
Sakala Model of Service Delivery: A Case Study On the implementation of Karnataka Public Services Delivery Act

Dr. Rajvir Dhaka
Professor,

Haryana Institute of Public Administration, Gurugram

Introduction:

The word *Sakala* is derived from Sanskrit language. It means “in time”. During the colonial period, the concept of public service was at the receiving end in India. It was only after the end of British rule that the concept of Lok Sewa emerged in the country. But, the progress in this direction was rather tardy because the priorities were fighting poverty, illiteracy, unemployment through development of agriculture, industries and infrastructure. So, the concept of public service did not gain importance in governance. The attitude of the administrative apparatus was limited to following the extant policies and instructions rather than towards the needs of the people. As a result, many programs failed because of wide gaps in the expectations of the people and the perception of the service providers. The E-governance initiatives in many states show that IT enabled services could meet the expectations of the people in public service delivery. Citizen friendly public service is the need of hour. The quality of service, mode of delivery, affordability and other aspects related to services have to meet the expectations of the citizens. Therefore, the Service delivery mechanism needs to be based on the needs of the customer. This is possible only when the organizational governance is citizen-centric. The recognition of the Citizens’ Right to Public Services through legislation is an important landmark in India’s pursuit of governance, reforms and optimum utilization of public resources. Haryana enacted the Right to Services Delivery legislation in 2014. It is called Haryana Right to Service Delivery Act, 2014 which is considered as one of the toughest legislations enacted by any state legislature of the country.

In this context the Sakala model of time-bound service delivery to citizens in Karnataka has worked as a trendsetter for other states for asserting commitment of the state and the politico-administrative will at the cutting edge level for making the delivery of the public services in a time bound manner a reality.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To understand the standard operating procedure involved in providing necessary services to citizens well in Karnataka;
2. To identify the best practices. Karnataka Sakala Services Act, 2011, amended in 2014, is considered as one of the finest legislations related to Services delivery; and
3. To study by close observation the actual working and practical problems in implementation of Sakala system, so that the best practices could be replicated in the state of Haryana as well.

Background of the study:

As part of the Induction Training Program for the District Food and Civil Supplies Controllers and Officers, the trainees were assigned to visit Karnataka to understand the operation of Sakala, to identify the best practices that could be replicated for better implementation in Haryana and also to gain insights into the various issues that Karnataka has been facing in the implementation of the Sakala Model. The team was also expected to take note of the differences in the cultural, historical and socio-economic variables of Karnataka and Haryana which could influence the adaptation of the Sakala features to the

Haryana Right to Services Delivery Act, 2014. The visit was undertaken to Karnataka from 24th to 29th June, 2017.

Methodology:

As a part of our objective of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the functioning of the Sakala systems in Karnataka, it was prudent to collect the data from primary sources. Useful information was obtained through interaction with the officials at various levels, directly and indirectly involved in the operation of Sakala. We also made use of the secondary sources such as the State Acts and other documents relevant to the subject. Besides, we interviewed a number of beneficiaries residing in Bengaluru.

Procedure Adopted:

The study commenced with a visit to the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (AR), M.S. Building, Bengaluru. An wide-ranging interaction was held with the Ms. Pallavi, Additional Mission Director, Sakala and Shri K. Mathai, Administrative Officer and Ex-officio Under Secretary to Government, Sakala Mission, for understanding the broader picture and various dynamics at play in the state which directly and indirectly impact the philosophy behind the design and implementation of the Karnataka Sakala Services Act, 2011 and (Amendment) Act, 2014. A presentation on the operationalization of mission Sakala in Karnataka was made by Shri K. Matthai, Administrative officer, of the mission.

This was followed up by a visit to the office of Deputy Director of Food and Civil Supplies, Bengaluru and interaction with Shri Naved Ahmed, Deputy Director, on matters related to services provided by the Department of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs under the Sakala initiative.

Rolling out of Sakala

The idea of time bound delivery of services in Karnataka was originally conceived by Bihar. To provide Guarantee of Services to Citizens within a stipulated time, the State Legislature enacted the Karnataka Guarantee of Services to citizens Act, 2011 (KGSCA) on 30th December, 2011. As a corollary to the legislation, the Sakala Mission was launched on 1st March, 2012 on a pilot basis in Aurad Taluk of Bidar District, Chitradurga Taluk of Chitradurga District, Puttur Taluk of Dakshina Kannada District and the Dharwad Taluk of District Dharwad.

Prior to beginning implementation of this Act, suggestions for a suitable name/logo were invited from the public for giving it a proper name. "SAKALA" which means "in time" was ultimately selected for the service delivery across the state from amongst the entries received for this purpose. Karnataka has taken up implementation of the Act in a Mission Mode. As many as 765 services of 63 departments/institutions are included under Sakala by June 28, 2017. Out of these 138 services are being provided through online channel presently. National Informatics Center (NIC) has provided the software and network support for this purpose.

Implementation Strategy

The Act has identified three officers/authorities and given them clear roles and responsibilities for its effective implementation. There are Designated Officers (DO), Competent Officers (CO) and Appellate Authority (AA). DO is required to provide citizen related services while the CO is empowered to impose cost on the government servant for defaulting/delaying the delivery of services. The Appellate Authority is empowered to hear appeals against the order passed by the CO.

It is the duty of the Designated Officer that an application for a service is duly acknowledged. The DO shall either provide service or reject the application within the stipulated time. He/she shall record the reason for rejection in writing and intimate the same to the applicant.

The DO shall also inform the time available for making appeal, along with the details of the appellate authority. For every delay in service the Dos or concerned officials have to pay punitive cost for such delay.

Every citizen shall be provided unique acknowledgement number of 15 digits known as Guaranteed Service to Citizens (GSC) Number. Display Boards containing services specified in the schedule and the stipulated time have been made mandatory. An applicant is entitled to monitor the progress of his application through the dedicated portal or the call center.

Features of Sakala Service Delivery Process:

All department have to set up a Sakala desk. The Citizens may go to the concerned office and submit his/her application at the Sakala Counter. Here a unique 15 Digits acknowledgement number (GSC) is assigned to the application. Citizens also get an acknowledgement SMS as well and as the first step the application is forwarded to the concerned department.

While the application undergoes approvals at various levels in department, citizens can track the status (Approved/Rejected/Intermediate Pendency) via internet or phone. Service is finally delivered either through the Sakala counter or at the desk of designated office. Certain services are delivered through internet as well.

(A flowchart of Sakala Service Delivery Process is attached as annexure A)

Grievance Redressal and follow-up:

For an appeal against the delay or inadequate service, the citizens may contact the Call Center and physically visit the competent officer to submit a formal letter. An aggrieved citizen may demand compensation for delay in services @ Rs. 20 per day up to a maximum of Rs. 500.

The driving force behind Sakala is online monitoring, rating and ranking of different districts on the basis of their performance. An SMS is sent to the Designated Officer everyday regarding current pendency of applications under him/her. Emails are sent in the form of notice to Designated Officer about cumulative pendency by the Mission Director with a copy to the Head of department. (Specimen Notice is attached as annexure B).

Feedback on pendency to officer is uploaded on Sakala website. Monthly review of such pendency is done through video conference meeting of all DCs with CM. A Sakala kiosk is set up in all Deputy Commissioner offices, Sakala LED is installed at the entrance of Vidhan Saudha, LED displays are installed in all Taluk offices.

Awareness programs are conducted with public participation. To disseminate the achievements under this initiative, the Sakala Magazine is regularly published. Regular training is conducted at State and District Headquarter for officers/staff engaged in delivery of key services.

Success story

Sakala got Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration for the year 2012-13. Sakala stands for transparency, accountability and reliability. Live data is available for anyone to check not only the status of his/her application but also its progress. Sakala is now ISO 9001:2008 certified. Sakala acts as a means to an end. It has reduced the time taken for service delivery. A total of approximately 12.08 crore services were reported to have been availed by the citizens. The average number of yearly receipts in Sakala is 2.04 crore. The average monthly receipt in Sakala is 20 lakhs and the number of daily receipts is 85 thousand. Monthly review of the services is provided / rendered through Sakala by the CM. It is somewhat equivalent to the portal of CM Window which is functional in the state of Haryana.

Weaknesses in Implementation

Effective implementation is lacking as the Sakala Mission Director has no enforcement powers. Compensation paid is not only meager in amount but it is also rarely given. No provision has been made for penalizing the First Appellate Authority. However, a healthy

competition has emerged for better performance with regard to the delivery of services by way of ranking and rating of districts by Sakala mission. No facility of Toll Free number is available to the public.

There seems to be a shortage or apathy among the staff. It surfaced after repeated dialing to the Call Center no. 08044554455 (Sakala Service Delivery Call Center Mobile number) by Dr. Rajvir S. Dhaka, Course Director, HIPA. The call was abandoned finally when no response was evoked for almost nine minutes during the presentation on Sakala.

Challenges:

A state-wide initiative of this dimension needs a robust and adequate infrastructure and support systems. The available computers and data entry operations should match the challenging task and need to be up-to-date and strengthened. Any innovative practice faces resistance to change from the functionaries, particularly, officers. The state of poor accountability and responsibility requires to be overcome. The onus has to be placed on the departments concerned and responsibility to be fixed for removing such irritants in provision of services within the stipulated time. To implement the concept of seamless service delivery, lack of inter departmental coordination is to be tackled on priority. Centralized approach, lack of innovation, stereotyped implementation, lack of involvement of people, bureaucratic and top-down approach must be discarded. This may involve huge investment in terms of time, money and infrastructure for capacity building and behavioural reorientation for the staff.

A social awareness programme should be an integral part of the implementation. Adequate publicity and popular mobilization through various media will address the problem of persistent lack of awareness. Self Help Groups and NGOs can be involved to achieve awareness and public trust in the initiative. Voluntary efforts by the members of Civil Society need to be encouraged.

Recommendations:

After observing the implementation strategy of the Karnataka government it may be recommended to the Government of Haryana to implement the Right to Services Act, 2014 in a Mission Mode. Even though the provisions under the Haryana Right to Services Act are more stringent than that under the Sakala Act, the latter has seen better results primarily because it is being implemented on a Mission Mode basis.

High-level Oversight

It will be a better idea to set up a separate wing in the Chief Minister's Office which shall be responsible for the implementation of the Right to Services Act in a Mission Mode. To manifest the resolve of the state government to implement the initiative with highest level support, such a wing may be headed by an officer of the rank of Additional Chief Secretary, Serving or Retired. It shall have its own independent secretariat staff consisting of a mix of Generalists and Specialists as per requirement. The role and responsibilities of the Right to Services Wing should be clearly specified. It shall include monitoring the status of requests for services, monitoring the grievance redressal and the statistics related to them so as to carry out mid-course corrections, delivering daily reminders and monthly reports about the status of pending service requests to the service providers at the cutting edge and the heads of the departments via SMS and email and rendering the necessary staff assistance to assist in executive decision making relevant to Right to Service Delivery.

Institutional Mechanisms

The Government of Haryana should take a leaf out of the institutional mechanisms being put in place for implementing Sakala in Karnataka. The Haryana Right to Service Commission needs to be equipped with sufficient secretariat staff and other requisite support so that it can

function effectively as an Independent Appellate and Enforcing Authority with sufficient penal powers and civil court powers. The Government also needs to include most of the services under the Right to Services Act, and fix reasonable and objective timelines for this purpose. The exercise of inclusion must not be left to the departments only. A mechanism needs to be developed whereby the political and administrative heads of the Right to Services Wing and the Civil Society are able to make recommendations regarding the inclusion of specified services. Powers need to be given to the Right to Services Wing to have a final say in the inclusion of any service under the Act after due deliberation and consultation with the affected parties.

Grievance and Feedback

The Fine/Penalty/Compensation amount may be deducted from the salary of the erring officer in case of repetition of violation of timelines without reasonable explanation. Systems also need to be set up so that the citizens can register their grievances by using online modes, track the status of their complaints and get the feedback online as well as through SMS facility. Private players may be roped in to provide an efficient and effective grievance redress mechanism.

Outreach and Awareness

A wider base of service seekers under the initiative will institutionalize it in the longer run. For this purpose, the government needs to design, develop and implement a comprehensive and intensive awareness generation campaign about the provisions of the Haryana Services Act. The Government may declare a day and a week of the year to be celebrated as the Right to Services Week. Necessary infrastructure and logistics should be mobilized so that the citizens are able to avail of most of the services through internet. This facility needs to be made available at village level. For this, the existing social infrastructure such as the Fair Price Shops, the Anganwadis and the Common Service Centers may be roped in.

Further Innovation

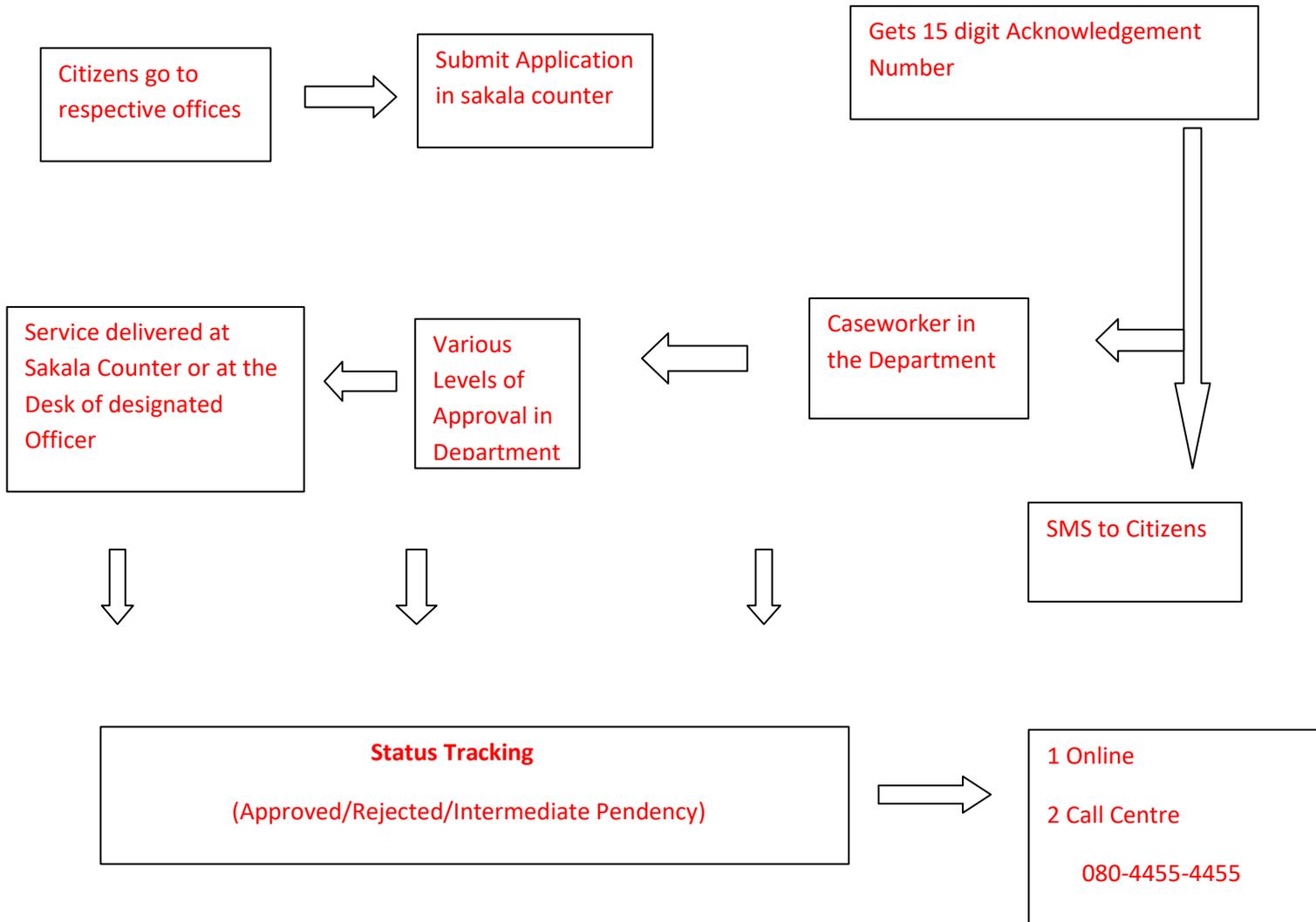
Provision of 'Tatkal Services' should be made by amending the Right to Services Act. The government may charge an additional and reasonable fee for the Tatkal Service. The doctrines of 'Duty to Serve' and 'Responsibility to Care' shall be reinforced.

Concluding Remarks:

The Sakala legislation of the state of Karnataka has worked as a torchbearer for other states in regard to the commitment of the state and will at the political, administrative and the grassroots level for making the delivery of the public services in a time bound manner. Though the implementation of the Act has ensured a marked improvement in the time taken to deliver an unprecedented 765 services to the people, there are certain weaknesses in the Act there need to be rectified. If implemented both in letter and spirit, Sakala could turn out to be a flag bearer in the world for the implementation of Citizen-Centric governance and for effective service delivery to the citizens.

Annexure -A

SAKALA SERVICE DELIVERY PROCESS



Annexure - B

Feedback to Officers on Pendency via email

From: KGSC <sakala_noreply@nic.in>

Sent: Monday, January 25, 2016 2:07 AM

To: dmhrp ksrtc

Subject: (132148) overdue

Notice

It has been noticed that out of **18207** applications received in your office under the “**KARNATAKA SAKALA SERVICE ACT 2011**”, you have failed to deliver **1** application within the stipulated time. The list of such pending application needing your attention is shown below.

You are hereby directed to dispose these applications at the earliest and also give your reason/explanations for such delays/defaults. You are hereby advised to take up corrective action and ensure that this is not repeated in future, failing which necessary action would be initiated against you.

Mission Director

Sakala Mission

GSC NO.	Service Name	GSC Date	Due Date
TC 0990001910786	Issue of Bus Passes to School Children	24/10/2015	04/11/2015

