



# Sewa Kendras in Punjab: a case study of public service delivery

Submitted to the **Office of Deputy Commissioner,**  
**Jalandhar**

Prepared under the aegis of **Public Policy  
& Good Governance Lab**

(A collaboration of School of Public Policy & Governance,  
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad &  
district of Jalandhar)



JALANDHAR  
ਜਲੰਧਰ

July, 2021



HYDERABAD  
OFF CAMPUS



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## FOREWORD

The Jalandhar District Administration has constantly strived to improve the quality of governance and make sure that it is able to perform its duties in a professional manner and reach all sections of society, with particular emphasis on providing access to government services and schemes to the marginalized sections of society and making sure that no one is left behind. This citizen-centric approach of the administration has reaped dividends and has also been acknowledged and appreciated by, both the State and Centre's administration. The District Administration has been working tirelessly during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the schemes of the government are implemented in a time-bound manner. The District Administration has been awarded the Skoch Award in recognition of its exemplary performance in improving the Public Service Delivery in the month of December of 2020. Further, it was also selected for stage 2 of the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration under Improving Service Delivery Category. These recognitions serve as an appreciation and motivation to the Administration's earnest efforts.


In its effort to constantly improve the quality of services, the district administration has frequently collaborated with leading academic institutions in conducting research geared towards providing tangible positive outcomes for the betterment of society. Government-academia collaboration also holds promising potential by being mutually beneficial, allowing academia to study the good practices of the administration and bridging the gap between theory and practice, while simultaneously helping the government gain insights from academics on how to serve the populace better by incorporating best practices. The periodic intake of interns is another push that has been a source of unparalleled knowledge to students from all walks of life, imparting them with insight into the daily affairs of the Administration while also providing practical problem-solving skills. The Inception of Public Policy and Good Governance Lab, a collaboration between the District Administration and TATA Institute of Social Sciences Hyderabad, School of Public Policy and Governance is among the latest initiatives highlighting the administration's commitment to ensuring the highest standard of service delivery.

During the internship period the students conducted the field study and prepared the following reports:

1. **Why Jalandhar has Low Uptake in MGNREGA:** The policy interns studied the implementation of MGNREGA in Jalandhar and examined the issue of low uptake of MGNREGA work in the district despite the registered initial demand for work. Through primary & secondary research, the students gave a good insight into the issue and suggested measures to increase the uptake of the scheme in Jalandhar.
2. **The Quality of Public Service Through Sewa Kendra:** The Zero Pendency Approach of Sewa Kendras in Jalandhar has been analysed and recommendations have been provided by the policy interns on how this approach of the administration could be further augmented to provide better services to the citizens.

3. **Vaccination Guideline for Elderly & Persons with Disability:** Assistance was provided by the policy interns to the district administration of Jalandhar in the conceptualisation of an inclusive guideline for doorstep vaccination of the specially abled & elderly via community & ANM(Auxiliary Nurse Midwife) led mobilization.
4. **District Mineral Foundation Fund (DMFF):** The policy interns analysed the current status of DMF in Jalandhar & the initiatives taken by the district administration to address issues in the mining industry of Jalandhar. Additionally, they also recommended best practices for better utilization of the funds in the district.
5. **Contouring the Methods of Targeting in India:** The policy interns carefully examined the implementation guidelines of 90 schemes and have identified various targeting methods that could be used by the district administration to delineate policies in the future.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Aseem Prakash, for conceptualising this initiative successfully. In addition, I'd like to express my gratitude for the youthful and dynamic group of interns who have worked vigorously to compose these reports and give their inputs for the same. I sincerely hope that these reports can help us enhance the effectiveness of the policies in the future.

  
Ghanshyam Thori, IAS  
Deputy Commissioner  
Jalandhar

## Foreword

Collaboration between government and academia is key to catalyse innovative policies which can effectively deliver sustainable and socially equitable outcomes. Government administration is often focussed on delivering tangible outcomes and serving the populace, while academia is focused on building new knowledge and applying existing concepts through research. A synthesis of both the efforts can yield promising results and such an exercise can be mutually beneficial for the stakeholders. Towards this, the School of Public Policy and Governance (SPPG) conceptualised the institutional design of the Public Policy and Good Governance Lab (PPGGL). The district of Jalandhar under the leadership of Shri Ghanshyam Thori, IAS, Deputy Commissioner operationalised the 'PPGGL' to better understand the outcomes of the ongoing policies, document successful practices and plan for the immediate and the long term future. Thus, under the guidance of Mr. Thori, a cohort of policy interns from SPPG undertook a thorough analysis of several programmes/schemes.

The Sewa Kendras in Punjab are exemplary institutions which facilitate public service delivery in a citizen centric manner while making effective use of e-Governance tools. Jalandhar enjoys the distinction of being the district with the lowest pendency rate across the state of Punjab and this has been possible only through the proactive involvement and novel initiatives of the District Administration through their Zero Pendency Approach. The students of the Policy Lab carefully examined this approach and have provided recommendations which could help further improve the quality of service delivery through Sewa Kendras in the district.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Thori for his visionary leadership and other officials of the District Administration for their enthusiastic support in this endeavour. I sincerely hope that the series of policy reports prepared under the aegis of 'PPGGL' will not only bring the good work done by the district administration in the policy discourse but also help them to further enhance the effectiveness.

Yours Sincerely,

*Aseem Prakash*

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## Executive Summary

The concept of public service delivery in India has transformed significantly, shifting from a predominantly traditional approach focused on viewing the State as a mere regulator to a renewed understanding of the State's role and citizens' expectations, centered on the larger goals of accountability, transparency, and efficiency. The interactions between the State, citizens, and businesses have also expanded monumentally, with public services like issuance of driving license, income certificate, caste certificate, etc., forming the most common interface between the government and citizens.

Parallely, the innovations in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have broadened the scope of governance and presented new opportunities for the government to enhance citizen-centricity in the process of public service delivery. This has prompted the Indian government to utilize avant-garde technologies to revolutionize the field of public service delivery and realize the ideals of good governance. In this direction, the government has undertaken several initiatives such as the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), Digital India, e-Kranti, Sevottam Model of service delivery, etc.

In line with these larger projects, the Punjab government has undertaken the initiative of providing time-bound and quality services to citizens by means of Sewa Kendras, integrated platforms for availing a plethora of citizen services. Sewa Kendras in Punjab have been instrumental in providing single window delivery of government services to citizens and doing so in a citizen-centric manner by making efficient use of e-governance tools. The institutional framework for Sewa Kendras is drawn from 3 main documents: **The Punjab Transparency & Accountability in Delivery of Public Services**, two reports of the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC): the 11th Report, Promoting e-Governance: The Smart Way Forward**, and the **12th Report, Citizen-Centric Administration**.

Sewa Kendras bring a convergence between different departments of the government through human and technological networking and in doing so deliver public services in a smooth and time-bound manner. The normative mandate of Sewa Kendras as mentioned in the objectives defined by the government is achieved through an institutional and infrastructural convergence. Given this normative mandate, this study aims to understand the approach

adopted by the Jalandhar district administration in successfully implementing measures to keep pendency cases low and institutionalizing comprehensive methods to ensure accountability and transparency in public service delivery.

The study examines the Zero Pendency Approach of the Jalandhar District Administration and how it has successfully been implemented to reduce pendency in Sewa Kendra applications across the district. The study recommends an increased emphasis on the 'Send Back' metric along with the existing Pendency metric to ascertain the efficiency of public service delivery. While the Zero Pendency approach adopted by the Jalandhar District Administration has 3 guiding pillars of: an incentive-based approach, an entitlements-based approach, and proactive involvement of the District Administration for continuous improvement and monitoring of the Sewa Kendras, the addition of two more 'pillars' to the existing approach can make the model more holistic and citizen-centric.

The **fourth pillar** which can be admitted is the **enhancement of citizen satisfaction** in terms of convenience in availing services at Seva Kendras. In this regard, improvements can be made in the design aspects of Seva Kendras so as to make the infrastructure more inclusive and user-friendly. The administration can adopt a more proactive approach for facilitating the experience of the disadvantaged/vulnerable sections including persons with disabilities, pregnant women, and senior citizens.

The **fifth pillar** which can be incorporated in the existing model pertains to the **regulated integration of informal actors** of form filling and documentation to make the system more expedient. Although every Sewa Kendra in the district is designed to have a helpdesk, one can observe that these help desks are overburdened and hence, unable to sufficiently cater to the requirements of all the citizens. Citizens' reliance on these unofficial channels and their unregulated nature necessitate the creation of a system that encompasses these informal actors by bringing them within the domain of the formal.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### **An outline of the study**

Sewa Kendras in Punjab have been instrumental in providing single window delivery of government services to citizens and doing so in a citizen-centric manner by making efficient use of e-governance tools. This study attempts to understand the approach adopted by the Jalandhar district administration in successfully implementing measures to keep pendencies low and institutionalizing comprehensive methods to ensure accountability and transparency in public service delivery. Further, the study also examines the pendency and send back of applications in Sewa Kendras in the Jalandhar district and suggests measures for enhancing the overall functioning of Sewa Kendras.

In this regard, the study first examines the evolution of e-governance initiatives in India and the shift to a citizen-centric method of governance. The second chapter deals with a brief history of Sewa Kendras in Punjab, the legislative framework and how this legislative framework has empowered e-governance and citizen centricity. The subsequent sections of the chapter define pendency as a metric of efficient functioning of Sewa Kendras and an analysis of the send back cases across departments and services. The last chapter of the study lays down the recommendations that can be adopted by the district administration.

### **Governance, Citizen Centricity and ICT**

Advancements in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have broadened the scope of governance and unfolded new avenues of interactions between the government, citizens and businesses. Today, the functions of the State are not merely limited to that of a regulator and enforcer but also include its role in facilitating the efficient delivery of public services. This transformation in the character and responsibilities of the State is associated with a parallel change in the perceptions of citizens. With growing levels of consciousness among citizens regarding their rights and entitlements, their aspirations from the government have also seen an equivalent expansion.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary government is

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<sup>1</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

expected to be transparent in how it deals with citizens, accountable for its undertakings, and responsible for providing certain services to citizens.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, the concept of governance has undergone significant transformation, placing greater emphasis on the quality, manner and mechanisms of public service delivery. Shifting from a state-centric to a citizen-centric approach, governments across the globe have started giving greater recognition to citizens' aspirations and rights in terms of equitable access to various public services. Therefore, the provision of a plethora of public services to citizens and ensuring their delivery within the stipulated time frame, has become one of the fundamental obligations of the government.<sup>3</sup> In the Indian context, this shift is evident from the enactment of legislations by several Indian states guaranteeing the Right to Public Service<sup>4</sup>, in a bid to ensure smooth and timely delivery of public services and promote citizen centric governance. These Acts specify the commitment of the states for providing quality, timely and standard services to citizens by setting standards and establishing efficient grievance redressal mechanisms for upholding accountability in governance.

In this context, technology can be viewed as an empowering tool for achieving these objectives and realizing the core ideas of good governance such as, efficiency, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, citizen-centricity, etc. Innovations in the technological arena coupled with increasing internet connectivity have made the storage, retrieval, communication and processing of data effortless, thus, ramping up governmental operations and decision-making processes, widening the reach of the government and enhancing transparency and accountability.<sup>5</sup>

Across the globe, there is an overarching consensus on utilizing ICT for discharging government responsibilities, enhancing citizen participation and bringing the government within the reach of the common person, in a manner which is efficient, quick and engenders minimum transaction costs. All these factors re-emphasize the growing significance of e-governance and mandate a deeper understanding of the theoretical concepts and arguments

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Dhaka, R. (2017). The Right to Public Services Delivery in India: A Paradigm Shift for Good Governance. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*. 2016;62(2):309-323. retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556120160208>

<sup>4</sup> The Right to Public Services Act has been enacted by several Indian states, including Bihar (2011), Madhya Pradesh (2010), Rajasthan (2011), Uttar Pradesh (2011), Kerala (2012), Gujarat (2013), Assam (2012), etc.

<sup>5</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

informing the various e-governance initiatives in the country with a special focus on public service delivery.

Placing the citizens at the heart of governance and ensuring efficient and equitable delivery of public services are the basic ideas informing the e-governance initiatives of the government. Further, these ideals also form the core of citizen-centric approach to governance. Citizen Centricity in good governance entails the following: an Ethos of service to the citizen which is in line with the adage of 'Citizen is King', providing services to the people in an ethical manner which includes having honest and transparent systems, equity which includes treating all citizens alike with empathy for the weaker section and do so efficiently which includes speedy and effective delivery of service without harassment and using ICT increasingly. Thus, equitable service delivery systems need to be based on quality standards that are well documented and well-publicized, efficient in their delivery such that they can be measured both by the service providers and by the citizens and simple to understand and use.

Governments around the world have adopted efficient and effective services to citizens (and businesses) by doing away with multiple windows and introducing a single window delivery of services. The rationale behind this approach in administration is the belief that citizens shouldn't have to approach a number of different government offices to avail their services since it results in increased transaction costs for the citizen and also the fact that multiple visits to government offices cause valuable time to be lost. This is achieved in a number of ways. Government organizations, especially those organizations which provide services to citizens should re-engineer their processes in a manner that all the services that it provides can be accessed by the citizens through a single channel. Alternatively, departments/ organizations can be created whose mandate would be to provide infrastructure to different departments of the government so as to facilitate them to provide their services on a single platform. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) enables governments and their different departments to provide information and deliver services to citizens in a manner that is faster, more efficient and transparent than traditional methods of public service delivery.

## Defining e-governance

Expanding on the concept of ‘minimum government and maximum governance’, e-governance basically entails the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for improving the internal and external efficiency<sup>6</sup> of the government in a manner that promotes Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) governance.<sup>7</sup> It aims to introduce a completely new model of governance in the country by revolutionizing the existing institutional framework<sup>8</sup> in order to serve multiple purposes such as simplification of governmental processes, greater citizen participation, improved business interaction, efficient and one-stop delivery of public services, and overall transformation of the relationship between government, citizens and businesses.

Today, there is growing recognition that Information Technology can act as a potent tool for accelerated economic development and aid the process of governance by bringing in efficiency and effectiveness. With the changing nature of entitlements that citizens enjoy, e-governance is being defined as the government’s business.<sup>9</sup> Most importantly, the idea of placing citizens at the heart of governance enables enhanced citizen participation in an electronic era, thus, fostering democracy.

As the idea of e-governance is gaining currency across the globe, various organizations and institutions have attempted to formulate a clear definition of the term. Although varied definitions of e-governance have been provided by different organizations, the core values remain the same, i.e., fostering democracy, delivering public services, lowering transaction costs, enhancing accessibility, and improving the relationship between government and citizens. One of the prominent definitions of e-governance as extended by the World Bank is as follows:

*E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved*

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<sup>6</sup> minimum administrative costs, smooth and timely delivery of citizen services

<sup>7</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> ibid

<sup>9</sup> ibid

*interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management.*<sup>10</sup>

The need for such a technological intervention arises in order to address the perils of an overtly paper-dependent and outdated system of governance, riddled with issues such as corruption, red-tape, mismanagement, unaccountability, delays and inconvenience in delivery of public services. The physical delivery of goods and services incurs high transaction costs in terms of time, effort and money; thus, increasing the overall cost of governance. Therefore, it was envisioned that the use of ICT and the advantages that it offers would mitigate these concerns and simplify the process of governance in the contemporary era.

It is important to point out that successful and inclusive implementation of e-governance initiatives proceeds in successive stages and requires mindful preparation. The first step would be re-engineering or restructuring of existing processes and procedures to ensure that the government is compatible with the changes introduced under the e-governance initiative. Such monumental structural transformation also requires genuine political will and the incentive to change for the other stakeholders involved. The other stages include infrastructural and technological preparedness, and finally, citizen readiness to adopt and embrace these changes.<sup>11</sup> Generating awareness among citizens regarding the technological know-how as well as the importance of such e-governance initiatives is equally important. Here, civil society organizations can play a substantial role in creating widespread public awareness about various e-governance initiatives and fostering greater interactions between the government and citizens.

### **E-governance in India**

Keeping up with the rest of the world, India has made huge strides in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), with large-scale digitization of government processes, business operations and citizen undertakings. In the Indian scenario, e-governance has progressively evolved through different stages. The initial stage entailed the computerization of various government departments and the use of ICT mainly for word

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<sup>10</sup> The World Bank. (2015). e-government. retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/digitaldevelopment/brief/e-government>

<sup>11</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

processing. The establishment of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1977 was a major step towards digitization as it highlighted the growing significance of ICT.

With the arrival of personal computers in the 1980s, most government offices became equipped with computers and further developments in the field of ICT enabled complex data processing and inter-governmental sharing of information. Later, the establishment of NICNET in 1987 – the national satellite-based computer network and the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) gave momentum to the ongoing process of digitization in the country. The launch of DISNIC was ambitious as it sought to computerize all the districts in the country for which the State governments received aid in the form of free software and hardware components.<sup>12</sup>

With the liberalization of the Indian economy from the early 1990s, progressive technologies and opportunities in e-Government emerged. The advancements in the field of ICT, ongoing computerization, increasing internet connectivity, broadened the scope of governance and opened new avenues for G2C, G2B and G2G interactions. The subsequent period was marked with various initiatives at the central as well as the state level to integrate e-governance in day-to-day government operations. ICT was used for the first time by tax administration departments at the federal and state levels to improve productivity.<sup>13</sup> In this period, several states, particularly those in the south, experienced significant success in utilizing e-government to improve citizen services.

There was no going back after that point. In 1999, the Union Ministry of Information Technology was founded with the aim of empowering citizens, promoting IT & ITeS industries, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development in the field of ICT, and fostering e-governance aided growth in the country.<sup>14</sup> In 2000, the Indian government released a 12-point agenda for e-governance implementation in all its ministries at both the state and Union level.<sup>15</sup>

However, these initiatives remained largely isolated and inconsistent due to the lack of cohesive ICT infrastructure disseminating down to the block and village level, lack of backend computerization, lack of connectivity, and insufficiency on part of all levels of

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<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> ibid

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.meity.gov.in/about-meity/vision-mission>

<sup>15</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

government to utilize ICT proficiently.<sup>16</sup> The NeGP envisioned to address these concerns. Finally, in 2006, the launch of the National e-governance Plan (NeGP) led to the incorporation of all e-government initiatives throughout the country into a collective vision.

### **National e-governance Plan (NeGP)**

In order to strengthen and accelerate the implementation of various e-governance initiatives across the country and give them a specified direction, the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeITy) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR&PG) formulated the National e-governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006.<sup>17</sup> Through its implementation, most services will be accessible online, enabling all citizens to have access to them, significantly improving basic governance. The original vision statement of the NeGP is stated as under:

*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.*<sup>18</sup>

Towards this end, a massive countrywide infrastructure extending down to even the smallest villages is taking shape, and huge records are being digitized in order to facilitate accessible and reliable internet access.<sup>19</sup> The effort stresses the creation of an adequate and unified institutional and governmental framework within the country and the establishment of an effective IT infrastructure.

The implementation of these objectives has been envisioned under a comprehensive approach, providing emphasis on six crucial areas: connectivity, capacity building, content creation, cyber law, citizen interface, and capital.<sup>20</sup> The initiative envisaged a three-tier implementation structure with Common Service Centres (CSCs) at the grassroots level, functioning as one-destination stops for front-end delivery of public services to citizens.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kumar, R. (2012). National e-Governance Plan: Vision, Challenges and the Way Forward. retrieved from <https://www.insightsonindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/national-e-governance-plan-analysis.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://meity.gov.in/divisions/national-e-governance-plan>

<sup>18</sup> ibid

<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> Kumar, R. (2012). National e-Governance Plan: Vision, Challenges and the Way Forward. retrieved from <https://www.insightsonindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/national-e-governance-plan-analysis.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium\\_FINAL\\_Version\\_220211\(1\).pdf](https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium_FINAL_Version_220211(1).pdf)

Getting a service transparently, at an affordable price and conveniently located empowers citizens. The second tier includes State Wide Area Networks (SWANs) and State Data Centres (SDCs) which facilitate the exchange of information seamlessly between government departments, agencies as well as with citizens.

Finally, the third tier consists of clearly defined Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) led by respective departments at the national and state level. In the National E-Governance Plan (NeGP), MMPs are a specialized framework of projects focused on one particular aspect of electronic governance, such as UID, income tax, e-districts, etc. MMPs refer to projects which have well-defined targets, scopes, execution timelines, milestones, as well as measurable outcomes.<sup>22</sup> NeGP originally ensued the implementation of 27 Mission Mode Projects and 8 components at the local, state, and integrated levels. Four new projects - Health, Education, Public Distribution System and Posts - were introduced in 2011 to increase the number of MMPs from 27 to 31.<sup>23</sup> The 31 MMPS are further classified as state (13), central (11) or integrated (7) projects. States can also ascertain some state-specific projects, conforming to their individual requirements but not exceeding five MMPs.<sup>24</sup>

### **Methodology and core implementation strategies of NeGP**

It is important to highlight certain crucial implementation strategies and the broad framework of NeGP, drawing inspiration from the past experiences of implementing various e-governance initiatives in the country. It was decided that although, the promotion of e-governance would be through a centralized programme approach, in order to ensure citizen service orientation, realize interoperability of various eGovernment applications, and ensure optimal ICT infrastructure utilization, its implementation would be done in a decentralized manner.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, it was realized that most of the projects can be executed in a public-private partnership model (PPP).<sup>26</sup> There has to be an assimilation between the private sector's expertise and the government's welfare orientation. This approach can help leverage the

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.meity.gov.in/content/mission-mode-projects>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium\\_FINAL\\_Version\\_220211\(1\).pdf](https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium_FINAL_Version_220211(1).pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <http://meity.gov.in/divisions/national-e-governance-plan>

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium\\_FINAL\\_Version\\_220211\(1\).pdf](https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium_FINAL_Version_220211(1).pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

competence and resources of the private sector without hampering the security and social concerns. Thirdly, successful projects will be identified, upscaled and replicated at a nation-wide basis with necessary customizations.

The implementation strategy of NeGP involves multiple Centre and State government agencies and departments, each having a well-defined function. Each line ministry and department is responsible for developing the MMPs, approving their finances, and executing them.<sup>27</sup> A key component of NeGP implementation is DeitY's facilitation and technical assistance. It is responsible for providing the technical and infrastructural assistance to the state governments and ministries.

An institutionalized governance structure has been established for effective management of NeGP to ensure accountability, establish a dispute resolution mechanism and facilitate the involvement of various stakeholders. An oversight committee headed by the PM is charged with providing the overall leadership for the NeGP. Under the purview of the Minister of Communications and IT, a National e-Governance Advisory Group has been instituted to solicit views from the stakeholders and make policy recommendations for advancing the role of ICT in governance. Additionally, the Cabinet Secretary has also established an Apex Committee on NeGP with the intention of monitoring its implementation and giving policy directions, as well as resolving all inter-ministerial disputes.<sup>28</sup>

### **E-Kranti: National e-governance Plan (NeGP) 2.0**

In a bid to engage with more advanced and emerging technologies, the Government of India launched a new mission in 2014 called, e-kranti: National e-governance Plan (NeGP) 2.0, under the Digital India initiative. The Government of India's flagship initiative, Digital India, aims to transform India into a knowledge-based economy and society through digital empowerment.<sup>29</sup> The Digital India project has nine pillars, out of which pillar 4, i.e., 'e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology', and pillar 5, i.e., 'e-Kranti - Electronic Delivery of Services' are essentially affiliated with the NeGP 2.0.<sup>30</sup> E-kranti has been envisioned to fill the gaps left by the NeGP, such as unfulfillment of the intended

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium\\_FINAL\\_Version\\_220211\(1\).pdf](https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/Compendium_FINAL_Version_220211(1).pdf)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.insightsonindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/national-e-governance-plan-analysis.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CRqpvAiqW3Kl1Sx\\_Lv1av-m0fEppRlvG/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CRqpvAiqW3Kl1Sx_Lv1av-m0fEppRlvG/view)

<sup>30</sup> <https://negd.gov.in/e-kranti>

outcome, inefficient use of IT infrastructure, lack of interoperability, weak process re-engineering, poor monitoring mechanism, etc.<sup>31</sup>

Bearing the **vision** of "transforming e-Governance for transforming Governance", mission e-kranti encapsulates a renewed emphasis on efficient delivery of public services to citizens electronically, optimal utilization of IT infrastructure, employ emerging technologies such as Cloud, mobile platforms, Software Defined Network (SDN), ensure prompt replication of successful e-governance plans and assimilation of e-Gov applications.<sup>32</sup> The original **mission** statement of e-kranti is stated as under:

*"...to ensure a government-wide transformation by delivering all government services electronically to citizens through integrated and interoperable systems via multiple modes, while ensuring efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs."*<sup>33</sup>

### **Citizen Centricity Models of Governance in India as outlined in the ARC**

The twelfth report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission deals with Citizen Centric Administration; the 10 chapters of the report delve into the different aspect of Citizen Centric Administration such as *"Accountable and Transparent Government, Issues of delegation, Accountability and transparency, Move from Processes Accountability to Productivity Accountability and from Transactional to Transformative Governance, Reduce delays and ensure promptness in delivery of services., Progressive interventions to make administration more result-oriented through Process Simplification etc."*<sup>34</sup>

Citizen Centric governance in order to be citizen centric should be participative and transparent. The three essential aspects of citizen centric governance is that it needs to be effective, efficient and responsive to the citizens. Further, an atmosphere of serving the citizens should be at the core of all government organizations across different levels . It also entails that government organisations be accountable to the people and have mechanisms in place to ensure said accountability . As one of the primary functions of the State is to promote the welfare of its citizens, an evaluation of the functioning of the institutions of governance

<sup>31</sup> [http://meity.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/dit/files/e-Kranti.pdf](http://meity.gov.in/sites/upload_files/dit/files/e-Kranti.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*

<sup>33</sup> <https://negd.gov.in/e-kranti>

<sup>34</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2009) Citizen Centric Administration: The Heart of Governance

will ultimately have to be based on the satisfaction they provide to the common man. In this regard, prominence would need to be attached to the voice of the citizens themselves.

The 12th report of the ARC identifies some of the pre-conditions in order to make governance citizen centric and these include *a Sound legal framework, Robust institutional mechanism for proper implementation of the laws and their effective functioning and Competent personnel staffing these institutions; and sound personnel management policies. Right policies for decentralization, delegation and accountability.*<sup>35</sup>

Some of the the tools which the twelfth report identified that can be employed to make administration citizen centric:

*a. Re-engineering processes to make governance ‘citizen centric’.*

*b. Adoption of appropriate modern technology.*

*c. Right to information.*

*d. Citizens’ charters.*

*e. Independent evaluation of services.*

*f. Grievance redressal mechanisms.*

*g. Active citizens’ participation – public-private partnerships.*<sup>36</sup>

### **Public Service Delivery and Citizen Centricity: Sevottam Model<sup>37</sup>**

The Sevottam model has three modules. The **first** component of the model requires effective Charter implementation thereby opening up a channel for receiving citizens’ inputs in the way in which organizations determine service delivery requirements. Citizens’ Charters publicly declare the information on citizens’ entitlements thereby making citizens better informed and hence, empowering them to demand better services. The **second** component of the model, ‘Public Grievance Redress’ requires a good grievance redressal system operating

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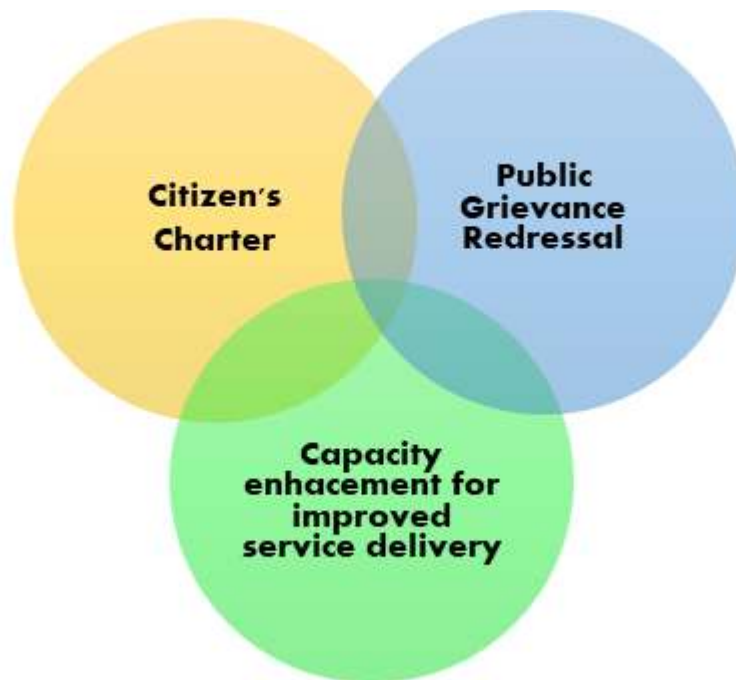
<sup>35</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Twelfth Report. Citizen Centric Governance: *The Heart of Governance*. February 2009

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

in a manner that leaves the citizen more satisfied with how the organization responds to complaints/grievances, irrespective of the final decision. The **third** component 'Excellence in Service Delivery', postulates that an organization can have an excellent performance in service delivery only if it is efficiently managing the key ingredients for good service delivery and building its own capacity to continuously improve service delivery.

### Sevottam Model of Service Delivery



## Chapter 2

### SEWA Kendras in Punjab

#### **Sewa Kendras: A synthesis of e-Governance and Citizen Centricity**

For public service delivery to be efficient, a few key ideals must be prioritized by any government. These priorities include understanding that the ‘citizen is king’ in the public sector. Here, the Sewa Kendras have functioned as a one destination stop for availing government services in an accessible manner while ensuring minimal transaction costs. If transaction costs are to be kept low, it is imperative that ICT and e-governance tools be adopted as much as possible.

Innovations in technology coupled with increasing internet connectivity and accessibility, has enabled the common citizen to access government services through these means. Further pulling down the walls; department silos must give way to interconnected governments where exchange of information happens in a seamless manner. The capacity to deliver rests upon building customer-centric models and ensuring continuous innovation by having different levels of administration fix accountability and transparency standards to sustain benefits. In this context, this section of the study focuses on how e-governance and citizen centricity manifests in the current functioning of the Sewa Kendras.

#### **A Brief History of Sewa Kendras in Punjab**

A few novel initiatives of different states in e-governance; specifically single window delivery of public services existed prior to the National e-Governance plan, which came out in the year 2006 and the recommendations of the Second ARC were published in 2008. Of these initiatives, notable ones include e-Seva in the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh (started in 1999), Gyandoot Project in Madhya Pradesh (2000) and Project Friends in Kerala (2000).

The single window delivery of public services in the state of Punjab started in October 2002 with the launch of SUWIDHA (Single User-Friendly Window Disposal Helpline for Applicants) as a pilot project in the district of Fatehgarh Sahib. The project was funded by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, GOI and was successfully

completed by district administration with the technical support of National Informatics Centre, Punjab State Centre. After the successful implementation of the SUWIDHA Kendras in the pilot, the project was then expanded to the other districts of the state as well.

Another significant step in the evolution of single window public service delivery came with the passage of the Punjab Rights to Service Act, 2011 with an aim to improve the service delivery mechanism in the state. Initially, the Act covered 67 services but later extended to 206 services. For the proper implementation of the Right to Service Act, 2011, SUWIDHA centres, Saanjh Kendras and Sewa Kendras were started at district, subdivision and village levels.<sup>38</sup>

SUWIDHA Kendras were then rechristened Sewa Kendras and in 2016 the operations of these Sewa Kendras was handed over to a private firm BLS-PSK. The Suwidha Kendras were earlier maintained and managed by the Sukhmani Society of the district under chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner under the framework and supervision of Punjab state e-governance society. The society had a self sustaining revenue model. In 2017 the number of Sewa Kendras was rationalized from 2100 to 500 making the Sewa Kendras more demand based and fully functional. Further, Fard records (Land Records) are also available to the farmers at the 500 Sewa Kendras in addition to the about 200 Farad Kendras.<sup>39</sup>

The aforementioned aspects of Citizen Centricity and e-Governance discussed in the former section are clearly reflected in the following *Objectives of the Sewa Kendra*:<sup>40</sup>

1. *Do away with the current approach of departments working in silos and having their separate service delivery channels.*
2. *Optimization of manpower and resources engaged in service delivery mechanisms.*
3. *Provide efficient and cost effective methods of service delivery to departments.*
4. *Enable the government departments to focus on their core functions and responsibilities.*
5. *Bring uniformity across the State in service delivery mechanisms.*
6. *Delivery of all services covered under RTS in a time bound manner.*
7. *Good ambience and amenities for citizens.*

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<sup>38</sup> Singh, H., & Kapila, R. (2020). Public Attitude Towards e-Governance Practices in Developing Societies: A Case Study of SUWIDHA Project in Punjab. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 66(3), 356–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556120957416>

<sup>39</sup> <http://diprpunjab.gov.in/sites/default/files/Acheivement%20booklet-2021---13-3-2021---curve.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> <https://punjab.gov.in/state-e-governance/sewa-kendras/>

8. *Integrated with individual department systems.*

### **How SEWA Kendra Works**

1. The citizen approaches the Sewa queue counter and gets a token number. Alternatively, the citizen can also book an appointment on the m-Sewa app and the e-Sewa portal of the Punjab government.
2. The citizen waits for some time till their token number is displayed on the screen. During their turn at the SEWA service counter, they file their application.



3. Citizens are issued a receipt-cum-token number, which specifies the date of delivery of services. Each type of service has a pre-defined delivery time and the system automatically calculates the service delivery date.



4. All kinds of payments for the fees, etc., can be made at the SEWA counter. This further saves the citizen the inconvenience caused by having to visit either the bank or the treasury office to deposit such payments. The SEWA counters also accept UPI and Card Payments.
5. The application/case is then sent to the concerned department for further processing.
6. In the meantime, the citizen can track the case with the help of the SEWA token number through the Punjab government's [esewa.punjab.gov.in](http://esewa.punjab.gov.in) portal.
7. In order to ensure the timely delivery of services, the District Commissioner (DC) monitors the progress regularly so that the citizen does not have to visit the office unnecessarily.
8. The delivery of documents or processed cases is made on the specified date.

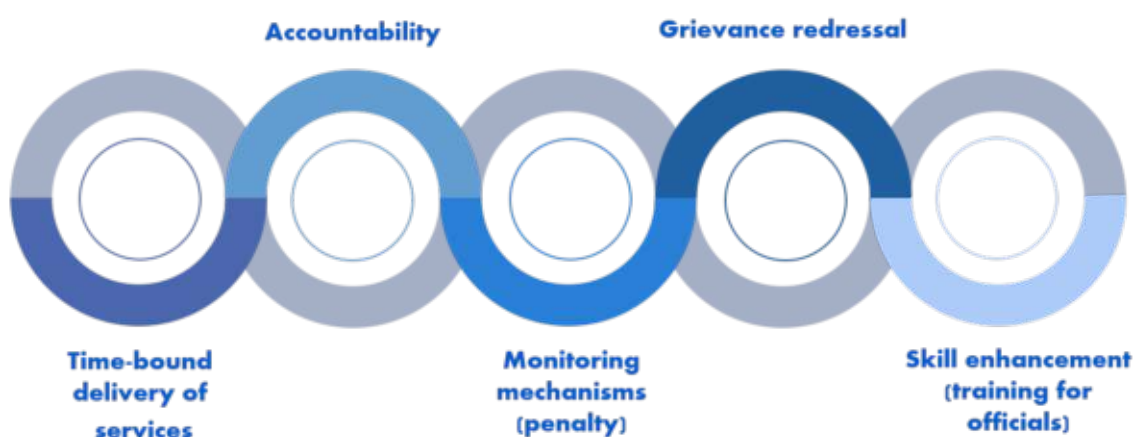
Images below reflect some glimpses of the Type 1 Sewa Kendras in the Jalandhar District. The first image shows the Token counter at the Sewa Kendra. The second image shows the Help Desk counter.



## **Punjab Transparency and Accountability in Delivery of Public Services Act, 2018 - a rights based approach to service delivery**

For the objectives of Sewa Kendra to be successfully realized, a sound legal framework was seen to be necessary. In this regard, the aspects of bringing uniformity across the state in service delivery mechanisms, delivery of all services under legislation in a time bound manner and efficient and cost effective method of service delivery empower the legislative framework as discussed below. As the 12th Report of the ARC notes that *“A dynamic society requires constant updating of existing laws as also enactment of new laws to meet emergent needs and challenges so that the welfare, protection and development needs of citizens is fully met.”*<sup>41</sup>

In order to ensure timely delivery of public services and realize the objectives of an accountable and responsive governance, the government of Punjab introduced the Punjab Transparency and Accountability in Delivery of Public Services Act, 2018. The said Act replaced the existing Punjab Right to Service Act, 2011 with the aim of addressing certain drawbacks in the earlier legislation. The key areas of improvement envisaged under the new Act include, time-bound delivery of citizen services, back-end computerization of all citizen services within three to five years and a mandatory provision for online receipt of service appeals.<sup>42</sup> By ensuring the timely delivery of services to citizens, the Act seeks to promote an accountable and responsive government.



<sup>41</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2009) Citizen Centric Administration: The Heart of Governance

<sup>42</sup>The Indian Express. (2018). Punjab: Right to Services Act to be replaced, only 500 Sewa Kendras to stay in operation. retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/punjab-right-to-services-act-to-be-replaced-only-500-sewa-kendras-to-stay-in-operation-5096881/>

The term “**Accountability**” here refers to the responsibility of the concerned public servant for ‘various acts of omission and commission’<sup>43</sup> that are related to the provision of public services. The Act specifies that it is the government’s responsibility to ensure a single window delivery of all public services to the greatest extent possible. It further mandates that the delivery of public services must be done in a transparent manner and within the stipulated time frame (as specified by the Government from time to time). The stipulated time begins from the “date when the required application, complete in all respects, for a public service is submitted to the Designated Officer or to a person authorized to receive the application in such manner as may be prescribed.”<sup>44</sup>

The Act emphasized on the electronic delivery of public services within three to five years, keeping in mind the ‘legal, technical and financial feasibility’<sup>45</sup>. For this purpose, the government shall publish a list of all such services to be provided in the electronic mode. The Act further instructs that in case of rejection of an application, the designated officer shall inform the applicant about the same and document the reasons for disapproval. In a bid to strengthen the **monitoring mechanisms**, the Act includes provisions for **imposing penalty** and taking disciplinary actions for default or delay on part of the designated officer in delivery of public services. There are provisions in the Act for **organizing training of concerned officials** in order to enhance their productivity and create a conducive environment for the successful incorporation of IT in public service delivery.

To monitor the implementation of the Act and ensure compliance, the Act directs the constitution of a single person Commission, headed by the Chief Commissioner. The major functions of the Commission include, monitoring the quality and time-bound delivery of services, and providing recommendations for redressal of public grievances and enhancing the overall efficiency of electronic service delivery.<sup>46</sup>

### **Pendency: the primary metric of efficiency**

The approach adopted by the District Administration in determining the efficient functioning of Sewa Kendras is reliant on the metric of application Pendency; a low rate of pendency

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<sup>43</sup> [https://prsindia.org/files/bills\\_acts/acts\\_states/punjab/2018/2018PB16.pdf](https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_states/punjab/2018/2018PB16.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> ibid

<sup>45</sup> ibid

<sup>46</sup> ibid

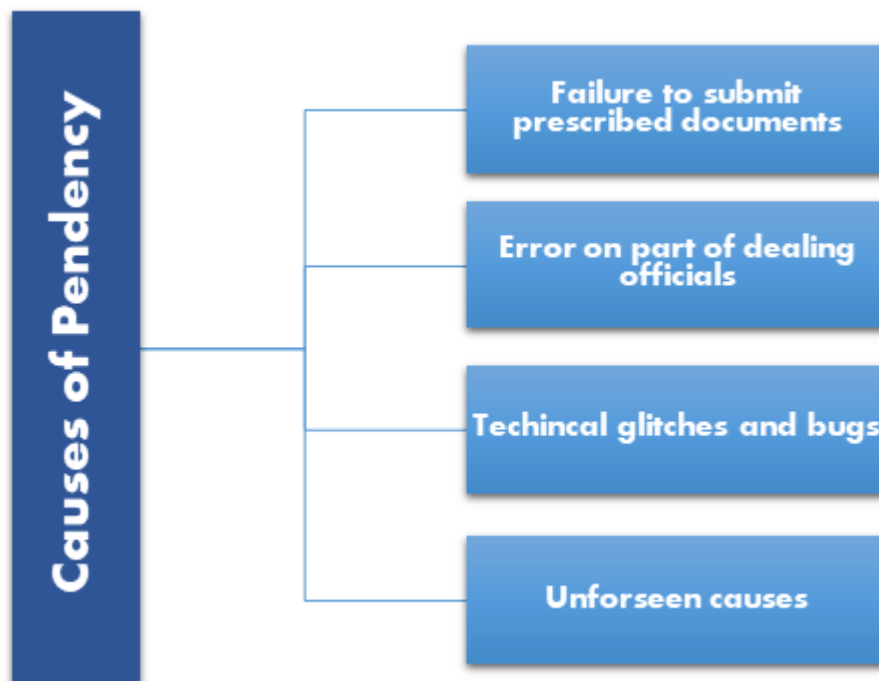
being the targeted goal to ensure that the citizens are able to avail services through Sewa Kendras in a prescribed manner.

Submitted applications that remain pending beyond the stipulated time frame specified by the Punjab Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018 are considered as pending. The stipulated time is counted from the date a citizen applies for a public service or submits the required application for the issuance of a public service in complete fulfilment of the prescribed requirements. Any delay or default on part of the Seva Kendra in dispensing the required service beyond the specified time frame counts as pendency and indicates deficiencies in the functioning of the Seva Kendra. Therefore, 'pendency' has been considered as a proxy instrument for measuring the efficiency of the Sewa Kendras across various districts of Punjab. The idea behind such a metric is that citizens should not run around different government departments for getting tasks done, rather it should be the government that provides services at the citizens' doorstep. A higher pendency rate does not only indicate the inefficiencies of the prevailing system but also entail poor citizen satisfaction.

Different pendency cases can be categorized into **four broad classifications**, based on the apparent cause of pendency. The first type of pendency arises when a citizen fails to meet the prescribed prerequisites in terms of documentation. When a pendency occurs due to the submission of incomplete documents and forms by citizens, it gets registered as a 'send back case'. The second type of pendency comprises those cases where the reason for delay falls back/gets passed down on/to the designated officer. The third category of pendency consists of erroneously registered cases which are a result of technical glitches and require the intervention of IT teams. The last category of pendency can be a result of unforeseen causes such as a pandemic, natural calamity, strikes, elections, etc.

#### **Case Study of Jalandhar district**

In June 2019, Jalandhar district recorded a staggering pendency of 56.39 per cent which amounted to around 42,585 pending cases. This could imply that the district administration faced several challenges in the implementation of the said Act, thus resulting in high pendency. However, the situation in Jalandhar was indicative of a larger concern. It was observed that even after the implementation of the Act, substantial pendency cases were reported; thus, implying deficiencies in the existing approach. Therefore, to overcome the mounting pendency rate and improve the overall functioning of Sewa kendras in the district, the Jalandhar District Administration undertook several proactive measures, keeping in mind the core ideas of citizen centric governance.



### Pune's Zero Pendency and Daily Disposal Approach

In a bid to enhance the quality of citizen services and usher in transparency in governance, the Zero Pendency and Daily Disposal (ZPDD) model was introduced in Pune in 2008 by the then District Collector, Chandrakant Dalvi. It aimed to improve the administrative processes by streamlining all processes at the Pune Collectorate. Under the initiative, efforts were made to classify and dispose of all old and pending documents across various government offices of Pune. The district adopted a decentralized approach to achieve this objective by involving various stakeholders at the Tehsil, Sub-division and district level. The initiative involved a total of 3193 officials, down from the Tehsildars to the Collector.<sup>47</sup>

Under the ZPDD model, officers were required to devise specific plans for clearing the pending files every week. It further mandated that all officials be present in the office on Mondays and Fridays to address citizens' grievances.<sup>48</sup> The Pune District Administration, itself played a dynamic role in monitoring the progress of the plan and ensuring proper compliance. In order to accelerate the process and ensure timely disposal of files, the model also specified the classification and segregation of useful documents under different categories on the basis of importance. It was estimated that around 1.2 million old and useless

<sup>47</sup>Mulla, Z. R., & Gordhan, K. S. (2013). Innovation in Public Service Delivery: Zero-Pendency and Daily Disposal (ZPDD) Initiative in Pune Collectorate. *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, 59(4), 843–866. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556120130407>

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*

files amounting to a total of 88.53 metric tonnes were discarded,<sup>49</sup> thus, boosting administrative efficiency and adding revenue to the state exchequer.

Even after leaving office, Dalvi continued to implement the ZPDD model in his subsequent postings which resulted in faster and efficient administrative processes and greater citizen satisfaction. Inspired by the success of the model, it was decided that the ZPDD approach will be replicated in all the government departments and offices of Maharashtra for ensuring the timely disposal of documents and promoting citizen-centric administration.<sup>50</sup> To augment the existing approach, training sessions were organized for officials to deal with implementation issues and incentives were put in place to reward the best performers.

### **The Zero Pendency Approach, Jalandhar - Overcoming the challenges**

A three-pronged model was devised to improve the functioning of the Seva Kendras in Jalandhar and strengthen the monitoring mechanisms. The three facets of the Zero Pendency Approach include, decentralized monitoring mechanism, capacity building and enhancement measures, and setting up incentive/deterrence structures. While employing these measures, the recommendations of the “ARC Seven-Step Model for Citizen Centricity” were adhered to a great extent. Overall, these steps were in line with the suggestions of the Citizen Centricity Model which recommended “setting standards and norms for each service”, “monitoring performance against the set standards”, “developing capability to meet the set standards”, “evaluating the impact through an independent mechanism”, and “continuous improvement based on monitoring and evaluation results”.<sup>51</sup>

The first aspect of this approach entailed the establishment of a **decentralized monitoring mechanism** to ensure efficient and time-bound delivery of citizen services. It was realized that involving the various nodal officers at the Tehsil and sub-Tehsil level and holding them accountable for their respective performance would go a long way in upholding accountability. To achieve this objective, Management Information System (MIS) reports were shared with officials on a regular basis. Thereafter, services with the highest number of pendency were identified and efforts were made to determine the apparent reasons behind

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<sup>49</sup> *ibid*

<sup>50</sup> Rawal, S. (2018). Maharashtra government has new plan to clear files quickly. Hindustan Times. retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/maharashtra-government-has-new-plan-to-clear-files-quickly/story-1Uw6bwvskZ4OihGDTVMjZO.html>

<sup>51</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Twelfth Report. Citizen Centric Governance: *The Heart of Governance*. February 2009

such delays. After ascertaining the probable causes of pendency, the concerned officials were given a genuine chance for mitigating their respective pendency rates before the Saturday review meeting with the Deputy Commissioner and other stakeholders. In the weekly scheduled review meetings, those officials and their concerned Nodal officers who are unable to bring down the pendency rate must justify their inability to do so backed with appropriate reasons.

The second aspect involves **capacity building measures** taken by the District Administration to augment the competence of the dealing officials and enhance the overall efficiency of Seva Kendras. It includes organizing regular training programs for operators, clerks and other staff belonging to different departments. For this purpose, a District Trainer has been appointed to provide the necessary training and guidance to officials in different Seva Kendras across the district. In addition, MIS reports were used to identify those send back and pendency cases which were a result of trainer inefficiency in handling cases. Thereafter, specific training sessions were conducted for such operators/Seva Kendras in order to extend the necessary technical assistance, thus, addressing the root cause of the issue. These steps were taken realizing the significance of technical preparedness in the successful implementation of e-governance initiatives.

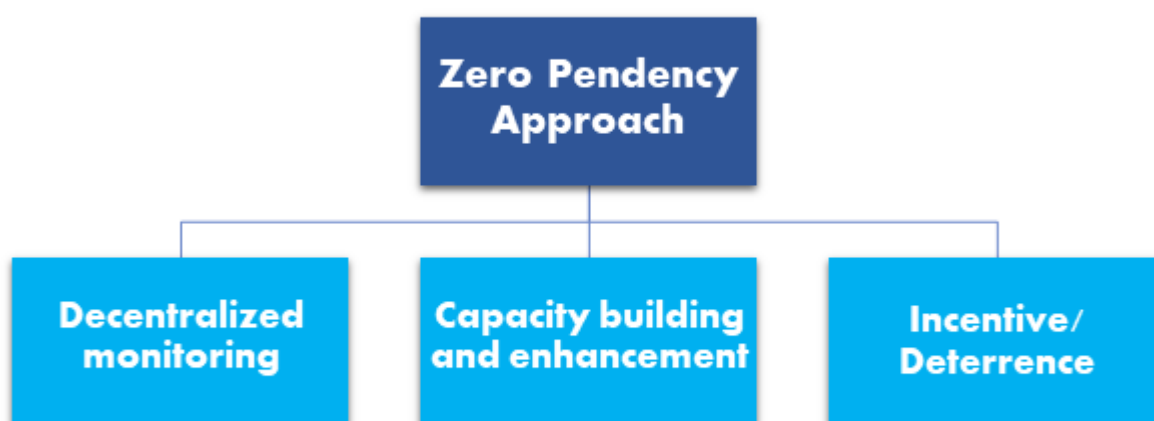
The third pillar of the zero-pendency scheme involved the use of an **incentive-based approach** by the District Administration. Incentives for change play a crucial role in motivating the involved stakeholders to fulfil their responsibilities efficiently and determine the success of any e-governance initiative.<sup>52</sup> A set of positive and negative incentives were put in place to ensure that the Seva Kendra operators and concerned officials deliver their duties proficiently and within the stipulated time. For instance, certain negative incentives were introduced, such as naming and shaming, preparation of daily MIS reports and holding the non-performing officials accountable in Saturday review meetings. In the event of an application being found pending, the concerned official is immediately notified. A nodal officer is alerted, who prompts the application to be processed in a timely manner. A set of positive incentives were also announced for rewarding and motivating the well performing Seva Kendras. These included handing out appreciation certificates and fitness bands to the top-ranking performers, verbal appreciation and honouring the best performers on days of

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<sup>52</sup> Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Eleventh Report. (2008). Promoting e-Governance: The SMART Way Forward. retrieved from [https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting\\_egov11.pdf](https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/promoting_egov11.pdf)

national significance such as on the Independence Day. Such motivations foster healthy competition and act as incentives for others to upscale their performance.

In addition to the three-pronged approach, a grievance redressal mechanism was also put in place for registering citizens' complaints and feedback. In case of any complaints or queries, provisions have been made for citizens to reach out on the Jalandhar administration's official facebook page, designated e-mail or call the helpdesk number. Further, the complaint boxes in the Sewa Kendras are monitored daily for written grievances.



### **Impact of the Zero Pendency Approach: transformation of Jalandhar**

After the systematic implementation of the Zero Pendency model, Jalandhar district moved from a staggering 56.39 per cent pendency rate in June, 2019 to a minimum 0.3 per cent pendency rate in June, 2020. In August, 2020, Jalandhar became the leading district with the lowest pendency rate in the entire state at 0.01 per cent. Quite notably, the Jalandhar district administration has been awarded the **Skoch Silver Award**<sup>53</sup> for maintaining the lowest pendency rate in the country and for the expeditious delivery of public services. Earlier, Jalandhar also was the only district selected from the state to be a finalist for the **Prime Minister's awards** recognizing public service delivery excellence.<sup>54</sup> In view of Jalandhar's

<sup>53</sup> The Tribune. (2020). District administration conferred Skoch Award. retrieved from <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jalandhar/district-administration-conferred-skoch-award-190488>

<sup>54</sup> ibid

impressive performance, the zero-pendency approach was upscaled and replicated in other districts of Punjab as well, leading to immense reduction in pendency rates across the state.

Jalandhar's success story highlights the efficacy of the existing model which combined the efforts of the District Administration with the finest aspects of an incentive-based approach and an entitlement approach. The active involvement of the District Administration in the entire process ensured effective monitoring of the service delivery mechanism and established an in-built corrective mechanism within the system which ensured time-bound and quality dispensation of public services.

### **Problem Statement**

The study examines the Zero Pendency Approach of the Jalandhar District Administration and how it has been successfully implemented to reduce pendency in Sewa Kendra applications across the district. The study recommends an increased emphasis on the 'send back' metric along with the existing pendency metric to ascertain the efficiency of public service delivery.

### **Analysis of pendency and send back cases of Jalandhar**

Under the Punjab Transparency & Accountability in Delivery of Public Service Act, 2018, Punjab maintains state level aggregate data regarding delivery of citizen-centric services through the Punjab e-Sewa portal. The district-wise performance of Sewa Kendras is measured through parameters such as the total number of applications received, the number of applications disposed; which includes both applications which have been rejected as well as applications which are rejected. In the year 2020-21 (from July 2020 to July 2021) Sewa Kendras in Jalandhar received a total of 2,90,874 applications; which was the third highest number of applications received among the districts in the state.

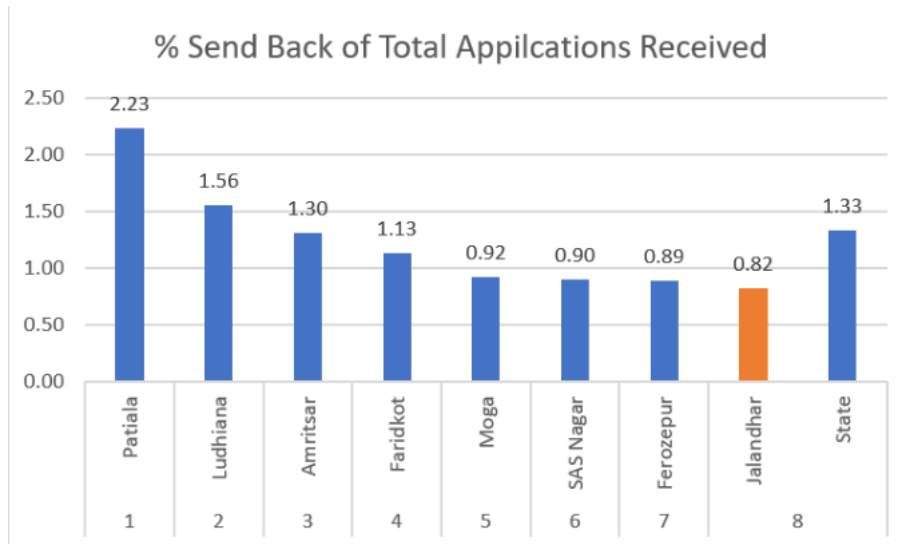
S.No	District Name	Total Applications Received
1	Ludhiana	438964
2	Amritsar	332522
3	Jalandhar	290874
4	Patiala	273334
5	Hoshiarpur	262858
6	Sangrur	242577
7	Gurdaspur	240454
8	Bathinda	215694
9	SAS Nagar	160151
10	Tarn Taran	157368
11	Fazilka	146954
12	Ferozepur	134407
13	Sri Muktsar Saheb	132691
14	Mansa	121810
15	Rupnagar	114964
16	Moga	112417
17	Pathankot	111911
18	SBS Nagar	109386
19	Kapurthala	103171
20	Faridkot	97324
21	Fatehgarh Sahib	84855
22	Barnala	82440

**Figure 1:** Number of applications received by Sewa Kendras in the state of Punjab from 10/7/2020 to 9/7/2021

S.No	District Name	Total Applications Received	Send Back	%age Send Back of Total Applications Received	% Pendency of total applications received
1	Patiala	273334	6109	2.23	0.04
2	Ludhiana	438964	6837	1.56	0.87
3	Amritsar	332522	4338	1.30	1.07
4	Faridkot	97324	1104	1.13	0.74
5	Moga	112417	1032	0.92	1.37
6	SAS Nagar	160151	1435	0.90	0.1
7	Ferozepur	134407	1196	0.89	1.29
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1549119</b>	<b>22051</b>	<b>1.42</b>	
8	<b>Jalandhar</b>	<b>290874</b>	<b>2386</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>0</b>
9	Barnala	82440	649	0.79	0.66
10	Rupnagar	114964	767	0.67	0.18
11	Fatehgarh Sahib	84855	552	0.65	0.55
12	Bathinda	215694	1260	0.58	0.66
13	Sangrur	242577	1320	0.54	0.98
14	Kapurthala	103171	524	0.51	0.52
15	Mansa	121810	610	0.50	0.72
16	Gurdaspur	240454	785	0.33	0.06
17	Pathankot	111911	342	0.31	0.34
18	Sri Muktsar Saheb	132691	382	0.29	0.99
19	Fazilka	146954	418	0.28	0.62
20	SBS Nagar	109386	306	0.28	0.11
21	Tarn Taran	157368	345	0.22	1.66
22	Hoshiarpur	262858	575	0.22	0.06

**Figure 2:** %age of Send Back of Total Application Received along with % Pendency of Total Applications Received.

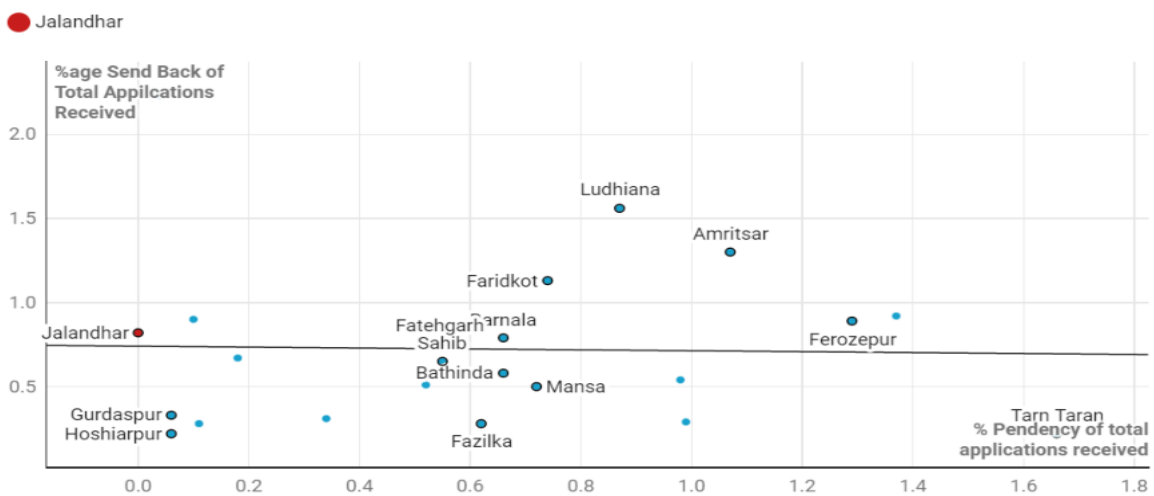
The Jalandhar District administration's Zero Pendency Approach has been highly effective in keeping the pendency rate of applications low; as of July 2021, Jalandhar district had 0% percent pendency; thus applications received were either approved, rejected or sent back and thus the citizens are not kept in limbo about the status of their application. Of the 2,90,874 applications received by Sewa Kendras in the district 3,010 applications were rejected; thus the rejection rate is quite low at 1.03% which is less than the state's rejection rate of 1.21% (48,086 applications rejected out of 3967126 application received). However, Jalandhar district still has a significant number of send back cases; 2386 applications received were sent back.



**Figure 3:** Jalandhar District in comparison to other districts in terms of % send back of total applications received

While the send sack as a percentage of total applications received is 0.82%, and lower than the State’s total of 1.42%, the send back cases also need to be carefully examined since these cases are also a type of pendency even though they may not be reported as such. A send back application signifies that a citizen approaching the Sewa Kendras did not receive their service within the stipulated time due to reasons such as incomplete or insufficient documentation submitted by the citizen at the time of submission of application or due to some discrepancies in the form submitted.

**Scatter of % Pendency and %age Send Back Cases of Sewa Kendras**



**Figure 4:** Scatter Plot of send backs and pendency across different districts.

There does not appear to be any significant correlation between the districts which have low % of Pendency of application and relatively higher % of Send Back cases; therefore it can be said that pending applications aren't being sent back to the citizens by the districts so as to lower their application pendency rates. However, the reasons for send backs do need to be analyzed since send backs are hindrances in the efficient working of public service delivery and citizen centric administration.

The application form for different services available can be accessed through the state's e-Sewa portal or printed copies are available at the Sewa Kendras. The application forms mention the documents that need to be submitted along with the application and citizens can also check the list of required documents for different services at Punjab government's e-district portal under the required documents section.<sup>55</sup>

However, despite the information regarding required documentation being available to the public, the frequency of send back cases suggests the existence of issues that need to be addressed. Since the online portal of the Government detailing the required documentation may not be accessible to marginalized sections of society, the Sewa Kendra operators and the Help Desk operators and counter operators are often the first points of contact for information regarding application and submission of applications, they require training to ensure that they collect complete documentation. While the Type 1 Sewa Kendra in Jalandhar district has some designated counters for services which are frequently availed and the operators are well versed with the required documentation for these services, a similar approach of designated counters for certain services with operators trained in the specifics of those services can be adopted by Type 2 Sewa Kendras as well. In this regard, the district administration does organize training sessions of operators and dealing clerks of various departments regularly for improvement in service delivery. These training sessions are conducted in both online and offline formats. The district administration also makes use of MIS reports to identify key components of training. For e.g. if send back cases of a particular Sewa Kendras are more due to negligence of the operator while applying the cases, a training session for the Sewa Kendra is conducted. District trainers have also been appointed whose sole focus is to conduct training throughout the District. They keep in touch with all the senior operators for the real time resolution of their queries.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://edistrict.punjabgovt.gov.in/EDA/DocumentsRequired.aspx>

Further, during the field visits to Sewa Kendras it was observed that while the notice board regarding the documents required were placed in a manner that was clearly visible, the printed notice boards were in English and may not be accessible to all sections of society therefore the list of required documents needs to be printed in Punjabi as well.

<b>Service</b>	Copying & M.A. Misc., Demarcation of Land, Non - Encumbrance Certificate
<b>Activity</b>	Copy of Mutation, Copy of Criminal Case, Copy of Jamabandi, Copy of Registration Deed
<b>Documents Required</b>	Certified copy of Document 1) Less than or equal to 3 years Court fee of Rs. 51/- 2) Above 3 years Court fee of Rs. 101/-
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Permission for Fair</b>
<b>Documents Required</b>	Application form in duplicate, Speaker Form in duplicate, Affidavit, Court fee of Rs. 5/- day
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Demarcation of Land</b>
<b>Documents Required</b>	Copy of latest mutation, Application form.
<b>Activity</b>	Non Encumbrance Certificate
<b>Documents Required</b>	Application form & Photo copy of Registration
<b>Counter No.</b>	<b>Service</b>
10, 11	Copying & M.A. Misc., Demarcation of Land, Non - Encumbrance Certificate, Copy of Registration Deed
<b>Service</b>	<b>Counter Signature</b>
<b>Activity</b>	Counter Sign of Ration Card, Date of Birth Certificate, Marriage Certificate
<b>Documents Required</b>	Two copies of Application (along with file cover.)
<b>Counter No.</b>	<b>Service</b>
12	Counter Signature
<b>Service</b>	<b>Affidavit</b>
<b>Activity</b>	Attestation of Affidavit, Indemnity Bond, Surety Bond
<b>Documents Required</b>	Ration Card or PAN Card or Passport or Driving License or Voter ID Card or Identity Card or Registration Certificate of Vehicle or Residential Certificate.
<b>Counter No.</b>	<b>Service</b>
15, 16	Affidavit

Figure 5: Notice Board of Services and the required documentation

Department Name	No. of Send Backs
Department of Revenue	1011
Department of Health and Family Welfare	804
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and Minorities	192
Department of Social Security & Development of Women & Children	172
Department of Personnel	38
Department of Home Affairs and Justice	35
Department of Rural Development and Panchayats	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2256</b>

Figure 6: Department Wise number of Send Back cases

The Department wise analysis of Send Back cases can help the district administration in better identifying the departments which have a significant number of send back cases. The applications directed to the Department of Revenue and the Department of Health and Family Welfare make up for more than 80% of the sent back cases. A service- wise analysis of the Send Back cases provides more insight into the kinds of services which are often resulting in Send Back cases.

Service Name	No. of Send Backs	Average of Days Pending For
<b>Department of Revenue</b>	<b>1011</b>	<b>31</b>
Counter Signing of Documents of Nri	291	25
Certified copies of previously registered documents.	279	47
Equity Entry of Mortgage	128	19
Issue of Income Certificate	109	30
Counter Signing of Police Clearance Certificate	95	25
Issuance of Non Encumbrance Certificate	39	14
Counter Signing of Affidavit	19	19
Demarcation of Land	19	70
Inspection of Revenue Records	16	14
Countersigning of Translation of Certificates	7	19
Identity Card To Lambardar	4	23
Counter Signing of Divorce Certificate	3	17
Indemnity Bond	1	8
Copy of Sanad	1	15

**Figure 7:** Services offered by Department of Revenue and the number of send back cases along with the average duration for which the send back cases remain pending.

Among the services offered by the Department of Revenue, the Counter Signing of Documents of NRI, Certified copies of previously registered documents, Equity entry of Mortgage and Issue of Income Certificates make up for the majority of send back cases. Some of the probable reasons for the significant number of send backs of counter signing of documents were discussed during interactions with the officials at the Sewa Kendra. Since Jalandhar lies in the Doaba region and the region is also called the NRI Hub of Punjab as a consequence of the migration of a significant percentage of people<sup>56</sup>The NRI population often aren't able to rectify the problems in their application because they submit their applications during their visits to their homeplace and often their visits are short and they are unable to submit the required documents because they have to return to their respective countries of residence. Further, the certified copies of previously registered documents also form a significant number of send backs; often the applicants are not able to produce the original documents in the prescribed format which results in Send Backs. The exact analysis of the reasons for Send Backs of these cases is difficult to ascertain considering that the objections raised by the Department vary on a case to case basis and the remarks of the

<sup>56</sup> Gurharpal Singh; Darsham Singh Tatla (2006). Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community. London: Zed Books Ltd. p. 40. ISBN 978-1-84277-717-6. big villages doaba.

operators/department officials in the data available to the researchers very often just mentioned ‘Objection’ without delving into the specificities of each case.

To rectify the send back situation in these cases, the services of counter signing of Documents of NRIs and certified copies of previously registered documents could be made available Online through e-Sewa portal/ mSewa app and facilitation charges could be charged to citizens wishing to avail these facilities. This would allow for NRIs to submit their documents without requiring having to visit Sewa Kendras and in an online manner.

Service Name	No. of Send Backs	Average of Days Pending For
<b>Department of Health and Family Welfare</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>47</b>
Correction in Birth Certificate for Urban area (After current year for both SMO/MO and EOMC)	139	39
Delayed Registration of Birth Certificate(Rural)(After One Year)	118	45
Birth / Non Availability Certificate Urban after Year	85	33
Birth / Non Availability Certificate Rural after Year	68	42
Correction in Birth Certificate (Rural after one year)	68	42
Addition of Name in Birth Certificate(Urban after one year)	50	56
Delayed Registration of Birth Certificate(Urban)(After One Year)	40	58
Issuance of First copy of Birth certificate	32	64
Delayed Registration of Death Certificate(Urban)(After 30 days and Within One Year) (in case of EOMC Office)	27	34
Delayed Registration of Death Certificate(Urban)(After One Year)	24	61
Issuance of First copy of Death certificate	19	43
Death / Non Availability Certificate Urban after Year	18	39
Correction in Death Certificate for Urban area (Within current year in case of EOMC)	18	65
Correction in Death Certificate for Urban area (After current year for both SMO/MO and EOMC)	16	64
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Urban Area After One Year Only - Non-Institutional After Current Year(URBAN)	13	106
Death / Non Availability Certificate Urban within Year	11	67
Death / Non Availability Certificate Rural within Year	10	69
Delayed Registration of Death Certificate(Rural)(After One Year)	9	40
Death / Non Availability Certificate Rural after Year	6	23
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Rural Area – after Current Year- Non-Institutional After year (RURAL)	5	158
Correction in death Certificate for Rural area (After current year)	4	57
Correction in Birth Certificate for Urban area (In case of EOMC within current Year)	4	72
Delayed Registration of Birth Certificate(Urban)(After 30 days and Within One Year) (In case of EOMC office)	4	45
Addition of Name in Birth Certificate (Rural after one Year)	3	23
Issuance of first copy of death certificate by ANM	3	39
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Urban Area With in Current Year Only -Non-Institutional Current Year(URBAN)	2	65
Delayed Registration of Death Certificate(Rural)(After 30 days and Within One Year)	2	79
Correction in Birth Certificate for Rural area (Within current year)	1	34
Issuance of first copy of birth Certificate (Rural)	1	1
Issuance of Still Birth Certificate (Urban)(In case of EOMC)	1	1
Birth / Non Availability Certificate Urban within Year	1	35
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Rural Area – With in Current Year -Non-Institutional Current Year (RURAL)	1	229
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Urban Area– After Current Year -Institutional After Year (URBAN)	1	90

**Figure 8:** Services offered by Department of Health & Family Welfare and the number of Send Back cases along with the average duration for which the send back cases remain pending

Among the services offered by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, the issuance and corrections in Birth certificates and Death certificates form a majority of the Send Back cases.

Service Name	No. of Send Backs	Average of Days Pending For
<b>Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and Minorities</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>110</b>
Caste certificate SC	90	107
Caste certificate OBC/BC	60	150
Shagun Scheme (For Sanction of Case)	29	74
Income and Asset Certificate	7	17
Issuance of General Caste Certificate	6	28
<b>Department of Social Security &amp; Development of Women &amp; Children</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>57</b>
Old age pension scheme	125	58
Disabled person pension scheme	20	73
Widow/destitute pension scheme	14	29
Dependent children pension scheme	13	49
<b>Department of Personnel</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>30</b>
Residence certificate	38	30
<b>Department of Home Affairs and Justice</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>75</b>
Renewal of Arms License	17	72
Deletion of Weapon	4	162
Issuance of New Arms License	3	103
Issuance of License For Travel Agent Consultancy	3	20
Entry of Weapon	2	24
Extension of Jurisdiction Outside Punjab	2	90
NOC/Permission for Sale of Weapon	2	17
Change of Bore	1	68
Permission for sale / transfer weapon in death case	1	55
<b>Department of Rural Development and Panchayats</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>
Rural Area Certificate	4	13
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2256</b>	<b>46</b>

**Figure 9:** Department and Service-wise Send Backs and Average Days Pending for.

In the services offered by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and Minorities, the issuance of caste certificates for SC and OBC persons form a significant number of sendbacks. The objections raised by the Department in issuance of caste certificates often pertain to the documents requiring the signatures of the Patwari, issues of address verification, missing signatures and photo identification etc. Similarly in the case of Old Age Pension scheme under the Department of Social Security and Development of Women and Children, the objections raised by the Department which results in sendbacks include land reports not being verified by the Naib Tehsildar, bank account number mismatch and other information related to bank account not filled correctly, photo of the beneficiary not in the prescribed format etc.

Service Name	No. of Send Backs	Average of Days Pending For
Counter Signing of Documents of Nri	291	25
Certified copies of previously registered documents.	279	47
Correction in Birth Certificate for Urban area (After current year for both SMO/MO and EOMC)	139	39
Equity Entry of Mortgage	128	19
Old age pension scheme	125	58
Delayed Registration of Birth Certificate(Rural)(After One Year)	118	45
Issue of Income Certificate	109	30
Counter Signing of Police Clearance Certificate	95	25
Caste certificate SC	90	107
Birth / Non Availability Certificate Urban after Year	85	33
Birth / Non Availability Certificate Rural after Year	68	42
Correction in Birth Certificate (Rural after one year)	68	42
Caste certificate OBC/BC	60	150
Addition of Name in Birth Certificate(Urban after one year)	50	56
Delayed Registration of Birth Certificate(Urban)(After One Year)	40	58
Issuance of Non Encumbrance Certificate	39	14
Residence certificate	38	30
Issuance of First copy of Birth certificate	32	64
Shagun Scheme (For Sanction of Case)	29	74
Delayed Registration of Death Certificate(Urban)(After 30 days and Within One Year) (in case of EOMC Office)	27	34
Delayed Registration of Death Certificate(Urban)(After One Year)	24	61
Disabled person pension scheme	20	73
Issuance of First copy of Death certificate	19	43
Counter Signing of Affidavit	19	19
Demarcation of Land	19	70
Death / Non Availability Certificate Urban after Year	18	39
Correction in Death Certificate for Urban area (Within current year in case of EOMC)	18	65
Renewal of Arms License	17	72
Inspection of Revenue Records	16	14
Correction in Death Certificate for Urban area (After current year for both SMO/MO and EOMC)	16	64

**Figure 10:** Highlighted Services have high no. of send backs and warrants appropriate attention and action from the district administration.

Similarly the application received under the Shagun scheme also has some sendbacks. Under the Shagun scheme the state government provides upto Rs. 51,000 per beneficiary for the marriage of girls from Low Income and Scheduled Castes/Backward Castes. Earlier the assistance offered under the scheme was Rs.21,000 which was hiked to Rs.51,000 .To avail the benefit, the annual income of the family from all sources should not exceed Rs 32,790. The parents/guardians of the girl should be domiciled in Punjab and the financial assistance under this scheme is limited to two girls only from one family. Further, the applicant is required to submit an application for getting financial assistance in the prescribed proforma before the date of marriage or 30 days after the marriage of the girl.<sup>57</sup> The hike in assistance was applicable from July 1, 2021.However in other districts of Punjab there have been cases of ineligible beneficiaries applying for the scheme by producing altered documentation with changed dates so as to be eligible for higher remuneration.<sup>58</sup> The district administration should look into this matter.

<sup>57</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/chandigarh/punjab-cabinet-hikes-ashirwad-scheme-assistance-from-rs-21000-to-rs-51000-7292878/>

<sup>58</sup><https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/chandigarh-news/ineligible-beneficiaries-claiming-shagun-scheme-aid-as-amount-hiked-from-july-1-101625774247852.html>

Service Name	No. of Send Backs	Average of Days Pending For
Caste certificate SC	90	107.00
Caste certificate OBC/BC	60	150.02
Shagun Scheme (For Sanction of Case)	29	73.76
Disabled person pension scheme	20	73.20
Demarcation of Land	19	69.58
Renewal of Arms License	17	71.94
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Urban Area After One Year Only -Non-Institutional After Current Year(URBAN)	13	106.00
Adoption for Place of Birth falls under jurisdiction of Rural Area – after Current Year- Non-Institutional After year (RURAL)	5	158.40
Correction in Birth Certificate for Urban area (In case of EOMC within current Year)	4	71.50

**Figure 11:** Caste related services have a significant number of Send Backs as well as high average days that the application remains pending for

The above services, with the highlighted ones being which pertain to persons from vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society, while having significant number of send backs also have high average days that they are pending for; this is a cause for concern because a service with high send back cases but a low average of pending days means that the citizens are receiving the services but with some delay. However, a high number of send backs and high average of days pending for signifies that the citizen are not able to rectify the errors in their application which results in two major downside of the citizen not being able to avail the services while also being reflected in the send back metrics of district without the issue being redressed.

Name of Service	Count of Send Back Date	Average of Days Pending For	Total Charges ((Govt.Charges+Facilitation Charges)*No. of Senback Cases)
Department of Health and Family Welfare	804	47.38432836	45350
Department of Home Affairs and Justice	35	74.85714286	22810
Department of Personnel	38	30.02631579	2280
Department of Revenue	1011	30.89020772	158470
Department of Rural Development and Panchayats	4	13.25	300
Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and Minorities	192	109.6822917	9600
Department of Social Security & Development of Women & Children	172	56.6627907	0
Grand Total	2256	46.07535461	0
			238810

**Figure 12:** Estimates of Fees generated by applications which are Sent Back in Jalandhar District

A preliminary analysis of the Government charges and the Facilitation charges indicated the fiscal aspect of the send back cases as well. An estimated amount of **Rs. 2,38,810** is still held up for which the services are yet to be rendered/ completed. This aspect also needs to be reviewed by the district administration so as to ensure that the services for which payments

have been received are duly accounted for. Services relating to Arms Licenses for example, have high government charges as well as high facilitation charges.

## Chapter 3

### Recommendations

The Zero Pendency approach applied by the Jalandhar district administration has achieved remarkable success in terms of reduction in the pendency of applications and overall functioning of Sewa Kendras in the district. However, there are certain aspects of service delivery which can be further optimized to make the Sewa Kendras function in a more efficient and citizen centric manner.

The Zero Pendency approach treats pendency as the sole indicator for gauging the performance of Sewa Kendras. The metric of pendency, although useful for ascertaining the responsiveness of the Sewa Kendra should not be the only metric determining the efficiency of the Sewa Kendra in delivering public services in a time bound and expedient manner. The pendency indicator fails to capture larger aspects of citizen centricity, including the number of send back cases and crucial questions pertaining to citizen experience such as the transaction costs incurred in terms of the time, money and effort taken in reaching the Sewa Kendra, gathering information, having one's queries addressed, and completing the required documentation correctly. A higher number of send back cases, for instance, can be indicative of insufficiency on part of the Sewa Kendra in providing adequate assistance and information to citizens regarding the necessary documents and other prerequisites.

While the Zero Pendency approach has 3 guiding aspects of: an incentive-based approach, an entitlements-based approach and proactive involvement of the District Administration for continuous improvement and monitoring of the Sewa Kendras, the addition of two more 'pillars' to the existing approach can make the model more holistic and citizen centric. The **fourth pillar** which can be admitted is the **enhancement of citizen satisfaction** in terms of convenience in availing services at Seva Kendras. The experience of the citizen while availing various public services at the Sewa Kendras is equally important because the Sewa Kendras are the 'face' of the government. A convenient and hassle-free user experience, if offered by the Sewa Kendras not only enhances user satisfaction but also creates a positive perception of the government in the minds of the citizens.

In this regard improvements can be made in the design aspects of Seva Kendras so as to make the infrastructure more inclusive and user-friendly. As per the present structure, every Seva Kendra has one helpdesk, varying number of counters and seating arrangements depending on the type and location of Seva Kendra, and disabled-friendly infrastructure such as ramps. However, the administration can adopt a more proactive approach for facilitating the experience of the disadvantaged/vulnerable sections including persons with disability, pregnant women and senior citizens. Provisions can be made for securing separate service counters and reserving seats for physically disabled individuals, pregnant women as well as the elderly. In case of both offline and online token systems, the disadvantaged sections can be detected and catered to on a priority basis.

It is commendable to note that women constitute a major proportion of the operators at Seva Kendras. However, in order to make the workforce more inclusive, persons with disabilities can be employed at these centres after imparting the necessary training and guidance. Further, greater emphasis can also be laid on the cleanliness aspect of the Seva Kendra in order to enhance the overall citizen experience. There is scope for improvement in terms of availability of toilets, overall cleanliness and infrastructure of Seva Kendras. Such small steps and improvements can leave a much greater impact on the quality of public service delivery and enhance the user experience at Seva Kendras exponentially.

#### **National e-Governance Awards 2020: Excellence in providing citizen-centric delivery**

The National Awards for e-Governance have been presented every year since 2003 to recognize and promote excellence in implementation of e-Governance initiatives and the 23rd National Conference on e-Governance organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India (DAR&PG) in Mumbai on February 8, 2020. One of the six categories for the awards includes 'Excellence in providing citizen-centric delivery' ( this category has been revised to 'Universalizing Access including e-Services' for the year 2020-21). Central, State and District Level initiatives are eligible to apply for these awards.

In 2020, the 'Antyodaya Saral' project of the government of Haryana and 'e-Kshana' (An Instantaneous Over the Counter Caste, Income & Residence Certificate Issuance System) of the Revenue Department, Government of Karnataka were awarded the Gold and Jury Award Respectively.

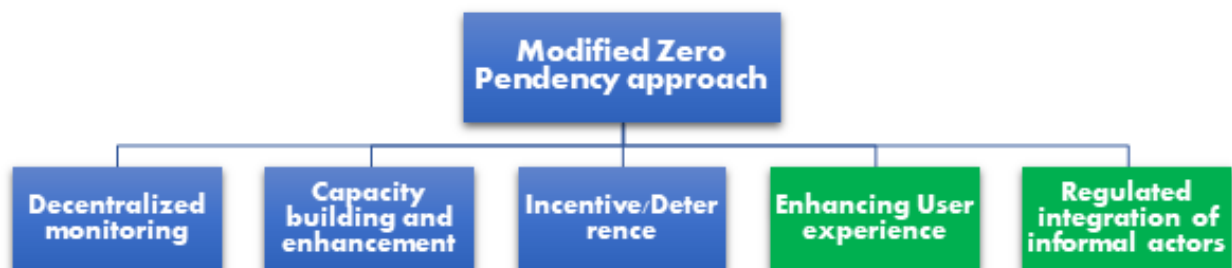
The 'Antyodaya Saral' platform has been made with the objective to provide all G2C schemes and services to the citizens on one single platform and available online across all 115 Antyodaya Saral Kendras and 8000+ registered Atal Seva Kendras. Total of 511 services and schemes launched out of a total of 550+ G2C services. These schemes and services spread across 38 Departments, Boards and Corporations.

The 'e-Kshana' initiative created a ready repository of caste income & residence certificates of the population of Karnataka, which enables instantaneous and over the counter issuance of these certificates at the citizen requests. The Certificates are also available ONLINE so that the citizen could print his or her certificate anytime and anywhere.

(The case studies for the above mentioned projects can be accessed at: [Antyodaya Saral, e-Kshana](#))

Lastly, the **fifth pillar** which can be incorporated in the existing model pertains to the **regulated integration of informal actors** of form filling and documentation to make the system more expedient. Although every Sewa Kendra in the district is designed to have a helpdesk, one can observe that these help desks are overburdened and hence, unable to sufficiently cater to the requirements of all the citizens. Overburdened help desks and the lack of complete information regarding proper documentation compel citizens to resort to informal channels of form filling which are mostly unregulated and charge exorbitantly high fees for their services. For instance, the marriage filling form took 10k rupees and some people still got it filled through these channels.

Although information regarding the required paperwork and other prerequisites is mentioned on the official website and on the public display boards in Sewa Kendras, people tend to overlook these details. Moreover, many citizens choose to avail assistance from these informal channels, especially from the persons who have notary desks in the District Administration complex, as they provide quick and hassle-free services, and assure that the prescribed paperwork is done accurately. Citizens' reliance on these unofficial channels and their unregulated nature necessitate the creation of a system which encompasses these informal actors by bringing them within the domain of the formal.



## Service Specific Recommendations

- Services such as **counter signing of documents of NRIs** and **certified copies of previously registered documents** could be made available online through e-Sewa portal/ mSewa app and facilitation charges could be charged to citizens wishing to avail these facilities. This would enable NRIs to submit their documents without requiring to physically visit Sewa Kendras and in an entirely online manner. Consequently, the send back and pendency cases arising due to the inability of NRIs to make physical visits would reduce substantially.
- In the services offered by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and Minorities, the **issuance of caste certificates for SC and OBC persons** form a significant proportion of send backs. The objections raised by the Department in issuance of caste certificates often pertain to the **documents requiring the signatures of the Patwari, issues of address verification, missing signatures and photo identification** etc. Similarly in the case of **Old Age Pension scheme** under the Department of Social Security and Development of Women and Children, the objections raised by the Department which results in send backs include **land reports not being verified by the Naib Tehsildar**, bank account number mismatch and other information related to bank account filled incorrectly, photo of the beneficiary not in the prescribed format etc. The District Administration should organize **training sessions for the Patwaris and Naib Tehsildars** so that the citizens are able to access these services in a timely and hassle free manner.
- As a result of the hike in assistance of the **Shagun Scheme** effective from July 1 2021, there have been cases of ineligible beneficiaries applying for the scheme in other districts of Punjab by producing altered documentation with changed dates so as to be eligible for higher remuneration. Since there are a significant number of send back cases in Jalandhar District pertaining to the Shagun Scheme, the district administration should also deeply investigate the matter and tackle the issue.

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