



# Citizens' Charter National Priority Program

The Citizens' Charter is a foundation stone for realising the government's self-reliance vision. It is a promise of partnership between the Afghan state and its thousands of communities. The Charter is a commitment to provide every village in Afghanistan with basic services, based on community's own prioritisation. Built around the use of unified village-level budgeting and financial reporting, under the Charter communities can oversee their own development goals, monitor the quality of service delivery, and report grievances to authorities and civil society. The Charter will promote inclusive development and accountability at all levels. It will give a voice to vulnerable groups such as women, returnees, and the poor.

## MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS

Services provided through the Charter will include:

- Universal access to clean drinking water
- Quality education in government schools
- Delivery of Basic Package of Health Services
- Communities will have at least one of:
  - › Basic electricity from renewable sources
  - › Basic road access
  - › Small-scale irrigation infrastructure

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS

Community Development Councils (CDCs) are the heart of the Citizen's Charter. First established under the National Solidarity Program (NSP), they are tasked with planning, negotiating, and managing development investments. The Councils are trained in financial

management and bookkeeping, and in basic principles of transparency, participation, and accountability.

Under the Charter, the government will train CDC members in fiduciary management and participatory planning. Existing Shuras, such as health, education, and agriculture committees, will become subcommittees. They will carry out technical functions and coordinate with line ministries, while providing CDCs with their full financial and planning information, allowing villages to manage and implement a single and transparent budget and development plan.



*Villagers discuss issues in their community at a CDC meeting in Shebar District, Bamyan. Across Afghanistan, 35% of Council members are women. CDCs have helped increase women's participation in village-level decision making. The Citizens' Charter will build on this success to increase the level and quality of women's participation. Inclusive development will be a key mandate of CDCs, to ensure that groups which are generally marginalised and vulnerable are included in the decision making process, and are benefiting equitably from development activities.*



As the Charter is a partnership, communities and CDCs will uphold a basic set of responsibilities that make up their side of the Citizen Charter. They include: ensuring safety and access for staff; being inclusive and ensuring that the poor and vulnerable get special attention; providing basic operations and maintenance from community resources; and ensuring village financial transparency and integrity.

## IMPROVING SERVICE DELIVERY

Consolidating service delivery under the Citizens' Charter brings many advantages to Afghanistan's development programming. First, using a coordinated approach to community partnerships is vital to ensure the efficient use of scarce resources. Not only is community-built and managed infrastructure cheaper than nationally-led projects, but communities are much more willing to contribute land, labour and cash to build and maintain projects that they themselves have proposed.

Second, community-owned programs which allow communities to negotiate and deliver on their priorities produce higher satisfaction rates, are more accountable, and less corrupt than top-down decision making. Community-led projects also benefit from extensive local knowledge, which can help improve performance and reduce disputes.

Third, community programs have the best track record for involving women in local decision-making, a priority policy objective of the government. Broadening the scope of their remit and oversight will further advance that goal.

Finally, transferring resources and responsibilities for local level management to communities lightens the load on Afghanistan's overstretched agencies, which can then concentrate on mandated technical programs.

## CONTRIBUTING TO POVERTY REDUCTION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Community level projects support basic infrastructure that lay the foundation for economic growth. At the local level, community development programs provide high internal rates of return. For example, road construction helps to reduce transport times and small-scale irrigation canals increase crop productivity. Previous community development programs have a rate of return estimated at around 35%, which measures well against global averages. Social investments, such as health and education, are basic responsibilities for any government that is committed to reducing poverty. But they are also preconditions for larger transformative investments.

Agriculture services delivered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, will be coordinated through CDCs, particularly for targeting initiatives for poor and vulnerable populations. Provision of inputs for wheat production; horticulture input packages; rehabilitation of irrigation networks and on-farm water management; conservation of natural resources; and provision of veterinary services will ensure income generation and economic development both in the community and at the national level.

## CITIZENS' CHARTER IN CITIES

For the first time, Afghanistan's urban and rural community development programs will be joined under the same umbrella. The Citizens' Charter in Cities (CCC) program will build on the national urban community development experience, under which 1,800 CDCs have been established. CCC will be a national program, coordinated by the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) and Kabul Municipality, in close collaboration with line ministries and independent directorates.



*A group of CDCs in the outskirts of Taloqan, Takhar, joined forces to build a school for the children in their villages. The villagers donated the land and constructed the school with their own resources. The CDCs worked with the Takhar Provincial Education Department to register the school so that the Ministry would cover the school's operational cost, including teacher salaries. The school now runs in two shifts, one for boys and one for girls. The all-female teaching staff teaches both groups of children. As the number of students has increased, the CDC is now working to raise more funds to build a larger building for the school.*

*The Citizens' Charter will encourage CDC members and villagers to take ownership of health and education activities. Communities will be involved in the management of facilities to ensure downward accountability from service providers. A strong sense of ownership from communities will increase the sustainability of projects through community support for operations and maintenance.*

Services in urban areas will focus on quality education and healthcare, including monitoring mechanisms for private healthcare providers and pharmacies. Infrastructure projects will focus on needs specific to urban populations, including roads, lighting, and green spaces. The program will have a strong focus on delivering services to informal settlements and returnees.

The program will start in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and Jalalabad. All provincial capitals, including Kabul, will be covered in phase one. The roll-out will be coordinated with the land certification program that provides urban communities with secure tenure and municipalities with resources to make investments in their communities.

## ORIGINS OF THE CITIZENS' CHARTER

The Citizens' Charter was first introduced in the "Realizing Self Reliance" policy paper. Afghanistan has over 15 years of successful community development experience, most notably from the NSP, but also from other government and non-governmental programs that have built partnerships with communities. These successful partnerships underpin the Citizens' Charter, which will transform individual projects into a sustainable program across Afghanistan.

## ROLES AND MANAGEMENT

The Charter will promote good governance at the local level, where most Afghans experience government. Under the Charter, line ministries are responsible for delivering outputs in each of their respective technical areas. With the exception of a small biannual grant to communities for basic maintenance, all funds flow through the responsible line ministry.

Over time health and education infrastructure at the sub-district level will be managed by Councils. Communities will also be responsible for overseeing the delivery of services and the reporting of problems such as absenteeism or illegal



*Under Citizens' Charter in Cities, women will receive a grant for basic economic activities and vocational training, based on demand in the local market.*

payments. Scorecards will be used in health and education facilities to ensure they are staffed and operating as per their mandate, and to prevent ghost teachers and schools.

The Citizens' Charter assigns critical roles to governors and mayors in holding line ministries accountable. Each year, line ministries participating in the program agree with the governors on the number of villages that their service will reach. This agreement becomes the basis of their financial allocation from the Ministry of Finance. At the end of the year, the governor's office sends a report to the oversight unit, based in the Ministry of Finance, on the status agreed target. Ministries that fall short will not receive further allocations for that province until outstanding services have been delivered. Provincial and District Governors will host regular accountability discussions in which they invite feedback from communities and civil society. CDCs will report progress and issues to the Provincial Development Council. Annual progress reports to the central government will be compared with reports from line ministries.



*Until recently, 300 families living in Eidgah village in the Zheri district of Kandahar lacked basic electricity. They relied on kerosene lamps, which are inefficient, dangerous and expensive. Through their community grant from NSP, the community prioritised the need for a micro-hydro power project to provide basic electricity to all households in the village.*

*Under NSP, 10 percent of all communities prioritised access to renewable energy. Access to safe energy for communities like Eidgah, is reducing exposure to toxins, one of the major causes of pneumonia in children. Electricity also increases access to media and telecommunications, as well as eliminating the need for families to spend large proportion of their income on fuel for basic lighting.*



## SCOPE AND COSTING

Achieving national coverage under the Citizens' Charter will take around 10 years and three phases. In its first four-year phase it will cover approximately one third of the districts in 34 provinces and all provincial capitals, reaching over 12,000 communities. Because of its modular design, it can be scaled up or down depending on the availability of funds.

The first phase of the program will cost approximately \$2.5 billion, or roughly \$60 per person per year, to provide basic infrastructure, agriculture extension, health and education services as well as operations and maintenance. However, a significant share will come from existing or planned service delivery programs that will be moved under the Citizens' Charter umbrella and are already included in sectoral funding plans. This leaves a financing gap of \$1.5 billion, of which the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund will provide around \$500 million, the government \$400 million, and the remainder to come from the consolidated funding request to donor partners at the 2016 Brussels Ministerial Conference.

## LEGITIMACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Services covered by the Citizens' Charter are the basic responsibilities of any government and, for this reason, over time they should move to the recurrent budget. Analytical work under the Citizens' Charter will explore opportunities for more private sector involvement in basic service delivery (health, education, agricultural extension), as well as innovative measures to increase local revenue collection and local contributions.

Technical support for the Charter will come from qualified facilitating partners. A sustainability strategy will ensure core functions are transferred to government positions after three years of capacity building.



*Afghanistan's underserved poor need to receive a basic-level of economic services in order to participate productively in the arenas of economic growth. To help poor communities get a minimum-level of services, we will develop a Citizens' Charter that will set a threshold of core services to be provided to all communities.*

*Realising Self-Reliance, December 2014*

The Citizens' Charter NPP will have a whole-of-government communications strategy to ensure that all stakeholders, particularly villagers, are aware of the objectives and the services that will be delivered through the Charter. Facilitating Partners will have to follow stipulated branding guidelines.

## CONCLUSION

After forty years of conflict, corruption, and disillusionment, no task is more important than rebuilding the trust between the people and the government. The Citizens' Charter is a promise of partnership. Equally as important as the services it provides is the process that it follows. A government that is transparent, democratic, responsive, and respectful of local knowledge will restore people's faith in the benefits of peace and the possibility of justice.



*A water point recently completed in Baghdis province under the management of the local CDC is providing clean water for up to 20 households. Under the Citizens' Charter, all communities across Afghanistan will have universal access to potable water over the next five years. Based on the gap analysis conducted by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, to achieve this target, 18,000 water points will need to be built over the next four years, in 12,000 villages; a feasible target considering the Ministry's current capacity to deliver 7,000 water points per year.*