen. Whether they will take cognizance of such dissatisfaction depends on several factors including voice of the citizen. Such feedback should also move up the chain of command from the service provider to the policy maker, which is usually slow, ineffective and in many cases non-existent. This is the long chain of accountability, which is common in functioning of government and is one of the reasons behind persistent failure of services.

All those relationships are shown pictorially in the diagram below.



**5.5 Importance of Accountability Mechanism in Delivery of Public Services:** The quality of service delivered depends on motivation, skill, responsiveness and understanding of what has to be delivered by the frontline providers along with availability of all resources required for delivery of services. However, satisfactory quality of services cannot be ensured by merely providing all those unless the accountability mechanism is strong and operative. Or, speaking in a different way even if all the essential conditions of better delivery of services is met by each of the actors referred to above there is no guarantee that services will be actually delivered unless the accountability mechanism functions well. There has to be continuous interactions among the actors mentioned before to check every step in the process of service delivery as may be understood by the ETVX model as well as the model presented above through the diagrams. Thus, delivery of services is not the sole function of the service provider whom the citizen meets and interacts but all the players narrated above including the citizen themselves have to be engaged with the governance functions by mobilizing their client power to make services work efficiently. However, establishing accountability relationship is not always easy and in real life there could be many forms of deviations which make the relationship weak or even non-functional (e.g. the organization provider may not have any real control on the service provider because of political interference or trade union movement, the client power may be kept suppressed because of physical threat compelling the citizen not to make any complaint and level of awareness of the citizen and their empowerment in developing required voice mechanism may be absent in practice etc.). The accountability mechanism and the related relationships may be weak or strong depending on the characteristic of the services being delivered as explained below.

## **6. Characteristics of Public Services**

Public service is unique in many respects in contrast to the private services, which the citizen consumes from the market. Competitiveness in the market ensures efficiency of delivery of private services. The relationship between the private service provider and the service recipient is also straight forward and mostly there are just two actors. The client receives the service, judges the quality and assesses if the payment which is being made is justified. In case the same is not acceptable the client may decide to stop the transaction. Such direct accountability and easy enforcement in case the service standard does not meet the expectation of the client is not possible in public services. Also, client does not directly pay for the services in respect of all free public goods (e.g. free education, health care, birth registration, receiving voter identity card, Mid Day Meal etc) or pay at much subsidized rate (e.g. PDS, fees in government colleges, receiving other subsidized products from public sector etc). The services being provided may be free to the citizen but not to the government (in fact cost of production and delivery of services in government is generally costlier, and there is a general trend for going for private partnership in reducing cost of delivery). Since clients do not pay directly they are not in a position to judge whether the service they are receiving is worth the cost being incurred by the government (out of tax paid by them). In case of private service snapping the relationship leads to loss of business and earning of the service provider and he has motivation to satisfy the client by maintaining quality of services. In public sector remuneration or motivation for financial gain is delinked from level of satisfaction by the clients. Rather there could be

possibility of rent seeking leading to extra income without losing regular remuneration. Dissatisfaction expressed by the clients can get corrected generally through the long route of accountability. The processes involved knowledge of what services were to be delivered, what has been delivered, reasons for failure and prompt action at every level of the accountability chain which involves meeting many other conditions making the accountability mechanism complex and quite ineffective.

Services which are delivered are of many types with varying attributes which have important bearing on functioning of the accountability mechanism and in ensuring quality of those services. Some of the services may be mostly delivery of goods which can be easily standardized helping the client to judge easily and express their grievance (e.g. food grains delivered in a ration shop, delivery of school uniform etc.). However, without a proper grievance redress system such effort becomes futile. In some cases though goods are delivered but it may be difficult for the citizen to check the standard (e.g. medicines, water for drinking for which quality in terms of bacteria/arsenic content is difficult to judge). That makes raising question on the material quality quite difficult. But delivery of many public services has little or no component of transfer of tangible goods whose physical parameters can be judged but the same consists of intangible services judging whose quality may have elements of perception making it difficult to set the standard and assessing service quality difficult objectively. However, quality of access, time taken to deliver, associated easiness or harassment, ambience in which service is delivered, payment of hidden cost (bribe) and attitude and behaviour of the service provider etc. become more relevant.

The services may be classified as transaction intensive and non-transaction intensive depending on the type of transactions necessary between the service provider and the client. In transaction intensive services there could be high element of discretion as to how the transaction will proceed to result in some output. A doctor examining a patient is transaction intensive requiring continuous interaction between the doctor and the patient for investigating the reason behind illness. Such process is both transaction intensive and discretionary (the doctor at a BPHC may not agree to conduct a delivery apprehending obstructed labour and may refer the patient to a hospital having facility for conducting caesarian delivery) making it difficult to standardize the services the doctor will deliver. Same is the case for teaching because teaching requires regular assessment of learning level of the student to plan teaching for further learning and there is lot of discretion as to how the lessons will be taught. Some of the services are transaction intensive but there is no discretion left with the service provider. For example SHG group drawing money from their group savings is transaction intensive but not discretionary (it becomes discretionary in deciding the credit limit the group will enjoy). Some of the services may be non-transaction intensive but discretionary. For example setting the eligibility criteria for recruitment against a post or designing the examination type for recruitment is discretionary but does not require prior transactions with the applicants (client). While transaction intensive

services make standardization of services difficult the discretionary services weakens the accountability mechanism as to why certain services were not delivered (why the patient was referred out of the BPHC) or the way the same were delivered. Services which are neither transaction intensive nor discretionary are easier to monitor and making the services work becomes easier. The matrix below shows the classification of services in the said two dimensions. Some of the services may be difficult to classify in a clear compartment because of its complexity but the analysis helps to appreciate the role played by different actors and how the relationships of accountability will take shape for deciding on the service quality.

Services	Non discretionary	Discretionary
Non-transaction Intensive	Issuing ticket, Supply of water/ electricity to existing consumer	Awareness generation campaign, Setting eligibility criteria for job
Transaction Intensive	Vaccination, Issuing photo identity card	Treating patients, handling a law & order situation

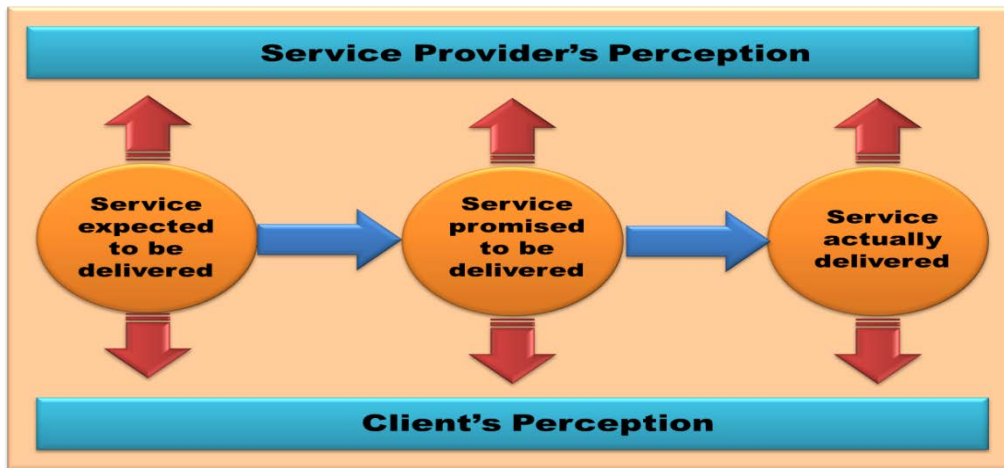
There are other attributes of the services which may influence the quality of services likely to be delivered. Some of the services may be universal in nature while others could be targeted (PDS, disability pension etc). Self targeting is a better way of deciding on the beneficiaries (e.g. MGNREGA) than to go by a prior list, which usually fails to the real beneficiaries and include ineligible persons through various manipulations. Also, as mentioned above the client power is usually weak for services targeted towards the poor and are not well implemented in general. Some of the services may be corruption prone because of the nature of services and such services may have unofficial presence of middlemen who do not feature in any of the government processes but may strongly influence the nature of delivery. Improving transparency of various steps involved in the delivery process is one way of reducing the risk of corruption. The same is enhanced through better engagement of the civil society in watching the associated government processes.

## 7. Reforming Delivery of Public Service

It is not the accountability relationship alone which determines the efficiency of delivery of public service. There is need for whole range of institutional reforms to make services work for the people, particularly the poor. The power relationship within the system is one which affects public service. The service providers require clear assignment of task, delegation of due authority, proper infrastructure and freedom to decide on matters which they are capable of doing. However, that will be possible only if they have enough capability to do so. Reforming power relationship is more political in nature and relinquishing power either through more devolution to local governments or through improving the compact by giving more freedom to the organization providers is generally taken up voluntarily and only if there is will to do so. Rather many of the management functions are taken up directly by policy makers, which weaken

the compact in producing and delivering public services. Proper delegation by the organization provider to the frontline bureaucracy and enabling them to function properly is also very important. Many of the routine administrative measures without having any political implication are not taken because of failure at this level, which needs to be improved.

Putting in place an efficient system of monitoring outputs and evaluating outcome is another weakness requiring reform. In fact, there is lot of gap between (1) what the client expects to receive, (2) what is promised to be delivered and (3) what is actually delivered. There is also difference in perception between the client and the service provider in respect of all these three elements, as shown in the diagram below.



The problem starts from not defining the standards of services which are to be delivered. Developing Citizen's Charter and informing all concerned about the services offered and standard of delivery is essential for monitoring the service quality. The Citizen's Charter is to be worked out based on what the citizen expects to be delivered. In many cases apart from the actual service per se there are other important determinants in creating impression about how the service was received. For example a patient visiting the hospital receives service from the doctors and other para-medical staffs all of which may perform their duties well but there could be miss-management in the queue or patients had to wait standing for long with no access to water and toilet. Thus, in spite of providing good treatment leading to faster healing of diseases the impression of how the services were delivered could be very poor. Understanding the local context and the ambience in which service is delivered is important in knowing and managing expectation of the clients. Also, there may be mismatch in perception in all the three aspects as mentioned above and bridging the gap is necessary for more client satisfaction. The first mismatch is about what the client actually needs and what the service providers perceive as their need and design the delivery accordingly. The second is what the standard of service delivery has been promised for (in case there is a Citizen's Charter) or understood to be provided (in case of having no such Charter) and what the expected standard perceived by the client (chronic failure lowers the expectation and creates a low level of equilibrium with low expectation, poor

delivery and no complaint about the service quality and any earlier effort to improve services which was fruitless helps to make peace with poor performance). The third component is what is actually delivered as understood by the service provider and what the client perceives as has been delivered. Bridging the gap is possible through more interaction with the client, encouraging their feedback and improving monitoring of what is being delivered. Government should provide legal right regarding standard of service delivery and a few states (Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, J & K and Delhi) have already passed Act related to public service delivery, which set the standard and related rights. This is a new and welcome development, which makes the commitment of the government in improving services very clear. However, building capacities for reaching the standard is a major challenge.

It is easier for the client to participate and give feedback for bridging the gap mentioned above if there is more transparency in functioning of the government as to how the services are produced (the related policy, funding provision, manpower deployed and their level and quality etc) in the public domain and how the same are delivered (the accountability relationship) as well as what to do in case the citizen has some to communicate (what has to be communicated to whom and how etc) for redressing their grievance or examining their suggestions. There is need for change of perception in favour of having more open governance compared to hiding governance function. Introduction of the Right to Information Act can be of great use in improving transparency of functioning of the government. However, more voluntary disclosure for improving transparency will help to develop confidence of the citizen in getting engaged with the government functionaries for improving service qualities. At the current level of electronic technology it is easier to improve transparency of functioning of the government. Wider dissemination of information on use of resources and rationality behind the same can help to come out with more possible alternatives in achieving desired results and the process also improves participation of the citizen in assessing how services are delivered.

Improving transparency of functioning also helps to reduce corruption and gap in effort (such as absenteeism, not doing the work even when remaining present and pursuing other interests in lieu of discharging assigned work etc) of the public servants in improving delivery. Both the issues are to be addressed in improving delivery of services. Corruption can be of many forms and checking corruption will essentially require putting in place a strong system of redress of public grievance and enforceability mechanism for correcting all lapses. Reducing fiduciary risks and improving financial management also help in reducing corruption. Adoption of various Information and Communication Technology tools is very helpful in checking both effort gap as well as corruption. In fact, technology will play more important roles in the coming days for improving governance and e-Governance measures should be adopted more aggressively. There is need for management of changes for adoption of technology in improving service delivery. That will also require capacity building, which is generally labourious and takes time. Ultimate

solution is to have more services delivered electronically to make the delivery fast, efficient, free from direct interface with the providers and the same also leaves an audit trail as to who does what and when, which promotes accountability.

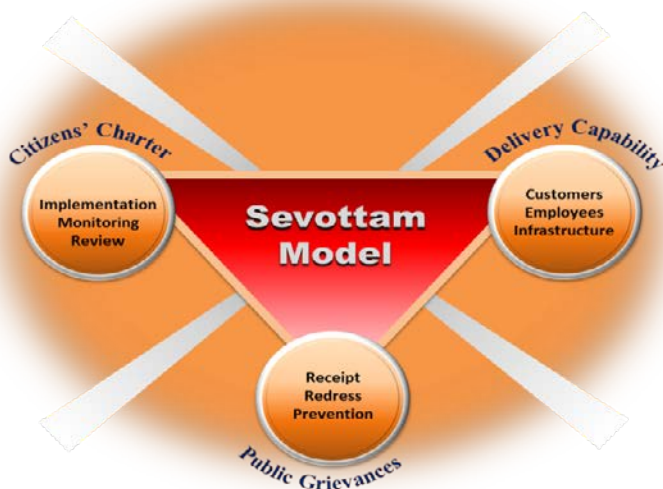
Reform for improving service delivery is never effective without a strong system of redress of public grievances. The existing system for redressing grievance is ineffective and any submission is seen more as an unwelcome piece of paper instead of considering than a valuable feedback for improving services. The service providers are more reactive to any complaint and not always willing to accept or even believe that things have gone wrong (which will generally differ with official reports). Also, there is no public commitment in maintaining standard of redressing grievance in terms of where to submit what type of grievances, what will be the response time in redressing grievances for various types of grievances (requiring different time periods to respond) and who is specifically responsible for addressing any particular type of grievance (same complaint is addressed to the entire spectrum of functionaries from highest political executive to the service provider). That also calls for installing a system to keep the commitment. In practice the system of receiving complaint is not efficient (or even non-existent) and complaints are not acted upon and one may ignore the complaint to the detriment of service quality. GOI has already developed a web portal for receiving complaints online, which helps tracking of the complaint and knowing the progress of disposal of the same. Some of the departments of the GOI are using the portal successfully and the portal may be customized for use by any state government with the support of the NIC. The government should provide legal right related to redress of grievances also. In fact, one Bill, known as the Citizen's Right to Grievance Redress Bill is under consideration of the GOI.

## **8. Putting Principles in to Practice – the Sevottam Framework of Service Delivery**

The analysis above helps to appreciate the complexities and issues involved in strengthening the institutional arrangement for improving delivery of public services. Those are to be put into practice for transforming the delivery mechanism. Department of the Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, GOI has come out with a framework for improving delivery of public services, which is known as the Sevottam framework and the same is presented below. The framework is the Indian Standard IS: 15700: 2005 of delivery of public services. It is a quality management framework which provides a systematic approach to improving public service and any public organization may acquire the said certification by complying with the steps (details available at [www.darpg.nic.in](http://www.darpg.nic.in)). The Sevottam framework is applicable to all public services delivered by the central and state governments. The framework has three different modules as shown below:

- i. Citizen Charter for defining the level of services to be provided to the citizen,
- ii. Grievance redress standard and,
- iii. Improving capability for delivery of services to the desired standard.

Each module has three components and within each such component there are eleven activities to be performed. The rationale of the Sevottam Framework is that the service standard should be defined first so that every citizen knows what to expect in terms of service types and standards. The next task is to receive feedback and complaints from the clients to know what has gone wrong in not meeting the service standard. The third task is to meet the service standard by developing capability of the delivery system. The framework with three modules is shown pictorially below.



### Modelue 1: Citizen’s Charter

The same has to be developed based on understanding people’s expectation and the Citizen’s Charter so prepared will clearly declare the services offered and the standards to be maintained, which should be backed by firm commitment and appropriate arrangement in keeping the promise. This has to be achieved through eleven different tasks as shown in the table below.

1.1	Implementation	Identification of services offered and their standards
		Understanding service recipient expectations
		Aligning services offered with service recipient expectations
		Preparation of Citizen’s Charter
		Understanding of Charter contents
1.2	Monitoring	Comparison of actual with prescribed standards
		Communication about differences in actual and prescribed standards
		Elimination of differences between actual and prescribed standards
1.3	Review	Charter effectiveness assessment
		Alignment of charter with changes in environment
		Awareness about revision in service standards and Charter

### Module 2: Public Grievances

The second module is about establishing an effective public grievance redress system. The system should have arrangements for receiving and tracking complaints, redress of the

grievances and making arrangement for prevention of grievances. Once the grievance has been recorded and classified as to who is responsible for redressing the same all concerned have to act within the promised timeframe. It is equally important that preventive measures are taken to reduce the grievances so that there is less requirement of taking corrective steps. There are total eleven elements in this module also as shown in the table below.

2.1	Receipt	Public awareness of grievance lodging process
		Convenience to public in lodging a grievances
		Classification of grievances at the point of receipt
2.2	Redress	Determination of time norms for grievance handling
		Adherence to time norms for grievance handling
		Disposal of grievances
2.3	Prevention	Identification of grievance prone areas
		Action on grievance prone areas through Annual Action Plan
		Action on grievance prone areas through Charter Review
		Action on grievance prone areas through internal coordination
		Awareness about progress of controlling grievance prone areas

### Module 3: Delivery Capability

The third module is about service delivery capability so that what has been promised in respect of delivery of services and redress of grievance the organization has the capability to match the requirement. The three aspects of improving capability is knowing the service recipients better in terms of their satisfaction level (which do not always come as complaint), improving attitude and skill of the employees and providing necessary infrastructure for performance. The eleven steps associated with this model is also shown in the table below.

3.1	Customers	Determining and improving citizen satisfaction levels
		Measuring citizen satisfaction levels across the organization and field offices
		Using citizen satisfaction measurement for Charter review
		Creating a citizen focused environment across field offices
		Differences in service delivery performance across field offices
3.2	Employees	Employee behavior for courtesy, punctuality, delivery promptness
		Willingness of employees to accept responsibility
		Employee motivation for service delivery improvement
3.3	Infrastructure	Basic infrastructure and facilities for service recipients
		Resource requirement to meet prescribed service standards
		Efficient use of available resources for continuous improvement

All the thirty three activities listed above can be broadly clubbed in seven steps mentioned below.

1. Define your service and identify your clients
2. Set standard and norms for each service
3. Develop capability to meet the set standards
4. Perform to achieve the standards
5. Monitor performance against the set standards
6. Evaluate impact through an independent mechanism
7. Continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation

At present ten departments of the Government of India (GOI) is implementing the Sevottam and a few pilots are also under implementation in a few states. The second Administrative Reform Commission set up by the GOI recommended adoption of the Sevottam framework. It is open for any department or any unit to try and implement the Sevottam Framework for improving delivery of public services.