STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What is Citizen-centric governance? Meaning and significance

Polity & Governance

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Citizen-centric governance is an approach in which public administration focuses on citizens' needs, rights, convenience and experience rather than merely completing administrative procedures.

In traditional administration, officials may rely primarily on inspections, departmental reports and internal assessments. Citizen-centric governance supplements these mechanisms with public feedback, accessible grievance systems and measurable service standards.

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Maha drops physical verification for Ladki Bahin Yojana, extends e-KYC deadline to March 31

Inspection of the Tehsil Karchana on the occasion of the Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas | Division Prayagraj, Government of

INDIA-TOILETS-PACKAGE

The Clean Toilet Picture Challenge demonstrates this approach because highway users can report a service deficiency directly rather than relying exclusively on routine inspections.

Key features of citizen-centric governance

Feature	Meaning	Application to the NHAI initiative

Accessibility	Services and complaint systems should be easy to use	Reporting through a mobile application
Transparency	Citizens should be able to understand how complaints are handled	Digital submissions and verification
Accountability	Responsible agencies should answer for service deficiencies	Identification of unclean facilities
Responsiveness	Authorities should act within a reasonable timeframe	Timely assessment and corrective action
Participation	Citizens contribute to monitoring and improving services	Highway users report poor sanitation
Outcome orientation	Success is measured by improvements in services	Cleaner toilets and better user experience

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Core concept: Good governance is not measured only by the existence of infrastructure. It must also be measured by its accessibility, cleanliness, reliability and quality.

Social accountability: How citizens monitor public services?

Social accountability refers to mechanisms through which citizens, civil society organisations and communities scrutinise public institutions and demand explanations or corrective action.

It complements formal accountability mechanisms such as legislative oversight, audits, inspections and judicial review.

Public service is provided

Example: A toilet at a highway toll plaza

Citizen observes a deficiency

Unclean or poorly maintained facility

Complaint and verification

Digital evidence and administrative checks

Corrective action and review

Cleaning, follow-up inspection and accountability

Why is social accountability important?

1. It provides information about service failures that routine inspections may miss.
2. It gives citizens a practical channel to communicate with public authorities.
3. It can improve the use of public funds by identifying poorly maintained assets.
4. It may strengthen trust when authorities respond visibly and promptly.
5. It can reveal recurring problems that require systemic rather than temporary solutions.

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Limitations

Social accountability works only when complaints lead to action. If reports accumulate without resolution, citizen participation may become symbolic.

There is also a risk of false reporting, duplicate complaints or disproportionate attention to highly visible problems. Authorities must therefore verify information, prioritise serious deficiencies and publish meaningful performance indicators.