

Chapter III

**Effective Redressal of Public Grievances & Furnishing
Information to the Visitors to the Secretariat**

Effective Redressal of Public Grievances & Furnishing Information to the Visitors to the Secretariat

A citizen-friendly government should give high priority to redressal of public grievances, since the government, being a service organization, is supposed to provide services to the public and to meet people's needs and aspirations. Effective and timely redressal of public grievances is also a hallmark of responsive and responsible governance. In order to have such a system firmly in place, the Assam Administrative Reforms Commission makes the following recommendations.

1. Separation of public grievance matters from the Pensions and Public Grievances (PPG) Department

Public grievance matters should be separated from pension matters, since these two parts of the PPG department do not have any synergy. Also, a large proportion of the grievances are pension-related and thus against the PPG department themselves. In any case, the PPG department do not do much to get the grievances redressed; they simply forward the complaints to the concerned departments, with hardly any follow-up, monitoring, etc.

The public grievances part of the PPG department should be tagged with the Administrative Reforms and Training (AR & T) department, on the pattern of the Government of India's Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances.

2. Public Grievances Review Committee

A public grievances review committee should be constituted under the Chief Secretary. This committee should have mandatory monthly meetings to review redressal of public grievances, with the senior most Secretary of all concerned departments in attendance. The Additional Chief secretary can preside over the meeting when the CS is out-of-station.

Such high level review would not only force the departments to give due attention to public grievances but also help iron out any inter-departmental coordination issues. The monthly review cycle would also help timely redressal of grievances.

3. Director of Public Grievances

A Secretary or Joint Secretary from the department to which the public grievances part of the PPG department is tagged should be appointed as the Director of Public Grievances (DPG). This position should be responsible for coordinating redressal of public grievances by all departments. The DPG should be authorized to review public grievances with all concerned departments/ organizations, and also authorized to call for relevant records from the concerned departments in cases pending beyond a certain period. This Director could assist the CS-level review committee, and coordinate with HOD /DC/ SDO-level facilitation centres. The Secretariat-level facilitation centre (described below) can function under the control of the DPG. The RPRS programme can also be coordinated state wide via this Director. The DPG should maintain a website via which the public may lodge complaints, confirm receipts of complaints, check the status of their own complaints, seek other information, etc.

4. Secretariat-level Facilitation Centres

A number of information desks (5 or 6) should be opened in the circular building outside the Secretariat main gate, equipped with computers connected to a central server under the Director of Public Grievances, where a database will be maintained with updated information on public grievances and other information for which the visitors commonly come to the Secretariat. The information desks will access the database via a local area network (the Secretariat LAN that is being laid out right now could be extended to include these) and will give up-to-date information to the visitors.

The public can also access information from this database over the Internet from anywhere (CICs, cyber cafés, home or office computers, etc.). They can also use the same channels to lodge grievances.

For the software platform, the public grievances package developed by the NIC could be adopted with suitable modifications.

5. Directorate/HOD-level Facilitation Centres

Although all HODs with public dealings were supposed to maintain a PG cell in their directorates, enquiries from some major directorates have revealed that either such cells don't exist or they don't do any meaningful work. Instead of the PG cells of this kind, the HODs should open facilitation centers at their directorates on the lines of the DCs/ SDOs. The Director of Public Grievances at the Secretariat can also monitor the functioning of these facilitation centres.

6. DC/ SDO-level Facilitation Centres

Under orders from the Government, public facilitation centres have been opened at all DC and SDO (Civil) offices. However, the attention given to these centers depends much on the individual officer's interest. For this reason, these centers have not functioned well at some places. Therefore, it should be made imperative for the DCs/ SDOs to take personal interest in keeping these centres active. Moreover, to maintain the vibrancy of the system, the RPRS programme should be effectively monitored and evaluated on periodic basis. Also, the Divisional Commissioners as well as the proposed state-level Director of Public Grievances should monitor the functioning of these mechanisms regularly.

7. Mandatory, time-bound redressal (Receipt – Redressal – Reply cycle)

At all levels of the government, time-bound redressal of public grievances must be made mandatory. Receipt of the grievances should be promptly acknowledged, and reply to the complainant should follow the redressal without any delay. This receipt-redressal-reply cycle should be kept going on at all levels in a continuous quality improvement (CQI) mode. The DPG should be authorized to ensure this across the board in the Government offices.

8. Accountability of the Departments/ Government offices

All departments and Government offices must be made accountable for timely redressal of public grievances under their jurisdiction. Unless these entities turn around the complaints and provide timely data to the Director of Public Grievances, it would not be possible to maintain the recommended information desks near the Secretariat gate. Also, credibility of the government will suffer, since public expectations would be raised but the fulfillment part will be lacking. Therefore, the senior most Secretary of the department should be made responsible for timely redressal of public grievances involving the department. Also, a nodal officer should be designated in each department who will keep in touch with the Director of Public Grievances on a regular basis and will update the DPG's database in a timely manner.

9. Regular Analysis of the Public Grievance Trends

The trends emerging from the public grievances database should be analyzed at regular intervals to understand the nature, volume, causes, etc., of the complaints and to give meaningful feedback to the departments/

authorities concerned. This exercise will also help in keeping a finger on the pulse of the state of affairs in the state, which could prove to be a valuable input in ensuring good governance.

10. Periodic survey of the visitors to the Secretariat

The visitors to the Secretariat should be surveyed periodically to understand the reasons that bring them there, their problems, potential solutions, effectiveness of the measures taken by the government, etc. This could be done using a simple questionnaire (a sample is attached), selecting the respondents randomly from the line formed outside the Secretariat gate. It would be necessary to keep the questionnaire short, simple, and to the point, so as to avoid irritating the visitors and wasting a lot of time in filling out surveys. The questionnaire should be made available in the official and associate languages so that the visitor is given only the version with which he/she is most comfortable. The data so generated should be analyzed in the manner recommended above.

It would be more credible if this job were entrusted to some independent, non-governmental organization. Initially, the Assam Administrative Reforms Commission would conduct this survey.

Facilitation Centre at Ganaseva Bhavan for Assam Secretariat

Guidelines regarding Functioning of the Facilitation Centre have been finalised after detailed discussions in the Three Day Workshop held in Assam Administrative Staff College on 31.8.2004, 1.9.2004 and 2.9.2004.

Introduction:

A citizen-friendly Government should give high priority to redressal of public grievances since the Government being a service provider, it is bound to meet people's needs and aspiration. Effective and timely redressal of public grievances is a hall mark of responsive and responsible governance. This has become more important after enactment of Right to Information statues. The workshop has been organized in the context of implementation of the recommendations of the Reforms Commission relating to effective redressal of public grievances at Secretariat level. Commission has suggested that, an Additional or Joint Secretary level officer should be earmarked in the Department of Administrative Reforms as a full time Director of Public Grievances who should be responsible for coordinating redressal of public grievances by all the Secretariat Departments. DPG should have authority to review the pending public grievances of all the Departments and examine the records pertaining to such matters. The Secretariat level Facilitation Centre would function under the DPG, who would maintain a website via which the public may lodge complaints, and check the status of their complaints.

1. Objective

In most of the offices, there is no established method to give information to the visiting public. This causes much difficulty to the people who cannot easily gather information regarding the fate of their representations. To reduce this difficulty the Government had issued detailed instructions for organizing facilitation center in most of the offices having direct interaction with the public. But by efflux of time, most of these centers have become ineffective.

The following guidelines have been framed for setting up of and streamlining the functioning of the Facilitation Centre in the Assam Sachivalaya.

2. Suggested Organisation of Facilitation Centre

- Facilitation Centres shall be set up in the Gana Seva Bhavan, Assam Sachivalaya, Dispur.

- In the Secretariat, the Centre shall be under the control of the Secretary in charge of Administrative Reforms. Director Public Grievances will be directly responsible for its functioning.
- The Facilitation Centre is to function mainly as an interface with the visiting public to give information on and to answer queries regarding petitions given by them.
- The staff required to man the Centre shall be drafted from the Secretariat offices. Those who are willing to do the work and are found suitable will be preferred for posting.

3. Staffing the Facilitation Centre

- In the Gana Seva Bhavan there shall be three windows with permanently assigned serial numbers. Each of them shall be equipped with a computer. One Under Secretary level officer shall be in overall charge of the windows. He/she shall be assisted by two junior ACS officers, who shall initially visit the Nodal Officers of the concerned Departments for collection of information, till the Local Area Network is established with the Nodal officers of different departments.
- The Facilitation Centre shall be provided with computers to record the enquiries, other relevant details and to facilitate periodic monitoring of the stages of action on the petitions received and processed.

4. Functions of the Facilitation Centre:

- The most important function of the Centre is to respond to enquiries. If the enquiring person physically visits the Centre, the details shall be obtained in a prescribed format.
- The enquiry shall be serially numbered in the computer and a slip containing the number and subject will be supplied to the visitor. On his subsequent visits to enquire regarding the same matter the visitor shall bring this slip for reference.
- Once enquiry is numbered in the computer it shall be closed only when the issue is finally decided and closed by the concerned Administrative Department.

- Wherever a matter is not to be processed in that office, the visitor shall be politely told so and the appropriate officer to be contacted has to be intimated to him.
- Till the fully computerized information system is introduced the Officer in charge of the Centre shall gather information from the respective sections either over phone or through the officers posted in the Centre and pursuing the concerned file. The entire office shall be liable to show their files to the designated officer except where it relates to a vigilance case, purchases or any other classified information.
- The Facilitation Centre need not render itself a file processing section parallel to the one that is having the subject as their allotted work. What really is intended is to inform the visitor regarding the stage of action on an issue and to follow it up till disposal.
- The Nodal Officer of the concerned Department shall be responsible to function as the **Contact Point** for this purpose.

5. Handling of Enquiries

- When a serial number is allotted to a paper the officer in charge of the Counter shall gather the information from the nodal officer of the respective section at the earliest and pass it on to the visitor.
- In case the matter enquired into has to be located and verified, the enquiries received till a cut off time on every working day shall be replied to across the counter in the afternoon. In any case, every visitor should be told as to when he could come back to the counter to get the required information or contact over phone.
- All the departments/sections are bound to supply information to the officer in charge of the Centre. In complicated matters the file also may be made available to the Officer in charge for perusal. Nodal officer of the respective departments will be personally responsible to furnish information to the Centre.
- When the issue enquired about is kept pending for want of additional information from the petitioner, the fact may be intimated to the visitor.
- The enquiry shall be limited to issues affecting the person, group of people etc. general matters like the financial position of the State, Law and Order, Taxation etc. shall not be entertained as enquiries.

- When the enquiry is made by MLA/MP the instructions relating to the interaction with them have to be kept in mind and observed.
- The Facilitation Centre shall not add any paper or document to the file, which is given to them for perusal. In the same way, they shall not hand over the file to any other officer and only return it to the giver.
- Non supply of relevant information by any section or officer shall be brought to the immediate notice of the Chief Secretary or the Additional Chief Secretary by the Secretary in charge of the Department of Administrative Reforms. Such lapses that affect the credibility of the machinery of Government would be viewed seriously.
- The Facilitation Centre is only to facilitate the providing of information in response to enquiries to the visitors. The Sections and officers charged with the processing of papers should ensure that instructions relating to processing of papers are observed properly and any assurance given through the counters are also accomplished.

6. Miscellaneous

- Enquiries recorded at one window shall be followed up till the staff of the same window finally disposes of the matter.
- The list of enquiries shall also be drawn up department wise and supplied to the Secretary in charge of the subject. While holding the monthly staff conference of the department, the Secretary shall review the pendency with reference to the list also.
- Whenever possible the persons who make an enquiry during the office hours may be provided with information over phone also.
- The communication and gathering of information by the Centre Staff from the office need not be in writing. It may be either conversation over phone or in person.
- The establishment of the Facilitation Centre does not take away the responsibility of the higher officers to entertain visitors on important issues.

Publications of different departments re: functioning, projects, information etc. should be made available in this Centre for wide circulation.

CRM

Citizen Relationship Management (CRM)

Improving government's relationship with the public
CRM's vision for public administration

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Improving government's relationship with the public CRM's vision for public administration

CRM stands for customer relationship management. If we think of the citizen as the customer” of public administrations and governments, we could call it: “citizen relationship management”.

Relevant CRM concept is a set of solutions and strategies focusing on:

- Improving services the administration provides to citizens.
- Making it easier for the citizen to gain access to government.
- Providing citizens with information about processes that involve them.
- Improving internal government processes.

When it interacts with the public, government must strive to:

- Know what kind of service and response citizen clients need.
- Focus on personal contact and meetings between citizens and government officers.
- Develop a strategy for managing relationship with the public.

Therefore, the most important steps are to define those processes that involve the public, manage all the information we have about the circumstances of citizens' involvement with government, use all available channels to communicate with citizen clients (visits, phone, internet, Fax, SMS, etc.....) and, finally, design a set of services that add value for the citizen.

CRM Solutions

Technology obviously has a critical role to play in achieving the objectives outlined above. Today, governments and public administrations can exploit a vast range of advanced technology to collect and analyze information about citizens and communicate with them. And that is what a CRM solution offers: multiple communication channels to the local administration or government, so that citizens can access what they need, when they need it, to make a transaction, ask for information, etc. etc.... These interactions are stored in a common database that authorized people scan for citizen initiated inquiries, active files and flagged problem situations.

Steps in the implementation of CRM

An effective implementation of a CRM solution should follow these simple guidelines:

- Multichannel access; the objective here is to improve the quality of service offered to citizens by providing alternative channels of communication. This usually involves implementing a Call Centre or Contact Centre and also providing an internet connection.
- Simplicity; a CRM strategy should start by first managing the simple processes. Easy access (e.g. via the internet) to information or document downloads will help the public to become familiar with the new service. Experience from managing these simple processes will assist the administration in determining what is important to the public, and it can then respond accordingly.
- Single vision of the Public Service; If citizens are offered a single point of contact for accessing related public services they will perceive they are dealing with well organized government departments. By integrating different applications behind a common entry point, citizen clients can easily obtain all related information through just one layer of access.
- Personalization; it is important to offer particular categories of client (e.g. senior citizens) the information they typically need. With technically advanced capacity for information analysis, the CRM solution can classify information about the population and group individuals accordingly. This enables administrations to design services and launch information campaigns targeting specific groups with the information they need.
- Pervasiveness; finally the most complex processes must be defined and modeled in order to apply process automation to every area and to every point of contact.

CRM Benefits

The important benefits of CRM to the public are improved client satisfaction levels resulting from reduced response times, and easy communication via channels of choice, including 24 hour internet access. The advantage to government is that happier clients naturally improve the personal satisfaction level of the administration's employees, and by leveraging CRM technology to collect and analyze citizens' feedback, departments are better equipped to improve delivery of required

information and services, which has an additional positive impact on client satisfaction.