

SERVICOM

The Problem

As a result of years of military rule and political instability characterised by systematic corruption and failure to meet citizens' need for public services, public confidence in government's provision of public goods and services is low marked by significant variations in service delivery, and conflicting and imprudent institutional arrangements. Some of the gaps in and problems with service delivery that were identified by the Nigerian service delivery research team before the commencement of SERVICOM include:

1. The need for government to listen to Nigerians' demand for services in terms of what they see as important, how and whether they have access to those services, and what services do they want improved
2. Duplications, conflict of responsibility and unclear indication in key service sectors due to ambiguity over functions of tiers of government
3. Weak fiscal system due to the ineffectiveness of the budget as a resource allocation mechanism
4. Complex legal requirements, institutional arrangements, weak systems, fragmentation, blurred accountability, and wasted resources resulting in obstruction of service delivery at the federal, state and local government levels
5. Weak incentives such as low enumeration and lack of performance management
6. Weak information system making it difficult to obtain reliable information to guide and plan service delivery

To achieve the desired level of service delivery to its citizenry a far-reaching transformation of the Nigerian society involving the government and stakeholders is required. The implementation of a service delivery initiative that keeps government closer to the citizen is one of several levers required to create the desired momentum for a demand culture of by the citizenry.

Reform Actions

In December 2003, a Nigerian service delivery research team investigated the process undertaken by the British government to improve service delivery to its citizenry. A 'diagnostic audit' of service delivery reflecting on people's view and experiences of services and examining the institutional environment in Nigeria was conducted and a list of suggested key actions and institutional arrangements to ensure effective service delivery was developed.

Service delivery in these five 'services' were reviewed: business registration (at the Corporate Affairs Commission); immunisation (at the Maitama General Hospital); passport office (at the Nigerian Immigration Service); hospital outpatient department (at the Maitama General Hospital FCT); power at the then National Electric Power Authority (NEPA).

It was noted that most facilities visited were unlikely to be representative of all challenges and complications in their representative areas of service delivery nationwide (apart from the comparative research with the mode of service delivery in the UK, all investigations

were restricted to the FCT). The service delivery audit team identified a consistent pattern of 'poor services and failure to meet low expectations' characterised by the following:

- Services were not serving people well
- Services were mainly inaccessible, poor quality, and indifferent to customer needs
- A lack of real levers for ministers to deliver or monitor the outcome of their policy pledges or hold anyone accountable for delivery
- Limited information of central departments to monitor performance or intervene to tackle failure
- Unpredictable and uncertain funding often leaving services without staffing revenue to maintain premises, systems, and provide services
- Current support services (such as finance, audit, ICT, personnel, and procurement) neither support nor serve delivery

In February 2004, the team's report 'Service Delivery in Nigeria: A Roadmap' was published. This report noted the commitment of top leadership and demonstration of commitment with a leadership declaration about service delivery by ministers is a critical success factors for this programme. Other conclusions and recommendations include:

- Services are not serving people; they are inaccessible, poor in quality and indifferent to customer needs
- Public confidence is poor and institutional arrangements are confusing and wasteful
- The need for a far-reaching transformation of Nigerian society through a service delivery programme as a step in the process of moving to a government that is more in touch with the people
- The service delivery initiative should the comprise of the following elements:
 - (1) Create citizens' and customers' demand
 - (2) Demonstration pilots
 - (3) Build wider support for service delivery

In March 2004, a special presidential retreat was held to deliberate on the report. The President and the Federal Executive Council adopted the findings and recommendations of the research team. Subsequently on 21 March 2004 the president, vice president, ministers, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Head of Civil Service of the Federation, special advisers, presidential aides, and permanent secretaries signed a service compact with Nigerians 'dedicating themselves to providing the basic services to which each citizen is entitled in a timely, fair, honest, effective and transparent manner' –this is the basis for the SERVICOM initiative.

SERVICOM is a service agreement between the federal government (including all its organs) and the Nigerian people. The acronym derived from the words SERVICE COMPACT. The broad objectives of SERVICOM, *inter alia*, are to: provide quality service to the people; set out the entitlement of the citizens; ensure good leadership; educate the citizens (customers) on their rights; empower public officers to be alert to their responsibilities in providing improved, efficient, timely, and transparent service. This agreement gives Nigerians the right to demand good service. Details of this right are contained in SERVICOM charters in all government agencies where services are provided to the public. These charters inform the public of what to expect and what to do if the service fails or falls short of their expectations.

The SERVICOM Office is located in the Presidency under the office of the Secretary of the Government of the Federation. This office is responsible for the following:

1. Coordinate the formulation and operation of service charters of ministries, departments and agencies
 7. Monitor and report to the president on the progress made by ministries and agencies in executing their responsibilities under SERVICOM
 8. Conduct Independent Surveys of the services provided to citizens by the ministries and government departments, their 'adequacy', their 'timeless', and 'citizen satisfaction.'

SERVICOM operates through a network of Ministerial SERVICOM Units (MSUs) headed by Nodal officers on GL 16 supported by three desk officers of between GL 13 -15 (charter desk officer, service improvement officer, and customer/complaints desk officer). The unit reports its activities to head of the ministry or parastatals.

Phases of SERVICOM reform actions:

1. The key elements of the SERVICOM roadmap under the first phase were to instil higher expectations of public services amongst Nigerians, to change Nigerians experience of public service delivery, build wider support for service delivery, demonstrate ministers' leadership in their departments, and radically change the existing managerial systems. This phase operated under a sponsorship agreement with the UK Government, administered by DFID and counterpart funding by the federal government. This phase ended in September 2009 after a nine-month extension after the initial December 2008 date. Assessment by the British review team rated SERVICOM as a high performing development aid programme.
2. The second phase commenced with government's commitment to continue sponsorship of the service delivery initiative. The activities implemented in this phase were: an expansion of its operations, an increase in the number of SERVICOM compliance evaluations, an increase in scope of actions in handling public complaints on service failure, an intensification in public awareness campaigns, a building on the current experience and knowledge to design, and an execution of service delivery improvement modules as a follow up to the already executed pilots so as to accelerate the dissemination and propagation of the real SERVICOM experience. This commitment was not met fully given the low funding by government, thereby resulting in a decline in the activities of SERVICOM.
3. The third phase commenced with the repositioning of the programme under the government's Transformation Agenda. In December 2010, the House Committee on Governmental Affairs organised the hearing on the SERVICOM Bill. In February 2012 a paper on 'The Future of Service Delivery in Nigeria' was presented to the Federal Executive Council (FEC). Some of the key recommendations of a nine-member Cabinet Committee chaired by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation constituted 29 February 2012 to look into ways of revitalising the SERVICOM Office to make it functional and explore a suitable funding mechanism for its operations include:
 - i. The relevance of SERVICOM has become imperative in today's governance
 - ii. Ministers should own SERVICOM and be conscious of their responsibility to it by reaffirming their compact
 - iii. The approval of a bridging fund for SERVICOM operations was suggested
 - iv. Each MDA should make a budgetary provision for its Ministerial SERVICOM Unit (MSU) to fund its management approved work plan.
4. SERVICOM should:
 - Be funded directly through its own budget line

- Collaborate with relevant agencies such as OHCSF, FCSC, and BPSR
- Develop measurable standards to assess compliance with MDAs' Service Charter
- Present a biannual report to the Federal Executive Council on service delivery initiative(s)
- SERVICOM nodal officers should not be below the rank of deputy director.

These recommendations were the basis for the new SERVICOM mandate to:

- Coordinate efforts by MDAs to formulate and implement Service Charters in the MDAs, regularly monitor and report to His Excellency, the President on the progress made by each of the MDA in performing their obligations under the Charter
- Carry out independent surveys of the services provided to citizens by the MDAs, assessing adequacy and timeliness of service delivery and level of customer satisfaction. Results should be widely publicised to keep citizens fully informed;
- Heighten public awareness of the damaging effects of service failure to the Nigerian society and social structures; and
- Promote attitudes by which citizens would recognise the need to challenge service failure as their civil rights as well as responsibility

SERVICOM's key priorities from 2013 to 2015 are to:

1. Develop and implement service charters
2. Raise citizens' satisfaction
3. Increase citizen's awareness
4. Develop robust performance monitoring and reporting systems
5. Ensure its own sustainability

SERVICOM's strategic objectives to achieve the following by 2015:

- Increase the number of ministries (and comprising parastatals) with and implementing qualitative Service Charters
- Raise the proportion of citizens satisfied with public sector service delivery by reducing the incidence of service and empowered to challenge service failures
- Achieve long-term survival and sustainability through improved funding, capacity building, and enhanced partnership with stakeholders.

This third phase also recognises the need for more citizens' engagement and has underpinned SERVICOM's new focus on stimulating citizen demand for services as a right. It is envisaged that by enhancing the roles of all critical stakeholders in the service delivery framework, SERVICOM can be repositioned for better effectiveness.

Main Achievements

Some notable achievements of SERVICOM include:

1. SERVICOM has initiated the establishment of Ministerial SERVICOM Units (MSUs) and Parastatal SERVICOM units in 84 ministries, parastatals, and agencies
2. From inception to date, SERVICOM has supported the development of qualitative service charters in over 80% of MDAs with citizen-facing service

windows. These now have mission/vision statements that include citizen expectations for services.

3. The establishment of the SERVICOM Institute responsible for the training of public servants in service delivery. To date, over 10000 civil servants have been trained in various aspects of service delivery by the institute and this continues to be the service-wide capacity building arm of the Service Delivery Initiative.
4. The ongoing development of the National Guidelines on Service Charters (which started in 2013) is expected to enable MDAs implement service standards as captured in their service charters. This also puts citizens at the heart of all service delivery and improvement efforts in MDAs.
5. The revision of the SERVICOM Index was undertaken in 2012 to include key dimensions of the service delivery framework. The five dimensions for evaluating citizen satisfaction and service delivery from the old Index were expanded to include a sixth dimension incorporating the political commitment and accountability on the part of government to respond to citizen demands for service.

This new tool has undergone trials with key MDA's such as the NDDC and FCTA in 2013/14.

6. The establishment of complaints mechanism in all MDAs. This is to ensure regular feedback on quality of services from citizens and to redress incidences of service failure when they occur in order to improve MDAs customer service.
7. SERVICOM Compliance Evaluations have been conducted in 202 service windows in 24 MDAs. Service windows being departments/units of government that has interface with the public.
8. The existence of SERVICOM in MDAs has created awareness of the importance of service delivery principles to both citizens and public servants.

Key Challenges

1. The lack of guaranteed continuous funding had stifled the growth of the reform. It is dependent on the favourable disposition of the government in power and donor support for continuous funding. This was evident in its second phase. The limitations of this were evident in its second phase.
2. Commitment of political leadership is critical to its success. Its sustainability depends on several factors that require top leadership commitment.
3. SERVICOM's composition appears to lack adequate numbers of senior level civil servants with capacity required to drive public service wide strategic change management initiatives.
4. Public office holders and senior civil servants are yet to be held accountable for their MDAs' level of service delivery.
5. With weak information systems, it is hard to assess the shift in quantity and quality of service delivery in most contact centres.
6. SERVICOM is perceived as ineffective and lacking in most quarters, therefore, it is unable to amass the momentum required to create an effective service delivery culture in MDAs.
7. Having SERVICOM Nodal officers reporting directly to ministers has met with mixed reactions in MDAs. While it has been successful in some MDAs such as FIRS, FRSC,

NTA and some tertiary health institutions, it has however been stifled in many MDAs, given the culture of the public service.

8. Reduced activity from the second phase to date on key SERVICOM activities, due to lack of funding and political commitment to the service delivery initiative.

Assessment of Reform Initiative

Against the 10 criteria for assessing the reform, the repositioning of SERVICOM is still trying to gain traction.

S/No.	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
1.	Have the reforms improved the quality and quantity of the public services delivered?	<p>Only in some cases. The SERVICOM-in-Action experiences in some tertiary health Institutions such as FMC Bida, Minna, Iddo-Ekiti and UCTH, where significant improvements have been recorded and sustained to date, improved the quantity and quality of services delivered in those organisations.</p> <p>However, these have not been taken to scale. These ‘pockets of effectiveness’ can be scaled up with further strengthening of the Service Delivery Initiative.</p>
2.	Do more people now have access to services, including disadvantaged groups such as women, young persons, and people with disabilities?	<p>The SERVICOM Compliance Evaluation process and Customer Care Sensitisation includes key measures of MDA’s responsiveness to vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Specific examples exist in most Federal tertiary hospitals and NIPOST where service points now have ramps and signage designed to cater for these groups.</p>
3.	Have the reforms reduced the cost of governance?	<p>There is no direct evidence that the cost of governance has reduced as a result of SERVICOM.</p> <p>However, adhering to SERVICOM principles has helped a number of MDAs to plan and manage their costs around service delivery more effectively, by translating feedback from customers into service plans and implementation.</p> <p>Recent evaluation and post evaluation actions by NIMASA and NPA reveals cost duplications at service points evaluated in 2013 and these has since been redressed.</p>

S/No.	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
4.	Have the reforms made the service more affordable for citizens?	To a significant extent, a number of evaluated service points in Federal Tertiary Hospitals have become more transparent in their charges to patients. The Christian Pilgrims Welfare Board had used feedback from its SERVICOM unit to reduce charges to pilgrims in 2012/13.
5.	Have the reforms reduced corruption?	To a significant extent, a number of evaluated service points in Federal Tertiary Hospitals have become more transparent in their charges to patients. Most MDAs evaluated now display costs for services to customers and this has reduced extortion and touting in some service windows. Opportunities now exist in Federal Universities for students to assess and provide feedback on lecturers, as it now operates in Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, FUT Minna where SERVICOM Vanguard s are involved in reducing instances of cash-for-grades among lecturers and students.
6.	Have the reforms reduced unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape?	There are few instances where processes have been properly defined and displayed for ease of access by citizens. FMC Keffi, FIRS and FMC Bida remain shining examples of what can happen when the Service Delivery Initiative is put to use effectively to manage red tape and bureaucracy.
7.	Is the reform initiative likely to lead to improved development outcomes?	Yes, if it is given the support it requires.
8.	Are things improving, staying the same, or getting worse?	There are some improvements but these are largely unreported and have not yet been taken to scale.
9.	Where things are improving, will those improvements endure?	In most cases, the improvements have endured, but the gains have been reversed in some other instances. Specific case in point is the successful pilots of the re-organisations at the Passport Office of Immigration Service where SERVICOM demonstrated

S/No.	Assessment Criteria	Result of Assessment
		improvements in passport issuance process by reducing touting in 2007/08
10	Where things are not improving, what should be done?	<p>The reform should be provided the level of support it requires.</p> <p>There is need for high level-buy in and political will by top echelons of government.</p> <p>MDAs need to comply with the directive to use the Service Charters as an operational tool to regulate, improve and sustain service improvement.</p>

Proposed Next Steps

1. Government reaffirmation of political commitment to SERVICOM through annual presidential retreat
2. Right positioning of SERVICOM initiatives in ministries.
3. SERVICOM nodal officers should report to their permanent secretaries through the newly created Departments of Reform Coordination and Service Improvement in the ministries.
4. Mainstream service delivery activities in all MDAs by incorporating service delivery improvement plans into MDA plans
5. Dedicated funding.
6. Development, implementation, and continuous review of a SERVICOM staff capacity development plan.
7. Enactment of a SERVICOM Bill - An Act of parliament establishing a sanctions regime for service failure in the public sector.
8. In order to focus on citizens' involvement in service definition, standard definition and establishment of service compacts, the Guidelines for implementing SERVICOM should be re-issued and MDAs should establish mechanisms for stakeholders' consultation at service windows.
9. Government should integrate SERVICOM and related issues into national information systems working through the Ministry of information and National Orientation Agency, and mainstream SERVICOM into MDA information structure;
10. In order to make MDAs more customer-focussed, MDA SERVICOM compliance outcomes should be reflected in Evaluation Performance Reports and customer-focussed Service Charters should be prepared by MDAs and prominently displayed.