

# PROVIDING ONLINE PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE MEKONG DELTA RECENTLY AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

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## ABSTRACT:

Online public services are one of the important tools to help local governments improving their capacity, in order to serve people in the context of rapidly-developing science and technology. Over the past time, the construction and provision of online public services at local government levels have achieved many important results. This paper analyzes and clarifies some issues about the current status of online public services delivery in the Mekong Delta. This paper points out the shortcomings and limitations that need to be solved. Simultaneously, some relevant recommendations are proposed to further improve the quality of this work in the coming time.

**Keywords:** online public services, the Mekong Delta, local government.

## 1. Online public services and results of online public services delivery in the Mekong Delta in recent years

Online public services are public administrative Service and other services of state agencies provided to organizations and individuals in the network environment. Online public administrative services are provided anytime, anywhere, so it will contribute to creating convenience, saving costs and reducing travel time for people. At the same time, it helps to enhance the publicity and transparency of the activities of public service providers, overcomes the situation of harassment and troublesome, in line with the development trend of society in the context of the industrial revolution 4.0.

Online public services are offered in 4 levels as follows:

- Online public services at level 1: is a service that ensures to provide full information on

administrative procedures and related documents regulating administrative procedures.

- Online public services at level 2: is a level 1 online public services and allows users to download document forms and declarations to complete records as required. After completing the application, it is sent directly or by post to the agencies or organizations providing the service.

- Online public services at level 3: is a level 2 online public services and allows users to fill in and send online forms of documents to agencies and organizations providing services. Transactions in the processing of records and provision of services are carried out in the network environment. The payment of fees (if any) and receipt of results shall be made directly at the service-providing agency or organization.

- Online public services at level 4 is a level 3 online public services and allows users to pay fees (if any), which is handled online. The return of

results can be handled online, in person or by post to the user (Government, 2011).

The forms to conduct online public services can be summarized as follows: Firstly, the state administrative agencies will set up electronic portals, integrating industry and sector information or state management agencies in localities, such as: the electronic portal of the ministries, departments, the government and the portal of the People's Committees of the provinces and central cities, the electronic portal of the departments and branches ... On a national scale, there is a National Public Service Portal. Organizations and individuals access the electronic portal (Online public service portal) to search the procedures for implementing public administrative service, select a service providers, then register, log in to an account, submit documents, search for, follow the status of records. Organizations and individuals receive results according to the requirements corresponding to the provided online public service levels.

Over the past time, regulations on promoting and applying information technology in the provision of public administrative service have gradually met the requirements of the industrial revolution 4.0. To operate the online public service portal, the People's Committees of the provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta have issued regulations on organization, management, provision of information and online public services on the portal or website electronic information of state agencies in the provinces (such as: Soc Trang, Hau Giang, Kien Giang, An Giang, Ben Tre, Tien Giang, Long An, Dong Thap, Ca Mau and Can Tho). Meanwhile, some provinces have issued regulations on the operation and provision of information of the provincial web portal (such as Tra Vinh, Bac Lieu and Vinh Long).

Many localities have paid attention to investing in information technology infrastructure, especially in state agencies such as An Giang, is ranked the third in the country in 2020, increasing 18th levels compared to 2018. Can Tho, Tien Giang and Kien Giang are ranked 15th, 16th and 20th respectively on this index in 2020 (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2020). In addition, localities in the Mekong Delta have invested in building web

portals of the Provincial People's Committees, departments, branches, People's Committees of districts and opened an online public service portal connected to the national public service portal. Information about agencies competent to handle administrative procedures as well as information about administrative procedures are published on local portals and online public service portal.

On local online public service portal or national public service portal, there is a section to guide people and organize the implementation of online public portal such as instructions for registering an account, guiding administrative procedures according to documents. samples, instructions for receiving, processing and returning results...Vivid and accessible form of instruction through video clips. At the same time, to support and guide at the request of people and organizations, the local online service portal also integrates a question and answer section on public administrative service.

In the Mekong Delta at present, the presence of online public services at level 3, level 4 is relatively high and tends to increase sharply in recent years (Online public service level 3 accounted for 22.24%, online public service level 4 accounted for 46.21 percent.

## **2. Some existence, limitations**

Firstly, the level of readiness to apply information technology of localities in the Mekong Delta is still quite low compared to the national average (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2020). Investment in technical infrastructure in the region is relatively low and uneven. Except for Can Tho City and An Giang province, which have paid attention to investing in information technology infrastructure, ranked 1st and 8th place respectively in this index, most of the other locals are ranked relatively low.

Secondly, people and organizations have limited understanding about the agencies dealing with their work and administrative procedures through the Internet. According to survey data from the SIPAS index in 2019 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2020), only about 6.13% of people and organizations surveyed in the Mekong Delta said that they received information about the settlement agency via the Internet compared to 8.2% of the

Table 1. Statistics of online public services in the Mekong Delta

Province, City	Level 2		Level 3		Level 4		Total services
	Number Of services	Percentage %	Number Of services	Percentage %	Number Of services	Percentage %	
An Giang	1324	57.92	280	12.25	682	29.83	2286
Bac Lieu	1010	50.47	602	30.08	389	19.44	2001
Ben Tre	279	16.79	215	12.94	1168	70.28	1662
Ca Mau	855	39.71	522	24.25	659	30.61	2153
Can Tho	361	19.41	901	48.44	598	32.15	1860
Dong Thap	735	39.33	411	21.99	723	38.68	1869
Hau Giang	252	13.31	169	8.92	1473	77.77	1894
Kien Giang	520	27.15	248	12.95	1147	59.90	1915
Long An	296	16.03	186	10.07	1383	74.88	1847
Soc Trang	581	30.28	289	15.06	1049	54.66	1919
Tien Giang	415	16.83	668	27.09	1383	56.08	2466
Tra Vinh	534	26.32	827	40.76	668	32.92	2029
Vinh Long	907	45.72	438	22.08	639	32.21	1984
<b>Mekong Delta</b>	<b>8069</b>	<b>31.17%</b>	<b>5756</b>	<b>22.24%</b>	<b>11961</b>	<b>46.21%</b>	<b>25885</b>

Source: Compiled from the public service portal of provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta (August 1, 2021)

national average (in which, mainly organizations with 74.27%). This figure is lower than 6.71% in 2018 but higher than 4.76% in 2017; In 2019, 4.04% of people and organizations surveyed in the Mekong Delta said that they know information about administrative procedures via the Internet compared to 7.34% of the national average (of which mainly organizations with 82.07%). This figure is higher than 3.19% in 2018 but lower than 4.71% in 2017 (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2018).

Thirdly, the effective promotion of online public services at level 3 and level 4 is not uniform among localities, administrative levels as well as between service sectors. Survey results of people and businesses show that only about 4% of respondents have used online public services. This shows that the application of information technology in providing public services in the Mekong Delta is not effective.

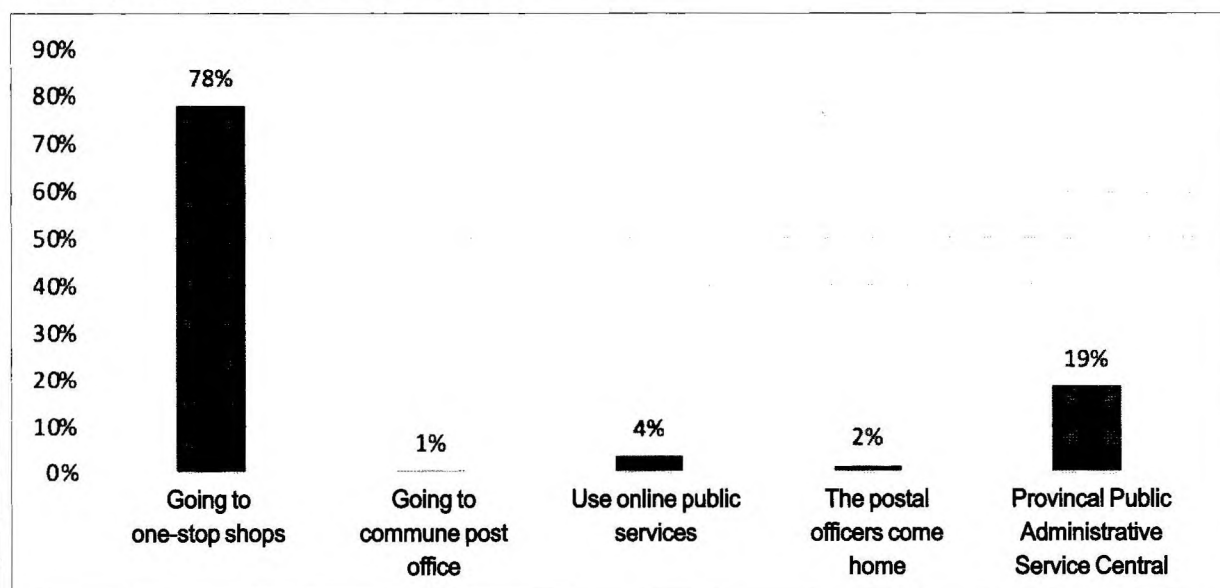
Fourthly, the online public services index of Mekong Delta provinces is not sustainable and ranks are not high compared to the whole country. The online public services Index rankings of localities fluctuate continuously with large gaps between years. In which, Bac Lieu province ranks 63/63 provinces and cities of the whole country in 2020 (See Table 2)

#### **The cause of the limitations**

*Firstly*, policy communication on online public services provision, orientation to access and use online public services for people is not effective. People have limited knowledge about public service supply models as well as do not know the benefits brought from innovation and investment by the state.

*Secondly*, the educational level of a part of the people in the Mekong Delta is not high (the Mekong Delta is still a low-lying area in terms of

**Form of performing Online Public Services**



Source: Author's survey and synthesis

**Table 2. Ranking of the online public services index of Mekong Delta provinces compared to the whole country from 2018-2020**

Province/ City	2018	2019	2020
An Giang	38	11	56
Bac Lieu	61	54	63
Ben Tre	30	54	10
Ca Mau	16	31	19
Can Tho	35	57	8
Dong Thap	46	41	32
Hau Giang	61	62	46
Kien Giang	24	20	27
Long An	46	6	32
Soc Trang	46	25	10
Tien Giang	7	3	10
Tra Vinh	40	17	36
Vinh Long	30	11	36

Source: Report on readiness index for development and application of Information and Communication Technology in 2020

the intellectual level of the whole country). This is one of the reasons why people's participation level at the grassroots level in the Mekong Delta is lower than the national average.

Thirdly, people and organizations have difficulties in accessing information about public services via the Internet. This is explained by their lack of necessary skills to access information on government websites, or online public services portals. On the other hand, people do not fully understand the content of administrative procedures in state documents. According to the survey results, up to 54.3% of respondents believe that it is necessary to further simplify administrative procedures (The results of the people survey were compiled by the author from 200 survey questionnaires),...

Fourthly, according to the assessment of localities, the psychology of people and organizations is still apprehensive and insecure in the implementation of online public services, especially for important procedures.

Fifthly, there are difficulties but there is no timely support and guidance system when people implement online public services. People have to wait for the system to respond to the receipt of records, many cases of editing and adding records

many times waste people's time, so they are not interested in online public services.

### **3. Some solutions and recommendations**

*Firstly*, Mekong Delta provinces and cities need to pay attention to investment and application of information technology in providing public services, improve the Readiness Index for the development and application of information and communication technology in Vietnam. In particular, some localities in the Mekong Delta need to pay attention to invest in information technology infrastructure such as: Ca Mau, Ben Tre, Bac Lieu, Soc Trang, Vinh Long, Hau Giang. Meanwhile, the provinces of An Giang, Soc Trang, Ben Tre, Tra Vinh, Bac Lieu, Ca Mau, Kien Giang, Long An, Hau Giang need to invest in developing information technology human resources.

*Secondly*, improving the efficiency of online public services delivery, localities, need to raise awareness, meaning and importance of online public services supply policies and the public's receiving capacity; promote policy communication, improve people's and organizations' understanding of online services at levels 3 and 4 (Nguyen Van Linh and partners, 2019). Promoting the role of the political system in propaganda activities, especially the role of socio-political organizations at all levels. Besides, it is necessary to promote propaganda through social networks such as zalo, facebook.

*Thirdly*, focusing on skills training, instructions on how to access and use online public services for officials, civil servants and members of the system of propaganda and support for people and organizations, especially at the grassroots level. Designing and arranging a department to guide people to switch from manual to online implementation so that people can experience and

perform online public services for themselves. Building a system to promptly support people's requests when they face difficulties in performing online public services. Replicating the 1022 switchboard model, in order to support quickly and timely responses and guidance for people and organizations in the process of accessing online public administrative services.

*Fourthly*, from a technical perspective, it is necessary to pay attention to standardizing the interface, simplifying the process, and manipulating the implementation of online public administrative services. Thereby, it is easy for people and organizations to perform when conducting online transactions. In addition, it is necessary to create a link to the online public services portal with social network accounts to access the online public services portal.

*Fifthly*, focus on organizing people's opinions, reflections and recommendations, organizing online services at levels 3 and 4 in many forms. The comments, suggestions, reflections and recommendations of people and organizations need to be analyzed and handled in order to promptly adjust the system's inadequacies and have solutions to overcome the limitations affecting the satisfaction of people and organizations.

### **4. Conclusion**

Over the past time, localities in the Mekong Delta have focused a lot of resources on the process of providing online public services, with initial results that are commendable. In the coming time, the authorities need to continue to improve the quality and efficiency of this work. Thereby, building up the administration is cleaner, stronger, more modern and more professional, constantly improving the level of people's satisfaction with the service of state agencies ■

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## **CUNG ỨNG DỊCH VỤ CÔNG TRỰC TUYẾN TẠI ĐỒNG BẰNG SÔNG CỬU LONG HIỆN NAY VÀ MỘT SỐ KHUYẾN NGHỊ**

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Trường Cao đẳng Cộng đồng Sóc Trăng

### **TÓM TẮT:**

Dịch vụ công trực tuyến là một trong những công cụ quan trọng giúp chính quyền địa phương cải thiện năng lực phục vụ công chúng trong bối cảnh khoa học, công nghệ ngày càng phát triển. Thời gian qua, công tác xây dựng và cung ứng dịch vụ công trực tuyến ở các cấp chính quyền địa phương đã đạt được nhiều kết quả quan trọng. Bài viết này phân tích, làm rõ một số vấn đề về thực trạng cung ứng dịch vụ công trực tuyến ở khu vực Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long, qua đó, chỉ ra những tồn tại, hạn chế cần phải giải quyết. Đồng thời, đề xuất một số khuyến nghị có liên quan, nhằm tiếp tục nâng cao chất lượng công tác này trong thời gian tới.

**Từ khóa:** dịch vụ công trực tuyến, Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long, chính quyền địa phương.