INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOLUTION FOR ISSUING PASSPORT IN INDIA: THE CASE OF PASSPORT SEVA PROJECT

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Abstract

Possession of a Passport is a necessity rather than a luxury in a country like India especially in the era of globalization. The inter-country mobility demands a valid passport in most of the countries. However, in getting passport, there was huge delay, corruption and nepotism in our country. To mitigate these troubles, the government of India has developed an IT solution for issuing passport under the National e-Governance Projec (NeGP)t. The project is called 'Passport Seva' . The vision of the project is "to deliver all Passport-related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and committed workforce". This article evaluates the performance of this new initiative. It is seen that the project has received high acclaim within a short span of time in terms of number of passport issued and awards received.

Key words: e-Governance, NeGP,TCS, Passport Seva Kendra.

Introduction

Over the past two decades or so, there have been islands of e-Governance initiatives in the country at the national, state, district and even block-level. During the 1980s and early 1990s, initial attempts towards e-Governance were made with a focus on networking government departments and developing in-house government applications in the areas of defence, economic monitoring, planning and the deployment of IT to manage data-intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc., (Government of India, 1985). These applications focused on automation of internal government functions rather than on improving service delivery to citizens. Some of them have been highly successful and are suitable for replication. A need was therefore felt for taking a holistic view of the several e-Governance initiatives implemented across the country. It was increasingly perceived that if e-Governance was to be speeded up across the various arms and levels of Government, a programme approach would need to be adopted, which must be guided by a common vision, strategy and approach. This would have the added advantage of enabling huge savings in costs, in terms of sharing the core and support infrastructure, enable interoperability through standards etc., which would result in the citizen having a seamless view of Government. It was with this background, that the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was formulated for implementation across the country.

The NeGP has been formulated by the Department of Information Technology (DIT) and Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DAR&PG). The Union Government approved the NeGP comprising of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and 10 components on May 18, 2006.   At present, there are 31 MMPs functioning under the NeGP. The NeGP aims at improving delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses with the following vision:*"Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man"*(DIT,2006). Among the MMPs operated through the NeGP, Passport Seva is one of the Central Government Category MMPs. The project has been completely rolled out and hence a look at the performance of this project is attempted in this paper.

Why a project called 'Passport Seva'?

All Indian citizens who depart or intend to depart from India are required to be in possession of a valid passport or travel document. Under the Passports Act 1967, the Government of India may issue different types of passports and travel documents such as Ordinary Passport, Diplomatic Passport, Official Passport, Emergency Certificate and Certificate of Identity for the purpose. Over the last few years, there has been an increase in demand for passport and related services combined with the expectation of enhanced service delivery experiences. The existing infrastructure, systems and processes were inadequate to meet the growing demand and heightened expectations of the citizens with respect to service delivery. Besides, there was also a need to comply to international travel standards which could not be met with the existing system.

Despite constant improvements in the Passport Issuance System and liberalized measures to make the system more transparent over the years and due to the rapid increase in the number of passport seekers besides increasing expectations from citizens vis-à-vis delivery of services to the citizens by the Government, it was realized that it would not be possible to meet the demand without revamping the system. Keeping this in mind, the Ministry embarked on an ambitious e-governance initiative as part of National e-Governance Plan - the Passport Seva Project (PSP) - a Mission Mode Project which aims "to deliver all Passport-related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and committed, trained and motivated workforce". The Passport Seva Project was launched by the Ministry of External

Affairs (MEA) with the objective of delivering Passport Services to the citizens in a comfortable environment with wider accessibility and reliability.

As a first step in designing the PSP, MEA engaged the National Institute for Smart Government (NISG) for studying the existing system of Passport issuance in India and the global best practices and for making suitable recommendations on establishing a redesigned system that could fulfill the above objective. On receipt of a detailed report from NISG, the MEA obtained approval of the Union Cabinet on 6th September 2007, inter alia to (a) outsourcing of delivering front-end passport services, (b) establishing 77 Passport SevaKendras (PSKs) across the country, (c) creating a centralized IT system linking all PSK's, RPO/POs', Police and Postal Department and (d) permitting the private partner to levy a Service Charge for each service.

Following a two bid process, M/s. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) were selected as Service Provider in May 2008 for implementation of Passport Seva Project. A Master Service Agreement (MSA) was signed by the MEA with TCS on 13th October 2008. TCS would recover its cost through Service Charge per passport based on volumes and subject to 27 stringent service delivery levels. These service delivery levels encompass various parameters such as external and internal efficiency; external, internal and technical effectiveness; environment and ambience and customer relations. The achievement and sustenance of these service levels requires a holistic approach to service delivery and optimization across technology, business process and people on a continuous basis. This IT driven Project is run with over 3,000 persons deployed from the private Service Provider and 2,500 officials from the MEA. The Project runs on the Build-Own-Operate-Transfer model wherein the initial investments are by the private partner. There is minimal investment from the Government.

The MSA includes clauses relating to governance schedule, use and control of PSKs, security and safety, terms of payment, taxation, breach, rectification and termination, protection and limitations, data protection, confidentiality, audit, access and reporting, intellectual property, trademarks/publicity, severability & waiver, dispute resolution, change control, exit management and terms of payment.

Responsibilities of Service Provider

The responsibilities of Service Provider include the following:--

a) All hardware, software, networking & PCs of the entire Passport system as specified in the RFP and the MSA.

b) Physical Infrastructure for all PSKs including interiors thereof, as specified in the RFP.

c) Data Centre (DC), Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC) and Central Passport Printing Facility (CPPF) setup

d) Maintenance and operations of all the above

e) Staff for all private counters at PSKs

f) Technical staff for supporting PSK, PO, DC, DRC, CPPF

g) Training on the application software, training on general computer skills, soft skills, and customer service & delivery

h) Change management and communication strategy & implementation

i) Obtaining ISO (9001, 27001, 20000) certifications for the Passport System

j) Compliance with the Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

k) Call Centre & grievance handling.

The pilot project was launched at four PSKs in Karnataka in May 2010. Subsequently, three more pilot PSKs were launched in Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Ambala in August 2010. Following requisite certification by the Third Party Audit Agency - Standards, Testing & Quality Certification (STQC), an organisation under the Department of Information Technology - in January 2011, a roll-out plan was firmed up jointly by the Ministry and the Service Provider – the TCS. By 14th June, 2012 all the 77 PSKs were set up and operationalised in the country. The STQC has issued Compliance Verification Report in mid-June 2012 and Operation & Maintenance Phase of the Project has since commenced for six years from the date of Go-Live i.e. up to 11th June 2018 as per terms of the MSA. As on 28th February 2013, 71.7 lakh passports were issued and 3.6 lakh miscellaneous passport services were rendered under the new system. The State-wise list of PSKs in India is given in Table 1. Kerala has the highest number of PSKs(13) followed by Tamil Nadu (8).

Table 1:State-Wise   List of Passport SevaKendras (PSKs) In India

Sl.No	State/UT	No.	Location of PSKs
1	Andhra Pradesh/ Telangana	7	Hyderabad I, II & III, Nizamabad, Vijayawada, Tirupati, Visakhapatnam.
2	Assam*	1	Guwahati
3	Bihar	1	Patna
4	Chandigarh UT**	1	Chandigarh
5	Chhattisgarh	1	Raipur
6	Delhi NCT***	3	Herald House, Shalimar Place, BhikajiCama Place
7	Goa	1	Panaji
8	Gujarat	5	Ahmedabad I& II, Vadodara, Rajkot, Surat.
9	Haryana	2	Ambala, Gurgaon.
10	Himalchal Pradesh	1	Shimla
11	Jammu & Kashmir	2	Jammu & Kashmir
12	Jharkhand	1	Ranchi
13	Karnataka	4	Bangalore I & II, Hubli, Mangalore.
14	Kerala	13	Thiruvananthapuram,Thiruvananthapuram (Rural), Kollam, Cochin, Ernakulam Rural, Alapuzha, Kottayam, Malappuram, Thrissur, Kozhikode I & II, Kannur I & II.
15	Madhya Pradesh	1	Bhopal
16	Maharashtra	7	Mumbai I, II & III, Pune, Nagpur, Thane, Nashik.
17	Odhisha	1	Bhuvaneswar
18	Punjab	5	Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar I& II, Hoshiarpur.
19	Rajasthan	3	Jaipur, Jodhpur, Sikar.
20	Tamil Nadu	8	Chennai I, II & III, Trichy, Thanjavur, Madurai,Tirunelveli, Coimbatore,
21	Uttar Pradesh	6	Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Bareilly, Ghaziabad.
22	Uttasrakhand	1	Dehardun
23	West Bengal@	2	Kolkata, Berhampore.
	Total	77	

Note:* RPO Guwahati covers five other North-Eastern States also.
        **RPO Chandigarh covers parts of Punjab and Haryana
        ***RPO Delhi covers parts of Haryana
        @RPO Kolkata covers Sikkim and Tripura.

Only front-end activities, such as token issuance, initial scrutiny of the application forms, acceptance of fee, scanning of the documents, taking photos and biometrics are performed by the Service Provider's staff. The sovereign and fiduciary functions such as verification of documents,

police verification, decision on grant of passports, revocation, impounding of passports, printing and dispatch of passports, are performed by the Government personnel.

The entire process is online and streamlined including interface with the Indian police for verification of personal particulars of applicants and with India Post for tracking delivery of passports. Status of applications can be tracked through the Passport Portal *www.passportindia.gov.in*. For assistance one can call toll-free helpline 1800-258-1800. Applicants' presence in person at the PSK enables the Passport Issuing Authority to capture their photograph and fingerprints to prevent the incidence of impersonation. The applicants also get full opportunity to see and affirm their personal particulars to be entered in the passport to avoid unnecessary correspondence later. An e-mail based helpdesk facility and a 24x7 call centre have been set up to provide requisite information to citizens in 17 vernacular languages. An SMS message is sent to the citizen as soon as the passport is dispatched.

The benefits of the Project to the citizens are service provisioning within defined service levels, closer and larger number of access points for services, availability of a portfolio of on-line services with real-time status tracking, an effective system of grievance redressal and strict adherence to 'First -In-First Out' principle in rendering of services. The number of public dealing counters has been increased from the erstwhile 350 to 1610 in the new system and public dealing hours have gone up from 4 hours to 7 hours a day.

The Agreement with TCS to operate and maintain the Passport Seva System is valid till 11th June 2018 with provision for its renewal for further two years. The Government, therefore, is in no position at present to indicate any future course of action as regards renewal or cancellation of the Agreement.

A Project of this magnitude, where nearly 30,000 passport applications are processed daily by the personnel manning the PSKs and many more thousand citizens are attended to by Call Centres, cannot be without operational relations challenges. In terms of the MSA, TCS is bound to provide services in compliance with 27 stringent Service Level Agreements. A Grievance Redressal mechanism is in place as part of the Programme Governance Structure. Whenever a complaint is received, it is redressed forthwith in consultation with the Heads of PSKs, RPOs and TCS. The Government has clearly delineated the role of TCS staff in the System for its smooth functioning. TCS has also been conducting training and orientation programmes from time to time to inculcate good work ethics among the staff. The Government is also working on a set of instructions for the CPO and TCS personnel besides standardization of documents required for

processing passport applications to minimize complaints in this regard and to improve service delivery.

With a view to address the challenge of digital divide in the country, especially in the rural hinterland, the Government in association with M/s. CSC e-Governance Services India Limited {which is promoted by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY)}, hasfacilitated online filingof passport applications through the vast network of over one lakh CSCs across rural hinterland. The CSCs which are the delivery points for Government, Private and Social Sector services in the area, facilitate filling and uploading of Passport application form, payment of applicable fee and scheduling of appointment for visit to the PSK, at nominal charge not exceeding Rs. 100/-. As per the appointment schedule, the applicants visit the PSK for completion of application submission process. The services through CSCs are available throughout the week, including during the weekend. The procedure for applying for the Passport through the Passport Seva Project is given in Appendix I.

Performance of Passport Seva Project

The Passport Seva Project (PSP), one of the largest and most successful MMP under the NeGP, has completed two and half years of its operations post all India roll out in June 2012. The project is being run in Public-Private-Partnership mode with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as the Service Provider.After a successful nation-wide rollout during 2011-12, the scheme is currently in the Operations and Maintenance Phase since 14th June 2012. Under the project, **77 Passport SevaKendras (PSKs)** with best-in-class amenities have been set up across the country as extended arms of the 37 Passport Offices, thus providing extended reach to passport applicants.

A **24 x 7 National Call Centre** has been set up which provides real-time status and up-to-date information in 17 languages using a toll free number (1800-258-1800). The Call Centre receives over 20,000 calls per day. The portal **http://passportindia.gov.in** also provides up-to-date real time information. The Project is integrated with the States/UTs' Police system for verification of applicants' personal particulars, with India Post for postal delivery and with India Security Press, Nasik for supply management of passport booklets. An SMS/email alert is sent to applicant as soon as passport is dispatched. The Project also provides real time up-to-date information to 180 Missions and Posts abroad as well as the Immigration authorities.

During the period between 1st January to 31st December 2014, 1.01 Crore application for passport and related services were processed by the PSKs and 98.80 lakhs passport and related documents were issued. Out of the 1.01 crore applications, 87.03 lakh applications (for passport and related services) were received and 84.69 lakh passports and related documents were issued through the PSP. This is an increase of 20 per cent in the number of applications received when compared to 2013 and an increase of 19 per cent in the services rendered. The 87.03 lakh applications received in 2014 includes 17,560 Official Passports, 2,648 Diplomatic Passports, 3,47,621 Police Clearance Certificate (PCC) applications, 2,595 Surrender Certificates (SC), 7,641 Identity Certificate (IC) applications and 4,278 Line of Control (LoC) applications. In addition to the applications received in India, 13.73 lakh applications were received at the 183 Missions Posts abroad. The Table given here reveals the fact.

Table 2   Passport Applications Processed and Services Rendered within India

Year	Processed (Lakhs)	% Growth	Services Rendered (Lakhs)	% growth
2012	52.42	--	44.11	--
2013	72.77	39.00	71.00	61.00
2014	87.03	20.00	84.69	19.00

Source: Passport Patrika, Various issues

As on 31st December 2014, 5.19 crore Indian citizens held valid passport. India is placed three after China and United States in terms of passport applications process in a year. The revenue generated through passport services crossed above Rs.2100 crore in 2014-15. There has also been a commendable improvement in daily appointments and processing of applications at PSKs. The table 3 gives details of the same.

Table 3: Daily turnout at PSKs

Details	2012	2013	2014	% growth over 2013
Daily appointments	36500	38400	50400	+31%
Daily applications processed	27300	30400	38200	+26
Absenteeism against appointments (%)	20.00	14.16	11.77	--
Token Refusals (%)	10.50	7.10	4.74	--

Source: Ibid

During the year 2014, Kerala has processed the maximum number of applications followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Out of the total 87.03 lakh applications, around 34.05 per cent applications were processed by these three states alone. Among the PSK, Kolkata PSK remained on the top of the chart by processing a total of 3,31,657 applications followed by Patna and Malappuram. Out of the 77 PSKs, these three PSKs together processed 10.10 per cent of the total applications processed. Among the Regional Passport offices (RPO), Hyderabad continued to be on the top of the chart by processing the maximum number of applications followed by Lucknow and Bangalore. These three together processed 21.36 per cent of the total applications processed. The facts are clearly provided in Table 4.

Table 4: The State, PSK and RPO with top performance in PSP

State/PSK/RPO	Applications processed in 2013	Applications processed in 2014	% Growth
STATE			
Kerala	940845	1067662	13.48
Maharashtra	821152	954922	16.29
Tamil Nadu	846915	949693	12.14
PASSPORT SEVA KENDRA			
Kolkatta	284384	331657	16.62
Patna	178754	302275	69.10
Malappuram	221207	248209	12.21
REGIONAL PASSPORT OFFICES			
Hyderabad	637073	717769	12.67
Lucknow	447345	627153	40.19
Bangalore	460547	520405	12.99

Source: Ibid

Noticeable Improvements in service delivery

There has been noticeable improvement in passport service delivery in the country since the initiation of the project. On a pan India basis, 21% of the normal passports were issued within

3 days; 47% of normal passports were issued within 7 days and 64% were issued within 14 days and 75% within 21 days (excluding the time taken for police verification). In case of Tatkaal passports, 28% wer issued on the same day and 60% were issued within a day and 84% within 3 days; 98 per cent issued within 7 days. If we include police verification time in the end-to-end delivery process, 49% of passports were issued within a month. The number of pubic dealing counters has been increased from the erstwhile 350 to 1610 in the new system and public dealing hours have gone up from 4 hours to 7 hours a day. Online applications comprise approximately 99 per cent of total applications processed. The table given here gives the details of the Tatkal passport issued through the PSK.

Table 5: Issuance of Tatkal Passport (Excluding Police Verification Time)

(Figures are in Percentages)

Sl.No.	Days	2013	2014
1	Same Day	10.00	24.00
2	One Day	21.00	30.00
3	2-3 Days	33.00	25.00
4	4-21 Days	34.00	20.00
5	22-30 Days	0.00	0.00
6	More than 30 Days	1.00	1.00
	Total	100.00	100.00

Source: Ibid

Police Verification

The Ministry engaged closely with the Police Departments across States/UTs. The all-India average for the number of days taken to complete the police verification was 42 and about 47% of the PVs got completed within the desired time limit of 21 days during 2014. Some States/UTs have consistently maintained low Police Verification processing times. For example, under the new system, Delhi completed police verification in 12 days on an average, followed by Andhra Pradesh (15 days), Goa (16 days), Haryana (16 days) and Chandigarh (17 days). In terms of RPO, Delhi again tops the chart by completing PV in 15 days followed by Visakhapatnam (16) and Goa (17).

Passport Applications: Geographical, Demographic and Socio-economic Trends

- **Volume of applications**

The total number of valid passport holders as on 31 December 2013 was 5,19,29,132. Top 5 States in terms of number of passport applications are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (accounting for more than 55% of total applications). The 5 Biggest Regional Passport Offices in terms of applications are Hyderabad, Bangalore, Lucknow, Delhi, Chennai , while, the Top 5 districts in terms of applications (excluding metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai) are Malappuram, Pune, Thane, Ahmedabad, Kozhikode.

- **Application Type**

An analysis of the type of passport applications received at PSKs showed that 63 per cent are first time applications. About 26 per cent applications are for re-issue of passports, 4 per cent are PCC (62 per cent are meant for Kuwait) and 7 per cent are Tatkaal applications.

Demographic & Socio-economic Trends

During 2014, the male-female ratio for the number of applications processed 2:1 and 55 per cent applications belong to the age group of 0-30 years. Also 25 per cent of the applicants were Graduate and above. The demographic and other socio-economic characteristics of the passport applications are given in Table 3.16.

Table 6: Characteristics of passport seva applicants

Sl.No.	Variables		Figures (%)
1	Gender	Male	68.00
		Female	32.00
2	Student Applicants		18.00
3	Govt./PSU employees		5.00
4	Education	Graduate and above	25.00
		10th pass and above	34.00
		Between 6th and 9th standard	15.00
		5th pass or less	26.00
5	Age Group	0-18 age group	12.00
		19-30 age group	43.00
		31-45 age group	25.00
		46-60 age group	13.00

		Above 60	6.00
6	Youngest applicant 2 day old		2 day old
7	Oldest applicant 116 years		116 years
8	Average Age of applicant 31 years		31 years
9	ECR category passports		22%

Source: Ibid

Passport Services Overseas

Indian Missions/Posts abroad rendered 13.83 lakh passport and related services. Two countries, namely Saudi Arabia and the UAE contributed to 43.4% of total services abroad (Location-wise, Dubai, Riyadh and Jeddah accounted for 39.4% services). Top twelve countries from the perspective of passport services were: Saudi Arabia, UAE, US, Kuwait, UK, Qatar, Oman, Singapore, Canada, Australia, Italy and Bahrain. They collectively contributed to 87% of total passport services abroad.

Passport Adalats andMelas

Passport Offices held Passport Adalats regularly to redress the grievances of passport applicants. These adalats have been very useful in disposing of some 7,000 old and complex cases. With the view to address difficulties faced by citizens in obtaining appointments and to meet increased demand for passport services, passport Melas were organized from time to time by Passport Offices. In 2014, 384 Passport Melas were organized on weekends and holidays in which more than 1.99 lakh passport applications were received.

Awards & Accolades

The Passport Seva Project has won various awards and accolades for its endeavor to provide best-in-class passport services to Indian citizens. Table 7 provides details on the awards secured by the PSP project since its roll out.

Table 7: Details of Awards and Recognition to Passport Seva Project

Sl.No.	Name of Award	Year
1	National Award for e-Governance (Gold Award) for outstanding performance in citizen centric service delivery.	2014-15
2	Featured as one of the achievements of UPA Government in the compilation '10 years of Progress and Growth (2004-2014)'	2014
3	Case study: On the Case: TCS-Indian Passport Office: Transforming public sector services through process re-engineering and digitization, Ovum, London.	2014
4	SecureIT Award for Information Technology.	2014

5	Promising Innovation Award at Tata Innovista Regional Rounds.	2013
6	'Citation by 'GOVERNANCE Now': 'BIG DATA LEADER'	2013
7	Finalist (Security in e-Governance), Data Security Council of India Excellence Awards	2013
8	The Economic Times Certificate of Recognition.	2013
9	e-India Award of Excellence	2013
10	Computer Society of India Nihilent Award of Excellence	2012

Conclusion

The Passport Seva, one of the Central sector MMPs under the NeGP is a well-conceived e-governance project. Within the NeGP, 'Mission Mode' implies that projects have clearly defined objectives, scope and implementation timelines and milestones as well as measurable outcomes and service levels. The whole exercise of the NeGP projects is conditioned upon its core infrastructure like SDC, SWAN, SSDG and CSCs.   Within a short span, the project could scale up in its totality.

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