The Kano State Water Board Service Charter Story – Opportunities for Reform

The State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) recently supported the Kano State Water Board (KnSWB) to develop its service charter and later carry out an Organisational Review of the Board.

What is a Service Charter?
A service charter is a short publication that describes the service experience a client can expect from an agency; the experience is communicated through the agency’s service delivery commitments (service standards). It defines the relationship between the service provider and service user by clearly establishing the rights and responsibilities of both parties and provides avenues for redress when service fails.

As a key parastatal of the state, and given its strategic position as provider of a prime utility service, KnSWB is one of the MDAs being reviewed in the third phase of the corporate planning process in Kano State, with the objective to improve its processes and ability to deliver on its mandates. The Water Board has been enthusiastic for such an intervention since it subscribed to the development of its Service Charter, which has proven to be a success, opening the consciousness of management and staff alike to the prerogative of mandates and mandate delivery.
Lessons Learnt

One of the key lessons learned is that initiating the Corporate Planning process for any Ministry, Department and Agency (MDA), which starts with the development of a Service Charter, creates increased understanding of the necessity to undertake Corporate Planning by MDA officials. Because MDA officials are part of the process, there is increased willingness to critically review their organisation and accept recommendations to make improvements. Service Charters help articulate service delivery targets and MDA officials will be more inclined to take all necessary actions to ensure they meet those targets.

Other lessons learned include:
- Political buy-in and MDA leadership at the highest level ensures success;
- Service Charter success is made more likely if the MDA management is involved and understands the value of the intervention. This can be achieved by starting the Service Charter development process with a sensitisation session for all stakeholders of the MDA;
- It is important that the Service Charters contain clearly articulated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will make the performance measurement process simpler, while bearing in mind that after the implementation of its Service Charter, an MDA’s performance will be measured against its service delivery targets;
- Using designated mechanisms such as the Service Charter Task Team (SCTT) or the KnSWB’s Internal SCTT ensures ownership of the process;
- Strong leadership commitment brings about desired change in an organisation faster, as indicated by the administrative fiat with which resources were deployed and judiciously spent in the process of developing the KnSWB Service Charter;
- Involvement of staff of KnSWB (participatory approach) throughout the process of developing the agency’s Service Charter not only gave them a sense of belonging but also created ownership for sustainability;
- Staff sensitisation increases reform buy-in;
- Stakeholder involvement provides opportunities for perception information management;
- Entrenchment of the spirit of team work reduces delays in taking key decisions.

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