

## V. FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF CUSTOMERS OF DHAKA CITY SERVICES

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**A**s part of the Dhaka City Management Reform project, a small-scale study focusing on the users of Dhaka City services was conducted. The study was undertaken with several objectives in mind. It was aimed at providing an overview of what types of services are in greatest need among the citizens of Dhaka and the extent to which different services are being used at present. It was also a means of validating the corporate bodies' perceptions of the levels and types of demand among their customers. More importantly, the study gauged the degree of customer satisfaction from the various services they receive, thus giving consumers an opportunity to provide feedback on city services to municipal service providers.

This study should be seen as a prototype from which valuable lessons can be drawn with a view to establishing a regular program. Though it is intended primarily as a means of providing data about Dhaka, its methodology could be extended to cover the other major metropolitan areas of Chittagong, Khulna, and Rajshahi.

### METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Since the study was conceived as a first attempt in designing a system for the continuous assessment of consumer satisfaction, the methodology itself was

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under test to see if it could deliver the desired type of results in a usable and cost-effective manner. The study was initially conceived in two stages.

### *Stage I*

This was a qualitative phase where focused group discussions were conducted among Dhaka householders. The purpose of group discussions was to identify the criteria consumers use to judge their levels of satisfaction with different services, and then establish some kind of framework by which customers would be able to provide scores of their perceived levels of satisfaction. One group covered the relatively affluent households, defined as having a monthly household income of at least Tk12,500. Another covered the less well-off homes (less than Tk7,500).

### *Stage II*

Stage II was the main quantitative phase of the study. Six hundred households were interviewed using the questionnaire developed following Stage I. The households were selected using cluster sampling techniques in 50 randomly selected cluster heads across the DCC area. The sampling frame used for the selection of the cluster heads (i.e., starting addresses) was the electoral roll. Twelve households were selected around each cluster head using predetermined rules of movement (the right hand rule). The adult member in each household who was most knowledgeable about the amenities and services used in that household was interviewed.

Trained staff were given a thorough briefing on the questionnaire used prior to the fieldwork. These workers then conducted the interviews in March 1998. Field quality control was maintained through extensive supervisory back checks. The items in the questionnaire covered the following areas.

- General attitudes toward provision of city services by public sector authorities
- Solid waste disposal
  - place of disposal of household solid waste
  - rates paid for collection from household
  - scoring of various criteria
- Electricity Supply
  - access to electricity, household generator
  - typical monthly bill, whether self-billing
  - scoring of various criteria
- Water supply and sewer
  - access to water supply, household reservoir
  - typical monthly bill, whether self-billing
  - scoring of various criteria
- Domestic piped gas
  - access to piped gas supply, LPG
  - typical monthly bill, number of burners
  - scoring of various criteria
- Other city amenities and overall scoring for various other services
- Sex and age of all members of household
- Chief wage earner's education and occupation
- Monthly household income
- Field control data

Respondents were asked about their level of agreement/disagreement (on a five-point scale) with a number of statements expressing different attitudes toward the provision of city services. The responses were then converted into numeric scores ranging from 0 to 100, where the higher the number the greater the level of agreement. Scores reported are mean scores for all those who provided a score for that particular item. In the tables, results are provided for higher-income households (A) and lower-income households (B).

In the case of particular providers of city services (DCC, DESA, WASA, and Titas Gas), respondents were directly asked to provide a score ranging from 1 to 10 for a number of aspects of the

service received. A score of 10 would indicate the highest level of satisfaction for a particular service, while a score of 1 would indicate the lowest.

Apart from the services provided by the corporate bodies, scores were also obtained for the overall level of satisfaction obtained from other city amenities and utilities such as parks and greenery, street lighting, law and order, mosquito control, and so on. These were grouped according to zone.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS

*Consumers favor the imposition of exemplary sanctions to bring about improvements.*

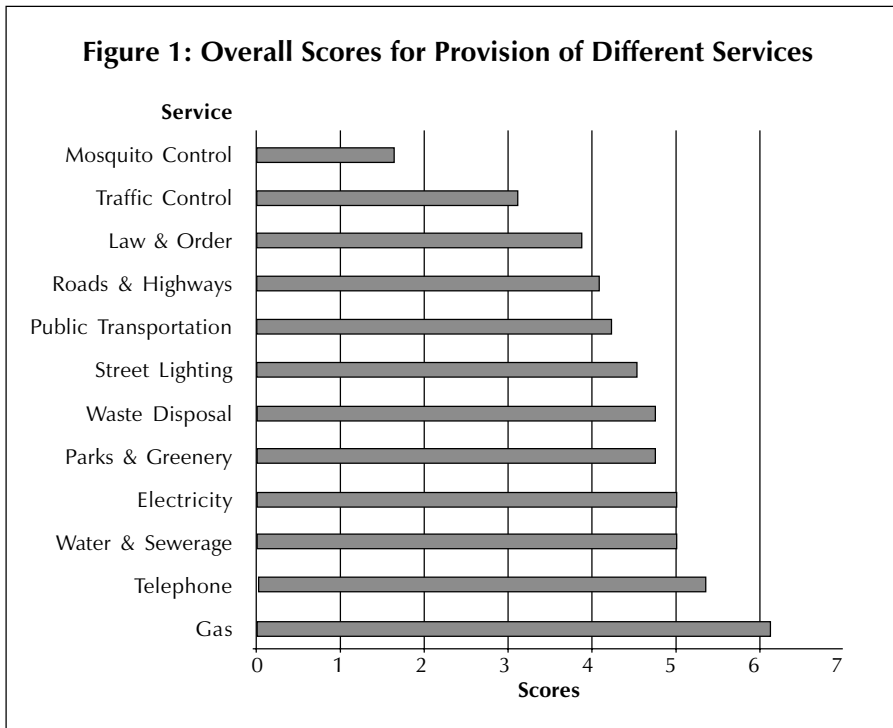
The scores clearly suggest that considerable frustration exists, particularly with the performance of personnel involved in providing city utilities, and that consumers tend to favor the imposition of exemplary sanctions to bring about improvements (Table 1).

**Table 1: Level of Agreement/Disagreement with Selected Statements**

Statements	A (%)	B (%)	Total (%)
If we severely punished a few of the wrongdoers everything would improve	85	88	87
We are being denied services to which we are entitled	86	86	86
You cannot get the service you require unless you make unofficial payments to staff	85	83	84
Most of the difficulties are deliberately created to extract more payments from the consumers	78	79	78
It is very difficult to know where to take your complaints	72	72	72
Even if we paid higher charge rates we would not get any improvements in the level of service	63	64	64
Privatized services would not be able to maintain quality because they would always aim to maximize their profits	58	67	63

There was a significant difference in attitudes on privatization between households from upper and lower socioeconomic strata, with households from the upper strata being somewhat more favorably disposed toward privatization.

In terms of the level of customer satisfaction with the various services received (Figure 1), the findings can be examined either by particular criteria or across different corporate bodies providing particular services. If we look, for instance, at value for money and the associated criterion of rates charged for the different services, we find that the level of satisfaction is similar for DESA, the electricity authority (4.9); WASA, the water and sewerage authority (4.7); and DCC, the solid waste disposal authority (4.6).



Satisfaction level is significantly higher, however, for Titas Gas, the gas supply authority (6.2). This is presumably because at the time of the survey domestic gas bills were assessed at a relatively low rate and were calculated according to the number of burners in the household, regardless of amount consumed.

Moreover, Titas Gas scores relatively well in terms of satisfaction with the regularity of its supply (6.7) as opposed to the regularity of collection of solid waste (6.3), regularity of domestic water supply (5.9), and, least well, the electricity supply (4.8), doubtless due to the frequent outages caused by the inability of present supplies to meet the demand.

In terms of informing their customers about themselves, Titas Gas, DESA, and WASA all score a relatively low 4.5, while DCC scored even lower with only 3.8.

Another way of looking at the results is in terms of overall comparisons between the different service-providing bodies. In this case the findings can be summarized as follows.

- DCC scores very well in terms of regular pickup of waste from the designated collection areas (6.3), but scores very poorly in terms of the smells (2.9), disposal of waste (3.7), attraction of vermin and insects (3.8), and general cleanliness (4.0).
- DESA scored well in the reliability of its billing (5.5), but tends to be brought down by load shedding (4.8) and safety hazards, repairs, and maintenance (4.6).
- WASA scores well in water supply (5.9), and pressure (5.2), but is brought down by concerns about the potability of the water (4.0) and inadequacy of the sewerage system (4.1).
- Titas Gas provides the highest overall level of satisfaction of all city services (6.1) as a regular (6.7), low cost (6.2) service, although it was not assessed on criteria such as adequacy of

pressure, system loss or hazards. It scored low only on information about itself (4.5).

### **FURTHER PROSPECTS FOR THE STUDY**

The research was conducted as a prototype study to test various aspects of the methodology and establish the types of data reduction and reporting formats that would yield clear, user-friendly results. The findings were presented at the Dhaka City Management Reform Workshop. They were well received, and useful suggestions for improvement were made by the workshop participants. There was also a general feeling that the establishment of a regular program of such surveys could make important contributions to management reform.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Set up a contact group of those who would be most directly affected by the findings, to include:
  - Representatives of the key service providers
  - Representatives of city management bodies
  - Organizers and sponsors of the workshop
  - NGOs involved in the urban sector
  - Representatives of consumer watchdog bodies
  - Members of the national media
  - Interested private sector representatives
  - Research professionals
2. Set up a protocol for a regular surveys into the consumption and assessment of urban services.
3. Investigate other similar initiatives in the region.