

GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH JAN SEVA KENDRA IN RURAL UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract:

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state of India and being a multilingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural society, ensuring good governance to all citizens creates a big challenge for the state administration. Good governance is the only hope for rural people who live in conditions of public insecurity and instability, corruption, abuse of law, public service failure, poverty and inequality. It aims at improving bureaucratic and political accountability, fighting corruption, promoting people's participation and making effective and efficient use of state's scarce resources. The Government of Uttar Pradesh is establishing 17,909 *Jan Seva Kendra* (JSK) (17,305 JSK already established) through Public Private Partnership model to ensure good governance to the citizens of rural areas. It offers a multitude of services ranging in the areas of e-governance, education, health, agriculture, commercial, retail, etc. The JSK has provided e-governance services within the reach of rural people and ensured single-point delivery system for citizen-centric services in a convenient and efficient ways. This has provided critical information on available government development programmes and helped in the uplift of the marginalised sections of the society. This has also helped in income generation of the rural people. It keeps the villagers well informed about job vacancies, examination results and various public issues. It has enhanced the accountability, transparency, and responsibility of the government towards the needs of the citizens. This paper aims to analyse various aspects of JSK in promoting good governance in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh.

Keywords: Good governance, *Jan Seva Kendra*, Public Private Partnership, Uttar Pradesh.

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Introduction

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state of India accounting for 16.5 percent of the country's total population. About 77.70 percent of the total population lives in rural areas. Though, UP is gifted with both natural and human resources in abundance than any other state in the country, it is one of the most backward states. There is shortage of rural infrastructure in terms of roads, electricity supplies, telecom facilities, irrigation systems, water supply and sanitation, markets, schools and health centre's. Most of the population depends on traditional farming with massive poverty, poor infrastructure, inequality, and backwardness. Added to this, there was widespread corruption, communal violence, riots, regionalism and criminalization of politics. Hence, ensuring good governance to all citizens creates a big challenge for the state administration.

But, good governance is the only hope for millions of people who live in conditions of public insecurity and instability, corruption, abuse of law, public service failure, poverty and inequality as it aims to improve bureaucratic and political accountability, fighting corruption, promoting people's participation and making effective and efficient use of state's scarce resources. *Mukhyamantri Annapurna Bhojnalaya Scheme, Mukhyamantri Free Laptop Scheme, Suryamitra Yojana, Mukhyamantri Swarojgar Yojana, UJALA Scheme, Pandit Deendayal Gramodyog Rozgar Yojana, Kanya Vidhya Dhan, Uttar Pradesh State Rural Livelihood Mission, Hamari Beti Uska Kal Scheme, Unemployment Allowance, State Nutrition Mission and various other programmes* were initiated by the state government to ensure good governance. Despite these efforts, as estimated, about 8 percent of the world poor people live in the state.

In this scenario, JSK has played an important role in ensuring good governance to the rural people of the state. It is an e-governance delivery centre having basic computing infrastructure, run by the local community entrepreneur. It provides all government services accessible to the common man in his locality and ensures greater efficiency, transparency, accountability and reliability of such services at an affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man. It has given the people more power. When the public gets power, then only the country is run 'by the people'.

The Concept of Good Governance

The concept of good governance is not new but much focus was given with the publication of ‘Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth’ by World Bank in 1989. Good governance is to promote and sustain holistic and integrated human development. It is by no means an univocal concept. It includes at least three different views on development i.e. managerial or technocratic, socio-economic (poverty alleviation), human rights and democracy approach.

The United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) definition of good governance is set out in a 1997 UNDP policy document entitled “Governance for Sustainable Human Development.” The document states that governance can be seen as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels.

Good governance comprises the existence of effective mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. It’s essential characteristics are:

- *Participation.* All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as on the capacity to participate constructively.
- *Rule of law.* Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.
- *Transparency.* This concept is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information should be directly accessible to those concerned, and enough information should be provided to render them understandable and monitorable.
- *Responsiveness.* Institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders.
- *Consensus orientation.* Good governance should mediate differing interests in order to reach broad consensus on the best interests of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.

- *Equity*. All men and women should have equal opportunity to maintain or improve their well-being.
- *Effectiveness and efficiency*. Processes and institutions should produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.
- *Accountability*. Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil-society organizations should be accountable to the public as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organization and whether the decision is internal or external to an organization.
- *Strategic vision*. Leaders and the public should have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, together with a sense of what is needed for such development. There should also be an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.

Good governance concept is inclusive and positive in nature. It is inclusive in nature as it aims involvement of people in the process of development. Thus, development is not merely people-oriented but people-centered. It is positive to the extent of building up new levels of skills, knowledge and support for development.

Problems of Good Governance in Uttar Pradesh

1) Corruptions and Scams

The biggest challenge for ensuring good governance to citizens is corruption and scams in the state. It is the cause and effect of poor governance. It prevents full realization of economic, social and cultural rights. The state Foodgrain scam is dubbed as ‘Mother of all scams’ that took place between years 2002 and 2010. The grain worth Rs 35,000 crore, meant to be distributed via Public Distribution System to the poor under several schemes like *Antyodaya Anna Yojana*, *Jawahar Rozgar Yojana* and Midday Meal Scheme for Below Poverty Line (BPL) card holders were diverted to the open market.[1] Uttar Pradesh National Rural Health Mission scam (2012), Taj Heritage Corridor case (2002-03) are some of the other scams.

2) Population Growth

The state ranks first in terms of population in India and fifth in the world after China, India, USA and Indonesia. The growing population is a menace to the mankind which is responsible for

widespread poverty, malnutrition, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy, agrarian and labour unrest, unbalanced regional development as the administration is unable to secure to all citizens equitable access to even primary education and health, food, water and a house.

3) Culture of Violence

Being a multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious country, often strikes, riots, terror attacks, religious intolerance, communal incidents are reported from different parts of the state thereby threatening peace and order of the state.

4) Criminalization of Politics

In UP politics, there exist nexus amongst politicians, business empires and bureaucrats, which hamper in ensuring good governance. This practice has increased in the era of coalition government without any checks and balances. The criminal minded people are entering in state legislature for seeking private gain and making lot of money without any concern for poor people.

5) Regional Inequality

There are wide variations between the regions, i.e. Western, Central, Eastern and Bundelkhand regions, when it comes to access to infrastructure, agriculture revolution, industries, and other socio-economic indicators. The Bundelkhand and Eastern regions have similar and low averages when it comes to the amenities index, signifying that provision of public goods is low in these regions. The Western region is much prosperous than the other regions.

6) Poverty

UP is the most populous state of India and is home to 200 million people, out of which 60 million are poor. Poverty is widespread in the state. The central and eastern districts in particular have very high levels of poverty. The incidence of poverty is slightly more in the rural areas.

Jan Seva Kendra

JSK also referred as common service centres is one of the largest government approved online service delivery mechanism in the world. It may be defined as the front-end delivery points for

public, private and social sector services to rural citizens. These were envisaged to be a strategic component of the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006 as a low cost medium for government organisations to deliver the e-governance services to the rural population. It is positioned as a ‘Change Agent’, to promote rural entrepreneurship, build rural capacities and livelihoods and enable community participation.[2] It supports collective action for social change through a bottom-up approach with focus on rural citizen. It offers a sustainable business model with the dual objective of revenue generation as well as socio-economic upliftment of rural areas.[3] It provides various government services and information in “Anytime, Anywhere access” format to the doorstep of the citizen, at an affordable cost. It is a retail outlet of services that are offered in a structured framework of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructures (PCs, printers, scanners, digital camera, projection systems, tele-medicine equipments, etc.), rural entrepreneurship and market mechanisms.[4] The project is being implemented on a Public Private Partnership model with a three tier implementation framework, in which the State Designated Agency (SDA) enters into a Master Service Agreement (MSA) with the Service Centre Agency (SCA) which appoints the Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLE) to operate the JSK. Some of the key stakeholders in the project include the Central Government, SDA, SCA, Service Providers, Banks, and the Village level Entrepreneur (VLE). The VLE is key to the success of the JSK.

The government is establishing 17909 JSK (17305 JSK already established) through Public Private Partnership model. The JSK has been classified into seven zones in the state and three service centre agencies namely, M/s SREI Infrastructure and Finance Ltd, M/s CMS Computers Ltd and M/s Vyapam Technologies Ltd are selected to implement these scheme.[5]

There are two major components of the JSK infrastructure-Physical Infrastructure and Digital Infrastructure:[6]

a) Physical Infrastructure would include the site and space for the JSK as well as other infrastructure like furniture, storage, security, UPS, wireless equipment, telemedicine equipment, etc.

b) Digital Infrastructure would comprise of all onsite technology equipment, such as PCs, Printers, Scanners, Projectors, Digital Camera, Software, Television, etc.

It offers a multitude of services ranging in the areas of e-government, education, health, agriculture, commercial, retail, etc. Vyapam Technologies Ltd. is implementing this project across 30 districts of UP, which collectively account for 5,600 JSK.[7] It provides a wide variety of services as listed below:

- (a) *Health*: Access to health consultancy, over-the-phone prescription, home remedies, SMS reminders, recommendation and guidance for advance diagnosis, health card comprising of discounts, insurances, child registration, pregnant women registration, patient registration, etc.
- (b) *Certificate*: All types of statutory certificates issued by government, viz, caste certificate, income certificate, birth certificate, etc.
- (c) *Licenses and Permits*: Services related to licenses and permits like arm licenses, inner line permits, etc.
- (d) *Land Records*: Services related to land registration.
- (e) *Commercial Tax*: Services like Dealers Registration, VAT returns, payments, etc.
- (f) *Social Welfare and Pension*: Senior citizen, old age/widow pension, freedom fighter pension, etc.
- (g) *Transport*: Issuing of driving licenses, registration of vehicle, transfer of ownership, etc.
- (h) *Public Distribution Services*: Issue of ration card, modification of details in ration card, etc.
- (i) *Election*: Services includes electoral roll creation, etc.
- (j) *IT Enabled Services*: Printing, scanning, burning media discs, CSC offers a host ITeS to the aspiring man who is also exploring internet's offering and opportunities.
- (k) *Information Exchange*: Two-way knowledge system with the ability to provide essential information and knowledge based services to its participants.
- (l) *Police*: Services like FIR Lodged, missing/lost persons, etc.
- (m) *Personnel and Administration*: Employee training, posting/transfer, ACR status monitoring, etc.
- (n) *RTI*: e-transaction related to RTI Act.

- (o) *Information Service*: Provides Data/Knowledge/Information on various services offered through dial.gov Service, form download, government programs and schemes, etc.
- (p) *Property Registration*: Registration of property acquired or transferred
- (q) *Rural Development*: Job card issued, job demanded and job provided under MGNREGA
- (r) *Employment*: Registration of potential candidates/Unemployed youth, etc.
- (s) *E-procurement*: Services include number of bidder enrolled, number of tenders created, number of bids received, etc.
- (t) *Utility Services and Bill Payment*: Utility services like electricity, gas, water, telephone, etc. and their bill payment.
- (u) *Agricultural Services*: Enhancing agricultural production, improving market access, capacity building and empowerment.
- (v) *Learning Centres*: The learning centres provide holistic educational services

JSK assisted access of e-services to citizens with a focus on enhancing governance, delivering essential government and public utility services, social welfare schemes, financial services, education and skill development courses, health and agriculture services and digital literacy, apart from a host of B2C services. They are more than service delivery points in rural areas of UP.[8]

The goal of the JSK is to empower the rural community and catalyze social change through modern technologies. With a large and heterogeneous geographical area, the private sector, if sufficiently encouraged, can play an active role in development and implementation of the JSK projects in supplementing the governments' efforts to realize its vision for the project.[9]

Role of Jan Seva Kendra in Good Governance

JSK allow state and central government agencies to directly link up with citizens without a long chain of intermediaries. Such a system would not only save huge costs but also reduce systemic red tape as well as service delays, thereby leading to better quality of governance. Some of the role of JSK in ensuring good governance is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Participation

JSK remove the gap between citizen and administration thereby increasing participation of people in various government programmes and policies. There is greater participation in debates and discussions, healthcare services, state and central level competitions, skill development trainings programmes, etc. It has also increased the participation in decision making by giving feedbacks of different government programmes. The people can apply for inclusion of name in electoral roll or apply for correction in electoral roll through JSK. The farmers participate and consult agricultural scientists for better farm productivity, seeds, horticulture, animal husbandry, health, fisheries, etc. They can also get information on agricultural inputs, weather, commodity prices, soil quality, etc.

The JSK has involved community to actively participate in supporting government initiative of promoting cashless transaction for building a new India. VLEs are also providing digital financial literacy training and enabling access to digital financial transaction in rural areas.

It has bring marginalized and the economically weaker section to the mainstream. It is the community participation and collective action which lead to a behaviour change for a sustainable socio-economic change and long-term rural prosperity.

Transparency

It has helped in increasing transparency in the functioning of government departments and also successfully tried to eliminate the scope of malpractices and irregularities in a systemic manner. It has provided critical information on available government developmental programmes, beneficiary criteria and present beneficiary list to bring in transparency and efficiency in the programmes and an opportunity for development of the marginalized sections of rural community. People can access any type of government documents relevant to their interest as all the information of the government are made available on the internet. It has also helped in removing corruption from the lives of rural people in many ways.

To ensure transparency, details of developmental works, ration allotment to fair price shop dealers, money sent to *gram sabhas* etc. are made available to people by the district administration. JSK also provides details of various government schemes, government prescribed

forms, details of developmental work in the district, lists of old age pensioners, lists of scholarship beneficiaries, funds allotted in various government schemes, allotment of food grains to *kotedars*, allotments of funds to gram panchayats, etc. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. Transparency has helped in increasing the confidence of the citizens towards administration.

Transparency is the answer to good governance. As JSK follows the Public Private Partnership model, transparency level reaches the highest it ever can; competition increases to almost perfection and moreover, people's trust in the system is back.

Accountability

Once the governing process is made transparent, the government is automatically made accountable. Now, citizens can ask for redress of their grievances from the government through JSK. There is an increase in number of filing complaints through this. It enhances the accountability of the government towards the needs of the citizens. ICT-based system with anytime, automated and accurate alerts and responses to queries has increased the accountability of government functionaries. There is reduction in response time in addressing grievances of the people by the concerned departments. The increased awareness among rural people also enforces the administration to be more accountable.

Efficiency and Economy

JSK bring government departments closer to the masses by offering efficient and speedy services through a single window. It provides services at cheaper costs, hence saving of extra time and money which villagers have to otherwise spend to travel to the city. It allows state and central government agencies to directly link up with citizens without a long chain of intermediaries. Such a system has not only save huge costs but also reduce systemic red tape as well as service delays, thereby leading to better quality of governance.[10]

The rural people can get their work completed in the villages itself rather than going to block and district headquarters. Only nominal fee are charged to receive information and other services. Earlier people were going to tehsil or district headquarters to make *Aadhaar* card, election card,

ration card, and other services. This saves their time and money. From the citizen's point of view, the processes have now become cost-effective and prompt e.g. processing time for all G2C issues has considerably reduced. The citizens can now spend time effectively towards other activities, rather than standing in long queues or travel physically to multiple government departments for simple transactions or information needs.

Since JSK would lead to cost savings and provide income enhancement opportunities for rural villagers, a substantial portion of rural income would be available for consumption of such products and services, thereby giving boost to retail marketing and rural economies.[11]

Equity and Inclusiveness

Equity is one of the fundamental principles of effective governance which refers to the right of all citizens to have an equal say in governance processes. Through JSK, government services are available to citizens electronically irrespective of caste, creed, sex, religion, etc. There is positive feeling of inclusiveness in citizens where they felt that VIPs, illiterates and under-privileged citizens of rural areas were all treated as equals in the JSK system. An accessible JSK can be used easily by all classes of society especially disadvantaged segments such as senior citizens, BPL households, the illiterate etc. and would be of great benefit in terms of offering a channel of interaction between the citizen and the government.

Rural Empowerment

JSK are empowering the rural population with a source of creating livelihood at their place of residence thereby reducing the need for people to migrate to cities to earn a living. Many people are enrolling themselves to become VLEs to generate income and provide services to the rural community and contribute to the nation's development. The best part is that JSK leads to unique micro-enterprise which provides local employment to 4-5 people. A direct benefit of the JSK model is the creation of direct employment of around 2,25,000 rural youth and indirect employment created by opening up new rural markets.

The number of services offered by JSK has increased at a steady pace in the last few years. While concerted efforts have been made to increase the number of G2C services available at

JSK, financial inclusion services (banking, insurance and pension), computer literacy training programmes, skill development services and tele-medicine and utility services, have also being added. Thus, it can be said that the JSK operations are contributing to and have the potential for the improvement of the economic status of the rural unemployed youth.

The state government is encouraging women to become VLEs in JSK. The women VLE not only enables generating business for her and her family but also supports other women in village/community for empowerment through various schemes/programmes of the government including digital literacy.

Financial Inclusion

Financial Inclusion is delivery of banking services at an affordable cost to the vast sections of the disadvantaged and low income groups. It is an integral part of the JSK ecosystem with a clear focus on banking for the unbanked. It is being used to deliver financial services such as banking, insurance and pension thereby creating a financially inclusive community.

JSK are also being used as retail extension outlets for banking products and services, i.e. account opening, agri-loans, rural housing loans, vehicle loans, gold loans, micro-deposits, loan recoveries, etc. For this, the banks are ensuring financial support to VLEs in the form of small loans.

With the aim of achieving greater financial inclusion, the Reserve Bank of India, in 2006, directed various organizations and service providers to act as intermediaries for providing various financial and banking services through Business Facilitator (BF) and Business Correspondent (BC) models.[12]Currently, the BF/BC services are being provided by the JSK in several rural areas to varying degrees.Currently, many VLEs are earning more than Rs 20,000 per month.

Challenges

JSK faces many challenges in its successful implementation in the rural areas. The broadband connectivity seems to be the biggest challenge faced by JSK. The rural areas in UP still lack fast

internet connectivity. About 1.81 million people have broadband connection in rural areas in comparison to 4.01 million in urban areas.[13] The availability of power in rural areas is very poor. The state had a total power generation installed capacity of 15,721.8 mega watt in 2014-15. Many villages are facing frequent power-cuts due to increasing demand. Power through the generator sets is very expensive, so, the VLEs are hesitant to use them. There is shortage of educated and IT skilled manpower in rural areas who can manage the service delivery system. The literacy rate of rural people in UP is only 65.46 percent as compared to 75.14 percent in urban areas according to census 2011. Moreover, computer literate to run the JSK are lacking in the state. Another challenge is the lack of awareness among the citizens about the JSK. There is also lack of awareness and reluctance to use such services among masses in rural areas. This leads to insufficient demand for the services at JSK making their financial sustainability a huge challenge.

Conclusion

JSK gives a ray of hope to the rural citizens of UP to fight with the long persisting problems of poverty, corruption, regional disparity and unemployment to ensure good governance. The information in the form of agricultural inputs, weather, commodity prices, health, as well as services in the form of e-government, tele-medicine, bill payments and bookings, data entry, digital pictures, entertainment, education and e-learning, micro-finance, etc. can not only save precious monetary resources but also provide an ideal platform for betterment of quality of life in rural areas of the state.[14] It has provided self-employment opportunities to the local people with special emphasis on women empowerment through entrepreneurship. The successful implementation of JSK would offer economical and instantaneous access to key information and services to rural people across the state in promoting good governance.

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