'Samadhan ek Diwas': Governance in a Day

Sanjay Dubey[1]

ABSTRACT

Governance in a day or "Samadhan Ek Diwas" is an approach envisioned by the District Collector, Jabalpur, Madhya.Pradesh, India with the objective of simplifying the public delivery system. It endeavors to promote excellence and transparency in public administration. Samadhan is a Hindi word for 'Solution' and 'Ek-Diwas' is also a Hindi word meaning 'one day'. Hence, "Samadhan Ek Diwas" is the solution to the grievances and applications of the citizens in a day.

Keywords: E-governance, Public Delivery System, Common Citizen

1. Introduction

Right to Information Act 2006 presumes that the access to government orders, notings, decisions and reasons are obscured in the veil of secrecy and hence to bring in the accountability citizen should have access to them. Prior to the Act the government of Madhya Pradesh (India) has issued instructions wide its government order no 769/CS/2001 fixing the deadline for the disposal of requests made by the citizens. It fixed the responsibilities of various departments besides also empowering the next appellate authority to ensure its compliance. Both these enactments and orders on one hand admit the failure of government to share its decision making process, while on the other hand proves that still after 50 years of independence we have not been able to evolve a system which is ridden off from the evils of delays, secrecy and harassment. Collector is the coordinator, manager and bureaucratic head of all the departments in the district. He has the territorial jurisdiction over the area as also the power and duty to devise the ways and means to see the welfare of its people. Thus the Collector is the obvious choice to be given the responsibility to coordinate amongst different departments to oversee the enforcement of government's orders.

However, bureaucracy has always been known for red-tapism, hierarchal arrangement of officers, formalism, administrative delays, cumbersome and dilatory administrative procedures and endless movement of files from one desk to another. In order to reduce such hindrances to smooth governance, need was felt for simplified office procedures, evolution of new patterns of decision making, brief and simple official forms/applications and to the point and cogent information about – where and how to apply. Governance in a day or "Samadhan Ek Diwas" is an approach envisioned by the District Collector, Jabalpur, Madhya.Pradesh, India with the objective of simplifying the public delivery system. It endeavors to promote excellence and transparency in public administration. Samadhan is a Hindi word for 'Solution' and 'Ek-Diwas' is also a Hindi word meaning 'one day'. Hence, "Samadhan Ek Diwas" is the solution to the grievances and applications of the citizens in a day.

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[1] Collectorate, Madhya Pradesh Government, Jabalpur (M.P.) - 482001, India (Email: sanrachna@hotmail.com, Telephone: +91-9425802001)

2. Priorities and Purposes

Citizens pay countless visits to the government offices in search of information, direction and help and more often than not end up falling prey to the middlemen. These middlemen who thrive on the information gap charge exorbitant amount for their services. The citizen does get his/her desired documents, however, after investing much energy, time and money. It is obvious that the process is taxing and drains down the people emotionally as well. The other side of this process is that the common man start thinking that something is wrong with them and starts blaming the government and themselves for the delays. Inherent in the system is the inefficiency of operation as the applicant moves table to table to find out the status of his application thereby wasting the valuable time of staff as well his own. This system also makes it difficult to monitor and evaluate, as there is no common database of number of applications received and disposed. More than that no track can be kept of the delays in disposal thus leading to errant behaviour of government functionaries. This is often the cause of the poor image of the government in the eyes of the citizens.

3. Strategy

Initial inertia and reluctance were the first few hurdles that this idea has to weather when the collector floated this system. The biggest problem that was put forth by staff was "how can we assure the issuance of certificates on the same day as the applications are generally not accompanied with the desired documents". Thus to make officials visualize the objective and also to convince them, a series of dialogues and meetings with various departmental heads were conducted and only after lot of persuasion and cajoling a list was prepared for 23 certificates, licenses and permits that could be disposed off in a single day. Core group worked on simplifying and standardizing the procedures besides analyzing "System Requirement Specification" (SRS). As a result, it gave an operating system, which is transparent, accountable, time specific, goal oriented and, above all, answerable. Software has been developed in house by NIC, Jabalpur to process the data with respect to - registration, scrutiny, evaluation, disposal and delivery of the applications.

Process

Traditional system of receiving and processing the applications cannot possibly support the imaginative system of governance in a day. Six computers terminals, printers with LAN connectivity are installed in the collectorate premises. The details of the applications received are fed in these terminals for processing (on line) by the respective sections and departments of the collectorate. These are then followed by the original documents (off line) for future reference and filing.

There is a provision of facilitation help desk which would not only distribute the required application forms, but also render necessary help like filling up the forms, briefing the applicant about the necessary documents to be provided. Applications forms, duly filled, can be submitted in any of the six counters between 11 p.m & 1 p.m. on any working day. After preliminary scrutiny of the application, the computer operator generates a registration number and a token bearing this number is issued to the applicant. The application is then sent to the concerned department for necessary action and the relevant certificate is prepared between 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and duly signed by the concerned officer along with official seal, is sent to the issue counter at 4 p.m. The Issue Counter would deliver this certificate to the applicant between 4 & 5 p.m. In case the certificate cannot be issued, a computer generated written statement is given to the applicant clearly citing the reasons for rejection. An officer in-charge has been appointed for this program, who would be responsible for the overall functioning of the system and would brief the collector regarding the status of the day's operations. Provision has been made in the software that till the collector approves the action taken on the previous day's applications, the system will not initialize for the current date.

Facilitation of disposal of application was not be all and end all of the system; rather to prove that the applicant is welcome the district administration has improved the environs of the office too. Now the

receiving and waiting hall is fitted with 51" Plasma T.V., comfortable seating arrangement, series of writing tables for filling of applications, tea / coffee wending machine, closed circuit T.V. and a public telephone booth. A special counter for women, senior citizens and disabled/physically challenged persons has been made. Ramp facilities have also been provided for disabled. Entire profile of the beneficiary is being maintained and analyzed, which is maintained in terms of various parameters like caste/sex/age etc, to see what can be the further improvements in the system.

Monitoring
The software is designed to keep a complete check on the efficiency and rate of disposal and hence it generates various reports to help in the monitoring and keeping tab on day to day functioning of the system. In order to ensure compliance the software demands initialization every day by the authorized officer, before it can accept the applications.

Line of Command
District administration has taken care that the work should not suffer in the absence of the officers and hence necessary delegations are made to the second line of officers. This is done to take care of the contingencies when the appointed officer could not be present.

Job Rotation
In order to check the complacency and avoid dilly- dallying, job rotation system is put in place. A batch of six computer operators takes charge of counters on rotation basis. One set of six operators is not repeated in a week. This does away the element of vested interest while dealing effectively with the citizen. These operators continue to work in their respective sections for rest of the days. This takes care of monotony and continuity besides maintaining the enthusiasm and zeal amongst the subordinate staff.

Incentive
Computer operating knowledge, knowledge for scrutiny of the forms before acceptance, collection of fee and giving the receipt etc were some of the actions for which operators feigned ignorance. To overcome this hurdle they were told in clear words that they have no way but to perform. In addition, an incentive scheme is also devised to identify the best worker for the month amongst them and is rewarded with cash award of 501 Rs. This generates internal competition and craving for hard work.

Behaviour
In order to ensure various aspects of services, operators are trained on behavioural and communication skills. They are also sensitized to deal with the citizens with dignity and respect. This promotes creation of conducive environment for work, which in turn promotes productivity.

Changes resulting from the achievement
This is the first ever project that issues certificates within the same day of acceptance of application form and can be considered as the first major step towards the ultimate goal of paperless office through E-Governance. The Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh formally inaugurated this project on 30th June 2006 in Jabalpur. Between 30th June 2006 and 31th Aug 2007, 54764 applications have been received and, out of which, 54095 certificates have been issued and delivered on the very same day, thus achieving a disposal rate of 98.80 %. The remaining 669 applications were rejected after specifically stating the cause for their rejection in writing. If we take the data prior to the implementation of this project, we find it that in the span of 14 months i.e. from Apr '05 to June '06, only 10048 certificates were issued in the district, which works out to be around an average of 24 certificates per day. However, after the implementation of governance in day, in a span of almost 1year 2 months it is around 130 certificates per day and that too within same day of the application, which could not have been imagined earlier. Hence, the results are not to be judged only by the statistics but by the quality of human character that has evolved. This project has

successfully resulted in the quick redressal of the grievances of the citizens. This instantaneous disposal has expedited speedy decision making, reduction in file movement and had put a check on red-tapism and corruption. The system has helped in inculcating the feeling of care and concern for citizens amongst the government employees besides improving their self-esteem.

Information on the fingertips have helped officials to monitor the performance of individual worker and officer. The minimal service charge levied for the facility on applicant has generated enough additional resources for the district administration to undertake new and innovative measures like acquiring ISO certification and developing new software. Incidently Collectorate Jabalpur became the first district in India to receive ISO 9001-2000 for all its sections.

4. Sustainability and Transferability

No sooner than its launch the system caught the fancy of its citizen. There were demands from all quarters to add new services and open new nodes. Convinced of its acceptability and success the district administration in Jabalpur decentralized it to subdivisions and Tahsil headquarters. Growing demand of services has motivated the officials to open new nodes in 8 suburban areas of Jabalpur on PPP model. The entrepreneurs have now roped in to become part of the system. Though, initially system provided only 23 services, more and more services have been added in its purview since then. Hence, it has laid a foundation for taking up more and more complex applications finally leading to full fledged e-governance. It has resulted in change in attitude of the people and has made them more aware & knowledgeable about official procedures and less vulnerable to the traps of the touts and middlemen. Citizens' demand has forced other district administration to adopt it and the government saw it, as an opportunity to serve its citizen. In fact, Madhya Pradesh Government has officially instructed all the District Collectors of the state to replicate the scheme and has even issued a deadline of 15th August 2006 for its implementation. Successful implementation by the entire district in M.P with differing culture and conditions, manned by different officials has proved it beyond doubt that it is immune to the predecessor-successor syndrome. District administration in Madhya Pradesh has so far benefited more than 0.2 million people by this project. Ease of operation, low cost of physical infrastructure, least requirement of training and minimum upkeep has made it ideal to further decentralization and transfer in smaller administrative units. Use of vernacular language (Hindi) for all its operation has reduced the resistance amongst the staff. In-house development of the software by NIC Jabalpur has made the troubleshooting easy besides giving the flexibility of its constant upgradation and addition of services. Adoption by all and that to in such a short time frame is itself an indication of its popularity and transferability and sustainability.

5. Concluding Remarks

Will to improvise and intelligent use of technology can work wonders for the masses. We neither require new systems nor the huge investments if only we have the commitment and desire to reduce the drudgery of common man. If a citizen feels that he is welcome in the system then it goes a long way in boosting his morale and enhancing the image of governance. System has brought citizen closer to government and government to its people. Services as varied as domicile certificate, caste certificate, transit pass for mining minerals, health benefits to building laborers, arms license renewal, small saving agent renewal, fertilizer license all under one roof from single window and on the same day of application is some thing that is hard to imagine and still harder to implement. This has been made possible in Jabalpur district and is now implemented in all districts of Madhya Pradesh including their remote and unapproachable areas.

In particular I acknowledge the efforts of the officers of NIC, Jabalpur for the design and development of the software and its maintenance since its inception.

References

1. *Right to Information Act 2005*
2. *IT Policy 2006*, Department of IT, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh

Appendix-I: Procedure of operation: A Flow Chart

Getting the form from the Jan Suvidha Counter by the applicant

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Getting the required information of the enclosures needed for the application from the officer at the **Help Desk**.

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Presentation of the duly filled application and submission at the **Jan Suvidha Counter**

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Initial scrutiny by the operator at the **Jan Suvidha Counter** and issuing of receipt of the applicant
(11:00AM to 1:00PM)

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Computer Genarated Notesheet being sent to the concerned section / Officer In Charge
(1:00AM to 2:00PM)

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Officer in charge **scrutinizes the documents** and on being satisfied about the claim of the applicant Authenticates the issue of the certificate. The certificate after being signed is returned back to the issue counter
(2:00PM to 4:00PM)

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Certificate being delivered from the **Jan Suvidha Counter** to the applicant
(4:00PM to 5:00PM)

Appendix –II: Citizen Services Being provided

Services	Amount	Services	Amount
Domicile Certificate	20	Road Accident Help Amount	00
Income Certificate	20	Senior Citizen Certificate	10
Caste Certificate Temporary	50	Affidavit	10
Birth/Death Certificate	20	Mela / Priyadaeshini Permission	50
Marriage Certificate	50	NOC for Foreign Liquor to	50
Solvancy Certificate	100	Retailers/Contractors Pesticides License	50
Rahat Yojna (Tribal Development)	20	Fertilisers Registration	50
Sobhagyawati Yojna (AC Tribal)	10	Seed Licence	50
Freedom Fighters Samman Nidhi	00	Zila Stariya Rajya Bimari Sahitya Nidhi	20
Arma License Renewal	50	Sharamik Hiradhikari Identity Card	10
BPL Certificate	50	Sharamik Antyasthi Sahayta Yojna	00
Loud Speaker Permission	05	Sharamik Prasuti Sahayata Yojna	10
Khasra B-1	10	Certified Copy of Voter List	00
Mining Lease (Temporary)	20	Permanent Registration	20
Urgent Certified Copies	50	Temporary Licence (Permit) (RTO)	30
Temparory Lease (Mining)	00	No Objection Certificate NOC (RTO)	20
Permanent Lease (Mining)	10		