



How to improve service delivery
and prepare service charters:
A step-by-step guide

sparc

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Abbreviations and acronyms

BPSR	Bureau of Public Service Reforms
ERC	Education Resource Centre
ExCo	Executive Council
MDA	Ministry, department, agency
MoE	Ministry of Education
MTSS	Medium-term sector strategy
OHoS	Office of the Head of Service
OoT	Office of Transformation (Lagos)
PIB	Performance Improvement Bureau/SERVICOM office
PSM	Public service management
SC	Service charter
SDP	State development plan
SDU	Service delivery unit
SERVICOM	Service Compact
SIP	Service improvement plan
SLA	Service level agreement
SPARC	State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability

Introduction

Purpose of this *How to guide*

This step-by-step guide to improving service delivery is the second in the series of SPARC *How to guides*. SPARC designed the series of *How to guides* to help executives, directors and managers in Nigerian federal and state public services to build and operate services more strategically and more effectively. This guide describes the overall approach to improving service delivery, an approach tested in SPARC-supported states. The guide captures some of the key lessons learned between 2010 and 2014.

How to use this guide

Part 1 of this guide presents a general 'service improvement cycle' and provides detailed guidance on each step in the cycle. Practical tools are provided to help senior officers to assess whether the approach is appropriate for their circumstances, to consider how best to apply it and to take practical steps to begin a service improvement cycle. The tools are of three types:

- **Checklists** that help review the current position, identify strategic deficiencies and plan how to prepare and put a service delivery improvement strategy into practice
- **Tips** that provide suggestions on how to tackle various tasks along the way
- **Exercises** that can be used by individuals, working groups or decision makers as they work through the process of improving service delivery.

Part 2 of this guide describes experiences with service improvement initiatives in SPARC-supported states. This part also includes four in-depth case studies that describe different approaches and identify critical success factors. Part 2 concludes by summarising the key lessons learned from experience in implementing service improvement initiatives across SPARC-supported states to date in the following areas:

- Policy and governance aspects
- Arrangements for managing the service improvement process
- Effectively defining services and service standards
- Providing for effective communications and consultations
- The importance of regular monitoring and reporting
- Other measures to maintain momentum of service improvement initiatives.

Annex 1 provides links to examples of service charters prepared by SPARC-supported states. The examples illustrate the diversity of approaches that are possible.

Annex 2 provides links to resources that give additional information and guidance on many of the topics covered in this guide.

Further assistance may be available through the SPARC ASK helpdesk which can be found at www.sparc-nigeria.com/ask



Part 1: The service improvement cycle

What do we mean by service delivery?

Service delivery is a term commonly used to capture the idea that government organisations exist to provide services to meet the expectations of their 'customers'. Service improvement initiatives intend to promote a public service culture in which service standards are defined, performance against service standards is measured and civil servants are encouraged to improve the services they provide continuously.

The concept of service delivery is extremely broad: ranging from basic standards for the delivery of specific services to citizens (e.g. frequency of refuse disposal, quality of roads, waiting times at clinics) to agreements for the provision of services between ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) (e.g. timely publication of accounts, budget releases, quantity and quality of training carried out on behalf of MDAs). Customer satisfaction, service accessibility, provision of information and complaints procedures are also important aspects of service delivery.

SERVICOM in Nigeria

In Nigeria, the SERVICOM initiative was launched in 2003 to promote improved service delivery. SERVICOM is an acronym for Service Compact. Based on the UK government model of service improvement, SERVICOM was intended to ensure that MDAs:

- Designed high quality services to meet customers' requirements
- Set out citizens' entitlements in ways they could readily understand

- Committed to provide services within realistic time frames
- Specified officials to whom complaints could be addressed
- Made service information (including fees and complaints arrangements) accessible to the public
- Conducted and published periodic surveys of customer satisfaction.

Many state governments and MDAs have adopted the SERVICOM model.

Where do service charters fit in?

The development of service charters is central to improving service delivery, and forms the heart of the SERVICOM approach. A service charter is a public document that:

- Informs clients about an MDA's services
- Outlines citizens' rights and responsibilities
- Specifies standards of service delivery in the form of a series of commitments
- Sets out arrangements for complaints when service fails.

However, a service charter is only the formal expression of a process of defining standards, evaluating an organisation's ability to achieve those standards, reviewing performance against the standards and planning continuous service improvement.

Step-by-step process for improving service delivery

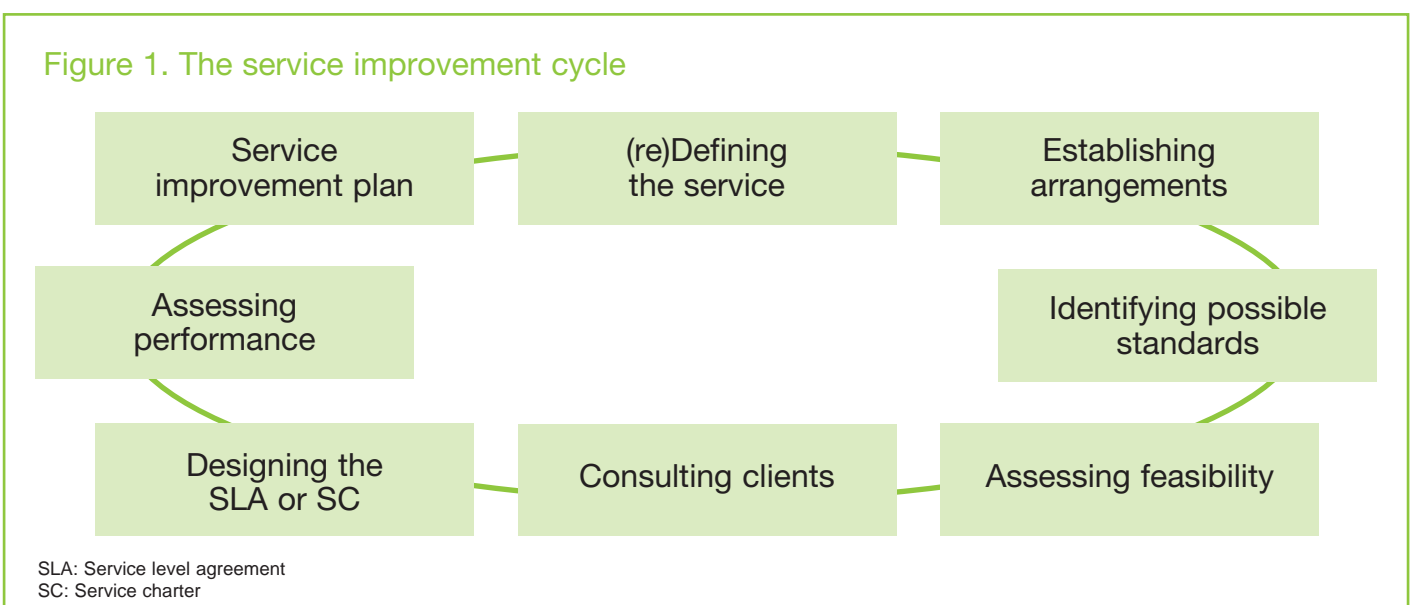
SPARC has developed a 'service improvement cycle' model, which is summarised in Figure 1.

As Figure 1 shows, service improvement begins by defining a service, and establishing arrangements to manage the service improvement cycle. The next stages involve identifying standards and designing a service charter setting out specific feasible performance commitments, in consultation with users and providers of the service. Once a service charter is in place, the cycle continues with assessment of performance against the service standards contained in the service charter, identification of areas for further improvement and preparation of a service improvement plan (SIP).

The service improvement cycle is an iterative process designed to bring about a constant focus on service delivery and sustained service improvement. The remainder of this part of the guide will look at each of the steps in detail.

Before you begin – Is service improvement right for you?

Like any other change process, the first step is to decide whether to undertake a change at all. *Begin by reviewing the entire guide to ensure that you have a good understanding of the service improvement model. Consider some of the lessons from states that are already making efforts to improve service delivery. Then come back to the checklist and exercise below to help you to decide whether to proceed.* The checklist presents questions to consider before beginning. The exercise provides you with a template to help you plan the service improvement process.



Checklist: Before you begin

Consider the following questions:

	YES	NO
1. Is there a demand for service improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
a. Is there political commitment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Is the interest state-wide or specific to one sector or MDA?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Are senior managers committed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Are service users demanding improvements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Can the service be clearly defined and described?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do we have information about the current level of service delivery for this service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do we have sufficient knowledge and expertise about service improvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do we have the resources to manage a service improvement initiative?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If, after considering these questions, you decide to proceed with a service improvement process, completing the exercise that follows should help you to develop a plan of action.

Exercise: Developing a plan

Complete the table below.

You may also find it useful to return to this exercise when you have finished working through the entire cycle, as a final check that you have covered all of the major points.

Points to decide	Decisions	Action to be taken	Who is responsible
Who will manage the service improvement initiative?			
Will this be a centrally managed initiative or take place at the level of an individual MDA?			
Who else should be part of the team?			
Do we need a high-level steering committee?			
Who should be members of the high-level committee?			
What approach should we adopt?			
What is a realistic timetable?			
What are the key milestones?			
Who needs to be informed?			
How will we inform these people?			
Who else needs to be involved?			
How will we involve them?			
Will we need expert help?			
Who can provide the expert help we need?			
What will the exercise cost?			
Do we have sufficient funds?			

Hints and tips on each stage of the service improvement cycle

This section provides detailed guidance on each of the stages in the service improvement cycle shown in Figure 1.

1. Defining services

The process of defining services begins at the highest level. The organisation's mandate and any strategic objectives (for example, captured in a state development plan (SDP) or medium-term sector strategy (MTSS)¹) will provide a general framework for the services to be provided.

MDAs should focus on their most important services. Most MDAs provide many services and it would be

Tip: Involve stakeholders in making a shortlist of important services

MDAs should shortlist services in consultation with service users, front-line staff who provide services and other interested parties (for example, civil society organisations). Although an MDA itself can develop the initial shortlist, a wider group of stakeholders must validate the selection of services.

unrealistic to expect to improve the delivery of all of these in one exercise. The exercise below provides you with some criteria for deciding which services are the most important.

2. Establishing arrangements

Arrangements for the governance and management of the service improvement cycle should be established at an early stage in the process. There are three critical aspects:

- 1. Policy and strategy oversight:** if a service improvement initiative is to succeed, high-level engagement is critical. In a number of states, the Governor has prioritised service delivery improvement, and the Executive Council (ExCo) has endorsed policies and strategies. In other states a high-level steering committee, chaired by an ExCo member or the Head of Service, may provide strategic oversight and direction.

Tip: Maintain high-level engagement

To maintain high-level engagement, a policy and strategy for service delivery improvement should be adopted and arrangements should be put in place for regular reporting at the highest level.

Exercise: Making a shortlist of important services

Consider the following criteria to determine a shortlist of important services.

Criteria to consider	Examples	Comment
The scale of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Numbers of clients who receive the service ■ Volume of the service which is delivered 	
The importance of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Impact on service users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Daily lives, e.g. provision of water or electricity, taxes and charges ■ Key life events, e.g. medical services, registration of marriages ■ Policy priority attached to the service by government 	
The profile of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public opinion ■ Media attention 	

¹ See the SPARC website for details of support for SDPs and guidance on the development of MTSSs.

2. **Managerial responsibility and operational leadership:** in addition to high-level oversight, robust arrangements for managing the service improvement cycle are essential. Without these arrangements, confusion can frustrate decision making and the initiative can lose momentum. The checklist below suggests the main management arrangements that you will need.
3. **MDA-level arrangements:** although a general service improvement initiative needs to be led on a state-wide basis, in reality, much of the work is undertaken by individual MDAs. The exercise below will help you identify the direct responsibilities of individual MDAs.

Tip: Formal arrangements help maintain momentum

In some states a dedicated structure, such as a SERVICOM unit, may be established, while in others responsibility may be given to public service reform units (often under the direction of the Head of Service). Some states may adopt less formal approaches, such as creating task teams. In general, formal arrangements have a better chance of maintaining momentum on service improvement initiatives than informal arrangements.

Checklist: Managing a service improvement initiative

Check that management arrangements include:

Management arrangement	YES	NO
Processes for promoting the service improvement initiative to service users and other interested parties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guidance and tools to assist MDAs to develop standards and service charters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arrangements for measuring performance against service charter standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support and guidance on service improvement planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications, monitoring and reporting mechanisms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Exercise: Responsibilities of MDAs

Indicate which MDAs are directly responsible for:

Action	Responsible MDA
Identifying the services	
Determining realistic standards in consultation with clients	
Preparing and publicising a service charter	
Developing a service improvement plan	
Regularly monitoring and reporting on performance	

Tip: Formal arrangements stand a better chance of success

In some MDAs, the responsibility for service delivery is placed within the general finance and administrative function, or within the policy and research function. In others, small, dedicated service charter units have been established. Again, formal arrangements stand a better chance of success, particularly if these are explicitly linked to a state-wide service improvement initiative function, such as a SERVICOM office or public service reform unit, which is directly mandated to oversee, support and review activities.

3. Identifying possible standards and confirming feasibility

For each service that an MDA selects for improvement there should be an iterative process of defining possible standards, and simultaneously assessing the MDA's current capacity to meet those standards.

In identifying service standards, an MDA should:

- Determine the key characteristics of the service under consideration
- Consult service users to establish what actually matters to clients.

The next exercise will help with the process of defining possible standards.

Tip: Define SMART standards

The standards which are defined for each service should be 'SMART'. That is, they should be defined in such a way that they are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time bound.

Tip: Develop standards that describe the actual quality and quantity of services

A common pitfall in identifying service standards is to focus exclusively on administrative service standards. While it is important that the 'customer experience' should be positive, MDAs must develop standards that describe the actual quality and quantity of the public services they deliver (e.g. number of vaccinations administered before a specific age; frequency of refuse removal; administration of examinations and notification of results within a specific period).

Tip: Use an iterative process to identify standards

The process of identifying standards and assessing the feasibility of delivery should be iterative, bringing together experiences of front-line staff in service delivery, actual client expectations, as well as politicians' aspirations and expectations.

Exercise: Identifying service standards

Complete the matrix below.

Priority service to be improved	What the service actually provides to the service user? (e.g. what, when, where, how and by whom...?)	What are service users' expectations? (e.g. timeliness of service provision, quantity of service required...)	What are the critical characteristics of service quality? (e.g. speed of service, clarity of documents, price...)
Service A			
Service B			
Service C			
Etc.			

Identifying desirable standards is only one part of the process. At the same time, MDAs should compare current actual performance with the proposed standards so as to determine whether they are actually capable of delivering the desirable standards. MDAs should do this **before** making a public commitment to the standards. The exercise below suggests questions to consider.

Tip: Promise only what you can deliver

It is generally true in Nigeria that operational budget and staff constraints are the single biggest threat to service delivery. MDAs should be careful not to promise to achieve service standards unless they are confident that funds and sufficient appropriately skilled staff are available to deliver what they promise.

Exercise: Determine what standards are feasible

Consider the following questions.

	Comment
What are we achieving now?	
What volume of service are we providing?	
How timely is service delivery?	
What are current levels of client satisfaction?	
What resources can we count on (skilled staff, robust systems and processes, financial resources)?	

4. Designing service charters

Service charters describe the service experience a 'customer' can expect. They contain key information about an MDA's service delivery approach and the relationship a service user will have with the agency.

A service charter should contain five basic elements:

1. A description of the services provided by the MDA
2. Service standards (or service delivery targets²) for key aspects of services, such as timeliness, access and accuracy
3. Service commitments describing the general quality of service delivery customers should expect, focusing on such elements as openness, fairness, courtesy and professionalism
4. Complaint and redress mechanisms that clients can use when they feel standards have not been met
5. Information about fees and associated costs of services for customers and stakeholders.

However, there is no single correct format or style for a service charter, and there are an infinite number of ways in which this information can be presented. The exercise below can help you to ensure you produce a high quality service charter. Annex 1 provides examples of service charters from SPARC states, illustrating that they can be diverse and that they can be tailored to meet particular needs and circumstances.

² The term 'service delivery target' is sometimes used where a new service is being developed: for example, the target date by which a new hospital will open, or a new road will become operational, etc.

Exercise: Assessing the service charter

Once the service charter has been drafted, complete the table below to assess whether or not it is of sufficient quality and fit for purpose.

Basic element	Specific considerations	Yes	No	Issues/Action?
Description of the services	Does the charter describe the general mandate or responsibilities of the MDA?			
	Have the most important services been prioritised?			
	Have front-line staff and the public been involved in selecting services?			
	Are the services distinct and clearly defined?			
Service standards	Do the standards specify only the key aspects of service quantity and quality? (i.e. not too many standards and not too few)			
	Are the standards 'SMART'?			
	Can performance against the standards be easily measured and reported?			
	Will clients understand the standards and performance reports?			
Service commitments	Are administrative service standards specified? (e.g. processing times, response times, accessibility of offices, etc.)			
	Does the charter define the general quality of service that clients can expect? (e.g. courtesy, transparency)			
Complaints and redress	Is a complaints process defined?			
	Is there clear guidance on how to complain and are contact details for complaints provided?			
	Is there clear guidance on redress which may be available?			
Other information	Does the charter include general service contact information?			
	Does the charter specify fees or costs that users may incur?			
Communications	Have audience needs been addressed? (e.g. language and readability)			
	Has audience accessibility been addressed? (e.g. media and distribution)			

Tip: Review the service charter regularly

A service charter should be a living document that evolves in line with changes that occur over time. Ideally, service charters should be reviewed on a regular basis, and preferably every two years.

Tip: Use evaluation tools to assess performance

The SERVICOM Index Compliance Evaluation is a useful tool for evaluating performance against service charter standards, but other tools, such as surveys, feedback forms and 'mystery shoppers' can also be useful.

5. Assessing performance against service standards

A service charter is not merely a document: it is a formal expression of a commitment to deliver services to a particular standard. The commitment is brought to life only when performance is regularly assessed. The performance assessment should:

- Consider what services have been delivered
- Systematically assess the extent to which the published standards have been achieved
- Identify service successes and service failures
- Prioritise further improvements to remedy defects.

The checklist below is a guide to designing a performance assessment process.

6. Developing a service improvement plan

The service improvement plan (SIP) is an important tool for enabling MDAs to identify service gaps or shortcomings, and to determine how to remedy them. Again, there is no single model or approach to the development of a SIP – each MDA should apply standard good practice planning methods to develop a SIP which is appropriate to its needs and capable of guiding the organisation to improve its performance.

Checklist: Performance assessment process

Consider the following aspects when designing performance assessment processes.

Aspects of performance assessment	Guidance	Comment
Regularity and frequency of assessment	At least annually, and preferably twice a year	
Ease of data analysis	Ensure that performance monitoring information is collected and recorded regularly, and in a format that will be easy to compile into a user-friendly performance report	
Frequency of publishing assessments	This should be done regularly to inform service users and other stakeholders, and maintain staff commitment to improvement Consider including service performance as a standard element of an MDA's annual report	

Ideally, the first SIP should be prepared at the same time as, or soon after, service standards are determined and the service charter is prepared. Thereafter, it should be periodically updated to take account of the results of performance assessments. Its starting point should be the gaps between stakeholders' expectations and current capacity to deliver, which the initial feasibility assessment of proposed service standards will have revealed, as described above.

Use the checklist below to guide the service improvement planning process.

Tip: Seek independent input and support

The managers who are responsible for services should prepare service improvement plans (SIPs) with the input of front-line delivery staff. An iterative process is usually required to ensure that priorities are correct and that action plans are feasible. Service managers can benefit from independent input and support during the service improvement planning process.

Checklist: Service improvement planning process

Ensure that your service improvement planning process includes the following steps:

Step	YES	NO
1. Identifying gaps by assessing compliance (or capability for compliance) with standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Establishing the causes of the gaps:		
a. Key functions and processes that determine achievability of standards?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Key resource issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Key competency issues?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Setting out clear goals, priorities and strategies for performance improvement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Developing a specific implementation plan for addressing the causes and closing 'performance gaps', which indicates specific:		
a. Actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Determining the likely cost of implementing the SIP and establishing a budget	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Part 2: Service improvement experiences and lessons

This part of the guide describes key experiences with service improvement initiatives in SPARC-supported states. Four in-depth case studies illustrate the variety of experiences. The section concludes by summarising the lessons learned across all SPARC-supported states to date.

Although the SERVICOM model is popular in Nigeria, there is an infinite variety of ways in which states, and individual MDAs, can approach service improvement. Seven SPARC-supported states are engaged in service improvement initiatives and these states have adopted a variety of approaches. The approaches range from a large-scale service charter programme which includes the development of service delivery units, performance assessment procedures and the introduction of SIPs; through testing by means of SERVICOM-style pilot schemes, involving a small number of MDAs; to developing and assessing the feasibility of achieving service standards before publishing any service commitments.

Lagos State has chosen to roll out a large-scale service charter initiative. The Lagos Service Charter Programme derives its momentum from the very public commitments made by the Governor and ExCo. The programme benefits from the establishment of formal service delivery units and structured support from the Office of Transformation (OoT). As a result, Lagos has made significant progress with performance assessment and introducing SIPs. Enugu State has also chosen to develop a large number of service charters, building on its previous service charter initiative. However, the resources available to the Enugu SERVICOM/ Performance Improvement Bureau limit the development of performance assessment methods and SIPs.

Most other SPARC-supported states have adopted SERVICOM-style pilot schemes, which involve a small number of MDAs. Pilot schemes are an appropriate approach for states that are interested in service delivery improvement but have no direct experience of service charters or SERVICOM-type approaches. With the exception of Kaduna, most of the states have set up temporary committees or task teams to oversee the process. Kaduna is taking advantage of its existing Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) to supervise the development and rollout of service charters, and this is clearly conferring benefits in terms of momentum and organisation.

Katsina has adopted a very different approach from the other states. Concentrating initially on developing service standards, Katsina has gone a step further and is developing and testing performance assessment tools and methods to ensure that service charters will be based on a realistic understanding of feasible levels of service delivery. This model may yield a number of important lessons about the best process to adopt.

The other SPARC-supported states – Anambra, Niger and Zamfara – are all at a very early stage of developing public service reform processes. As such, they are not yet in a position to introduce service delivery improvement initiatives.

Case studies

This section presents four case studies, chosen to provide a deeper insight into the different approaches and experiences of SPARC-supported states. Each case study is different, highlights different issues and illustrates some of the critical success factors.

The case studies are:

Enugu: illustrates the experience of two cycles of service charters – contrasting initial Performance Improvement Bureau service charters supported under a different programme with the present process.

Kaduna: illustrates the use of a service charter guideline for MDAs and the experience of supporting the development of service charters through a public service reform unit.

Katsina: illustrates the experience to date of introducing a different approach – using pilot agencies to test standards before publishing service charters.

Lagos: illustrates the adoption of a mechanism for assessing service performance, and the development of service improvement plans.

Case Study A: Comparing two cycles of service charters in Enugu State that used different approaches

What were the approaches?

Enugu's first performance improvement initiative saw the establishment of a Performance Improvement Bureau (PIB), an adaptation of the SERVICOM model, under the Head of Service in June 2005. An internal consulting unit in PIB was responsible for, among other things, facilitating the development of service charters in state

MDAs. Despite this promising beginning, a review of progress in improving services in 2009 found that service charters had failed. This finding led to a new initiative, beginning with ExCo approval of a service charter policy, and the re-establishment of PIB as PIB/SERVICOM within the Office of the Governor.

What has been done to date?

The 2005 initiative resulted in 12 draft service charters (although not all of these were published). The process focused on both demand and supply: sensitising citizens on their rights to quality service, and supporting government MDAs to improve their performance by developing service standards. However, the initiative ultimately failed. Momentum stalled and service charters were not rolled out beyond the pilot MDAs. A 2009 review attributed this to:

- The lack of a policy or a legal framework
- Limited understanding of the concept of service charters in MDAs
- Weak institutional arrangements at MDA level
- Lack of resources to support MDAs to bring the service charters 'to life'.

As a result, ExCo approved a SERVICOM policy in 2010. Approval of the policy was quickly followed by a directive from the Secretary to State Government charging all MDAs to establish a SERVICOM unit in their offices.

To date, all MDAs in the State have developed service charters (12 of them directly supported by SPARC), although it is not clear whether these service charters are actually being implemented in practice.

What are the key points of interest?

The contrasting experiences of the two initiatives demonstrate clearly that without a policy framework it is difficult to maintain the momentum to sustain service charters, review performance, or begin service improvement. Equally, a strong reporting link to the most senior level of state government means that the initiative is 'taken seriously' by MDAs.

Despite these improvements, PIB/SERVICOM continues to suffer from financial constraints, which limit its capacity to lead the service improvement initiative and support MDAs.

Nevertheless, actions to raise awareness are yielding benefits: citizens are beginning to understand their responsibility for holding government accountable.

What are the critical success factors?

The most critical success factors appear to be:

- Establishing a state policy and an organisational framework for operational responsibility
- Creating a senior leader for the initiative: cabinet-level responsibility gave the initiative momentum and overcame MDAs' indifference or resistance
- Ensuring that the agency charged with responsibility for the initiative has sufficient resources
- Sensitising service users to demand good services to keep the initiative 'active'
- Developing service standards in MDAs which already have an MTSS
- Providing adequate budget releases to enable MDAs to meet the service standards to which they have committed.

Case Study B: Supporting the development of service charters in Kaduna State through the Bureau of Public Service Reform

What was the approach?

The Kaduna State Public Service piloted the preparation and implementation of service charters to drive service delivery to the public through MDAs. Under the Office of the Head of Service (OHoS), the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) was mandated to drive and coordinate the preparation and implementation of service charters in the Kaduna State Public Service.

What has been done to date?

As of May 2014, service charters have been prepared for the following MDAs:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Lands, Surveys and Country Planning
- Kaduna State Board of Internal Revenue.

BPSR is currently supporting each of these MDAs to help strengthen their service standards by involving service users. BPSR is using the consultations to identify and agree priority service targets for the MDAs. Progress will be monitored and assessed in the next 12–18 months.

What are the key points of interest?

Distinctive features of the approach in Kaduna State are the use of the BPSR to help prepare and implement service charters in MDAs through continuous

engagement with pilot MDAs, and agreeing specific service targets.

In late 2012, the OHoS issued a concept paper on implementing service charters in Kaduna State. This paper was the foundation for a draft service charter policy and guideline, which was finalised by a representative group of permanent secretaries in December 2012. The policy mandated BPSR to drive and coordinate the preparation and implementation of service charters in the Kaduna State Public Service.

Thereafter, pilot MDAs set up MDA service charter task teams. The teams agree clear terms of reference and quarterly milestones with BPSR. BPSR provides continuous support and advice to MDAs' service charter task teams.

BPSR briefs the Head of Service on progress and has set up a mechanism for continuous monitoring of the service charter implementation activities agreed with the MDAs' service charter task teams.

What are the critical success factors?

The most critical success factors appear to be:

- Putting a service charter policy and guideline in place
- Mandating a coordinating agency with the authority and influence to drive the process
- Piloting service charters with MDAs that already have service user-oriented systems in place. These MDAs can then support the introduction of a second wave of service charters in other MDAs
- Forming and training a service charter task team (or equivalent) to take responsibility for the process in each MDA
- Periodic reporting on service charter implementation to maintain momentum and focus.

The key obstacles faced were:

- Getting the MDAs to sharpen their service targets to bring out specific measurable benefits for service users
- Arranging consultations with external stakeholders. Only the Ministry of Education had pre-existing procedures for stakeholder consultation in place.

Case Study C: Introducing a different approach – pilot agencies to test standards in Katsina State

What is the approach?

Katsina State wished to build awareness and interest in performance standards and performance monitoring

without prematurely committing to service charters. With only limited knowledge or understanding of service charters in the State, the initial task was to demonstrate the usefulness of defining service delivery standards and the benefits of monitoring performance.

What has been done to date?

The Ministry of Education (MoE) expressed an interest in developing service delivery standards. Thus, the exercise was carried out within the MoE and the Education Resource Centre (ERC) with the knowledge of the OHoS. A briefing note was sent to ExCo, which elicited strong support from the Governor. Although no formal management arrangements have yet been put in place, this will change if wider adoption of service charters is agreed.

Once pilot MDAs in the education sector had been selected, existing performance standards were identified, and additional standards were devised to cover all ERC activities. Capacity to monitor performance against standards was tested in one unit (Schools Inspection) to identify the measures needed to put effective monitoring in place. The proposals have been accepted and a full ERC service charter is being prepared. Thereafter, the process is to be rolled out across Katsina State Government.

What are the key points of interest?

Building a solid case for performance standards and measurement before attempting to introduce service charters creates a much better understanding of the underlying rationale for service charters.

To date this has been a low-key exercise but one that has built support and understanding of decision makers in the education sector. Briefing the Governor resulted in solid high-level support for the initiative.

What are the critical success factors?

Success has yet to be really tested – this will only come with the preparation of service charters. But the low-key, participatory approach has been critical in building internal support and understanding. This has made the process very straightforward, with no obstacles or resistance.

The critical success factors appear to be:

- Building understanding of the importance of service standards as an integral part of an organisation's operations, not just for a service charter
- Not defining standards in isolation but defining standards that can be measured. The standards need to be seen as an integral part of an MDA's

operations and not merely 'aspirational statements' for a service charter document

- Defining/identifying and testing standards that are meaningful to a wider audience, and can be measured objectively. This means that the standards can be confidently included in the service charter
- Taking a modest, low-key approach is likely to make the service charter a more realistic document.

Case Study D: Mechanism for assessing service performance and the development of service improvement plans in Lagos State

What is the approach?

Lagos State adopted the SERVICOM model for service charters (policy and guidance) as early as 2010. Service charters are a high priority, state-wide initiative. Initially, a committee led by the Head of Service oversaw the development of the policy and process. The Office of Transformation (OoT) was then designated as the lead agency to support the rollout of service charters. Lagos deliberately chose to move quickly, not only introducing service charters, but also creating organisational arrangements in MDAs, and rapidly initiating performance reviews and the introduction of service improvement plans (SIPs).

What has been done to date?

The Governor launched the first wave of 14 MDA service charters in 2012. Eventually, the plan is for each MDA to have a service delivery unit (SDU) that is responsible for the charter and SIP. The Governor commissioned an impact evaluation of the 14 service charters in December 2012. Lagos State has extended service charters throughout the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. A second wave of charters is planned for 2015.

The OoT is currently assessing performance against service standards (using the SERVICOM Index as the core assessment tool³) and the quality of draft SIPs. Overall, MDAs' SIPs have been rated 60–75%. Action plans for further improvements are in place or being prepared.

At this point, not all of the MDAs that have prepared service charters have functioning SDUs nor are likely to have active SIPs. Nevertheless, there is some visible impact (particularly in terms of improving reception services and ensuring that the public have positive experiences of MDAs).

What are the key points of interest?

The experience in Lagos State shows that the right 'champion' can make a difference in a very short time. The fast rollout was deliberately designed to maintain momentum by embedding the service delivery approach in MDA structures and processes. Since the initial adoption of the service delivery approach in 2012, Lagos has held its first service charter week – in May 2014 – where awards were presented. The service charter week is now intended to be an annual event.

The Governor has been the critical champion, demonstrating his commitment throughout the process: he formally launched the 14 charters, commissioned the impact study and sponsored the high profile 'Service Charter Week 2014'.

Publicising the initiative has been a key feature of the strategy. For example, Service Charter Week 2014 included inputs from academia and civil society, private sector sponsorship and an exhibition space, as well as an award ceremony.

What are the critical success factors?

The most critical success factors appear to be:

- Winning the Governor's personal interest by beginning with MDAs that provide services which are policy priorities
- Creating a dedicated core team with visible support
- Establishing the commitment of the officer responsible for leading the operational side of service improvement
- Building momentum steadily and preparing for a long process. Keeping the medium-term target in view
- Recognising that the process will take longer than political leaders often expect: even building the capacity of the lead agency can take years
- Publicising and celebrating success.

The key obstacles faced were:

- Initial training activities were 'wasted' because arrangements for implementation were not fully in place. As a result the participants 'dispersed' and training had to be repeated
- It has proved difficult to move away from service charters and SIPs that focus on administrative improvements rather than standards related to users.

³ See Annex 2 for a link to Service Charter Compliance Evaluation – a How to Guide, June 2014.

Lessons learned from service improvement initiatives

As described above, each SPARC-supported state has developed its own specific approach to introducing service improvement initiatives. This has meant a rich variety of innovations has been tested. Many lessons have been learned. In general, experience has confirmed that there is scope for a diversity of approaches, tailor-made to the capacity and priorities of states. MDAs have taken approaches ranging from a full, formal SERVICOM model to more cautious 'pilot testing and readiness-building'.

This section summarises the key lessons learned from the experience of service improvement initiatives in SPARC-supported states to date.

Policy and strategy

- Service charters can only be used effectively where a service is clearly defined and is either the responsibility of one identified MDA, or is subject to clear, agreed and robust coordination arrangements between responsible MDAs.
- Adoption and publication of a service improvement policy and strategy is helpful in setting the direction and overall objectives of any service improvement initiative.

Leadership

- Formal governance arrangements are more successful than informal arrangements.
- Strong leadership from the highest level of state government is a prerequisite for success. States where the Governor is directly involved make most rapid and consistent progress.
- At the same time, it is vital that political leaders understand the implications of making commitments to service standards, in terms of raising citizens' expectations.
- As far as possible, ownership of the process should reside with the decision making senior managers of an MDA rather than a steering group or task team *per se*.
- There should be explicit links between MDA-level arrangements and a state-wide service improvement agency or unit, which is directly mandated to oversee, support and review MDAs' activities.

Managing the process

- A systematic approach to planning and managing the rollout of service improvement initiatives is important. This should cover activities such as: launching the initiative; deciding the approach; targeting MDAs; developing a timetable; and reporting progress.

- Building the readiness of MDAs and civil servants is important. Progress has been slower where insufficient attention has been paid to raising awareness and other preparation.
- It is essential to ensure that the MDA-level service delivery units/teams have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the process.

Defining standards and service commitments

- Sufficient time should be invested in clearly defining a service and ensuring that standards are appropriate, reflect service users' priorities, and are feasible within an MDA's resources and capacity.
- In particular, MDAs must be absolutely realistic about the level of budget releases which they can expect to receive, and the implications for performance if funds are not available.
- MDAs should resist over-ambition (in the form of tackling too many services simultaneously, making too many service commitments, or setting unachievable service standards).
- Political leaders should resist the temptation to make high profile commitments and over-promise improvements.

Consultation and communications

- An effective and sustained communications campaign raises the profile of a service improvement initiative, both within government and service users.
- A clear communication strategy helps to ensure effective consultation and engagement of service users in the design and implementation of a service improvement initiative.
- Consultation processes in defining a service and designing standards should have as much input as possible from both clients of a service and front-line service providers.

Importance of monitoring

- It is generally true that only what is measured and reported is delivered. Without performance reviews or publication of performance results, service charters are meaningless.
- It is essential to plan and design monitoring and review arrangements alongside the initial development of service charters, and to put these arrangements into effect as soon as possible.
- Particular attention should be paid to arrangements for sharing the outcomes of monitoring with stakeholders, and for ensuring that any remedial action required is also reviewed and reported.

Maintaining momentum

It is apparent that, after an initial period of enthusiasm and activity, states, individual MDAs and even individual civil servants lose interest in a service improvement initiative. It is critical to maintain momentum by, for example:

- Rapidly defining performance measurement mechanisms and applying these promptly
- Regular reporting to ExCo
- Publishing performance results in the media (press and radio)
- Initiating regular reviews and updates of service charters
- Introducing and supporting the development of SIPs
- Involving service users or civil society in assessing and commenting on performance.

Annex 1: Examples of service charters prepared by states supported by SPARC

The following examples of service delivery charters developed by states can be found on the SPARC website at www.sparc-nigeria.com:

Jigawa Budget and Economic Planning Directorate

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=f5c6707a-1fd0-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Kano Ministry of Education

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=660295a6-26a9-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Lagos Ministry of Health

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=b6647ef8-1fd1-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Lagos Office of the State Auditor General

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=4d8cc488-1fd3-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Annex 2: Links to other resources

Lagos State

Lagos State Service Charter Policy (2012): In production

Lagos State Service Charter Policy July 2010:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=a8a1d3c2-1fd3-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Lagos State Guidelines for Implementing Service Charters July 2010:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=34231e2e-1fd4-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Lagos State Service Charter Initiative: Support for Capacity Development, Phase 1, Final Report July 2012:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=b346bc8e-26a9-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Lagos State Service Standards and Improvement Planning Report March 2013:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=78611da0-1fd6-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Performance Against Service Standards: Assessment Tools and Methodology, Workshop for Staff of Lagos State Office of Transformation (OoT) March 2014: In production

Service Charter Compliance Evaluation – a How-to Guide, June 2014: In production for publication in 2014

Fourteen Lagos State Service Charters – published in a guide by the State Government 2012:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/docs/documents-library.aspx>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Ministry of Education:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8bccca322-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Ministry of Health:

<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c2cdd6e-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Ministry of Motor Vehicle Administration

Agency: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c371086-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Civil Service Commission: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c3e9784-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Civil Service Pensions Office:
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c44b830-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State House of Assembly: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c49fade-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Lands Bureau: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c5a5dfc-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Ministry of Economic Planning & Budget:
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c695712-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c72688e-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Office of Establishments Training & Pension:
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c79a8f6-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Office of State Auditor General:
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8c816ac8-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Public Service Office: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8d2dd3c6-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Lagos State Waste Management Authority (LAWMA):
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8d33734e-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

LASG Service Charter for first phase MDAs – Public Service Staff Development Centre (PSSDC):
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=8d3cba8a-3f35-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Report of the Impact Assessment, Of Service Charter in the Fourteen (14) Pilot MDAs held between Monday, 7th January and Friday, 18th January, 2013:
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=dd0b15fa-1fd9-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Kano State

Kano State Government Service Charter Guidelines October 2013: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=22e540fa-1fda-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

SERVICOM Policy: <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=a27c2bd0-1fda-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Enugu State

Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (March 2013):
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=66793e16-26ab-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Compliance Evaluation Questionnaire (April 2013):
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=66c27dec-26ab-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Kaduna State

Kaduna State Service Charter Template (July 2013):
<http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=3a310b8e-1fdc-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

Jigawa State

Jigawa State Central Service Charters Guideline (February 2014): <http://library.sparc-nigeria.com/Delivery.aspx?AttachmentID=a75b1e5c-1fdc-11e4-96cc-00221964e37f>

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