Governance and Participation
A Series of Policy Discussions Papers

Advisory Report on Improving the Provision of Online Public Administrative Services in Soc Trang, Quang Tri, and Hoa Binh Provinces

Towards leaving no one behind in the process of developing electronic and digital government in provinces with large ethnic minority populations

Two public administrative services under study:

(1) Residency registration for citizens; and,

2) The "3-in-1" service for a birth certificate, a health insurance card, and residency registrationfor children under 6 years old

Online Public Administrative Services

One-stop shop

Ha Noi, 12/2022

The series of Governance and Participation Policy Discussion Papers is commissioned by the Governance and Participation Team at UNDP in Viet Nam.

The series aims to analyse trends in Viet Nam regarding the implementation processes and options in specific public administration reform areas. In order to confront the social, economic, political and environmental challenges facing Viet Nam, policymakers need to adopt evidence-based decision-making. These policy papers aim to contribute to current policy debate by providing discussion inputs on policy reforms – thereby helping to improve Viet Nam's development efforts.

Three principles guide the production of the policy discussion papers: (i) evidence-based research, (ii) academic rigour and independence of analysis, and (iii) social legitimacy and a participatory process. This involves a substantive research approach with a rigorous and systematic identification of policy options on key public administration reform and anti-corruption issues.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this policy research paper do not necessarily reflect the official position of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

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List of abbreviations

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GSO General Statistics Office of Vietnam

OPAS Online Public Administration Service

PAPI The Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index

PCI Provincial Competitiveness Index

UNDP United Nations Development Program

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Acknowledgments

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Research Objectives and Research Scope

1.1. Research Objectives

This study focuses on assessing the current facts and determinants affecting the provision of online public services at level 3 (partial online public administrative procedures from submission to notification of results for onsite clearance and fee payment) and level 4 (full online public administrative procedures from submission to payment) of the commune government. It also looks into the ability to access and use the online public services of ordinary citizens, especially ethnic minorities in Soc Trang, Quang Tri and Hoa Binh provinces. Two public administrative services selected for the in-depth review include: (1) procedures for residency registration for citizens and (2) the "3-in-1" administrative service for a birth certificate, a health insurance card, residency registration and an identity number for children under 6 years old. Upon the review, the research team suggests solutions and recommendations to the relevant agencies from the commune to central levels.

1.2. Research Scope

1.2.1. Research locations

a. Soc Trang Province

- Working with Soc Trang Standing People's Committee and representative leaders of relevant provincial departments and agencies (Department of Home Affairs, Department of Information and Communications, Department of Justice, Social Insurance, Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, Public Security…).

- Working with Soc Trang City People's Committee leaders and representative leaders of relevant Soc Trang city agencies. After that, the research team worked and conducted field surveys at the People's Committees of Ward 2 and Ward 10 of Soc Trang City.

- Working with My Tu District People's Committee leaders and representatives of relevant professional agencies of the district. After that, the research team worked and surveyed the field at the People's Committee of Phu My commune of My Tu district.

The above-mentioned communes ensure the socio-economic characteristics of the research purpose: economic conditions (proportion of poor and peri-poor households), urban and rural communes, population density, ethnic minorities structure, religion structure, management capacity, results of providing public services, etc. In which, Ward 2 and Ward 10 (Soc Trang City) belong to Region I (initially developed commune), and Phu My commune (My Tu district) belongs to Region III (special difficulty commune)[1].

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[1] Prime Minister (2020), Decision No. 33/2020/QD-TTg dated November 12, 2020 of the Prime Minister on criteria for delimiting ethnic minority and mountainous areas according to the stage of development. period 2021 - 2025, Hanoi; and Prime

b. Quang Tri Province

- Working with Quang Tri's Standing People's Committee and representative leaders of relevant provincial departments and agencies (Department of Home Affairs, Department of Information and Communications, Department of Justice, Social Insurance, Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, Public Security…).

- Working with People's Committee district leaders and representative leaders of relevant Hương Hoa, Dakrong agencies.

- At the grassroots level, the research team worked with leaders of People's Committees and civil servants in Tan Lap commune (Region I), Huong Hoa district and Ba Long commune (Region II), Huong Hiep commune (Region III) in Dakrong district. The selection of 03 communes in 03 different regions is to ensure the representativeness of the 03 groups of communes as well as the ability to compare and evaluate the influence of socio-economic conditions on accessing online public services of citizens.

c. Hoa Binh Province

- Working with Hoa Binh Standing People's Committee and representative leaders of relevant provincial departments and agencies (Department of Home Affairs, Department of Information and Communications, Department of Justice, Social Insurance, Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, Public Security…).

- Working with Hoa Binh City People's Committee leaders and representative leaders of relevant professional agencies of Hoa Binh City. After that, the research team worked and conducted field surveys at the People's Committees of Phuong Lam of Hoa Binh City.

- Working with Tan Lac District People's Committee leaders and representative leaders of relevant professional agencies of the district. After that, the research team worked and surveyed the field at the People's Committee of Phong Phu and Suoi Hoa commune of Tan Lac district.

The above-mentioned communes ensure the socio-economic characteristics of the research purpose: economic conditions (proportion of poor and peri-poor households), urban and rural communes, population density, ethnic minorities structure, religion structure, management capacity, the fact of providing online public services, etc. In which, Phuong Lam ward (Hoa Binh City) belongs to Region I (initially developed commune), Phong Phu commune (Tan Lac district) belongs to Region II (communes with average economic development conditions) and Suoi Hoa commune (Tan Lac district) belongs to Region III (extremely difficult communes).

1.2.2. Research Scope

The study focuses on assessing the provision and accessibility, using two public administrative procedures, including: (1) Residency registration with Public Security Agencies

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Minister (2021), Decision No. 861/2021/QD-TTg dated June 4, 2021 of the Prime Minister approving the list of communes in Region III, Region II and Region I in the ethnic minority region and the region. mountains in the period of 2021 - 2025, HN.

and (2) the "3-in-1" administrative service for a birth certificate, a health insurance card, permanent residency registration, and an identity number for children under 6 years old in both face-to-face and online forms (herein below called the "3-in'1" service).

These procedures are used by many people, have a significant impact on their lives, and are strongly influenced by the process of collecting and building a national database (related to the original information of the people's residency, health insurance, social insurance, etc.)[2] At the same time, it ensures that priority criteria are implemented in the electronic environment[3].

1.2. Research Methodology

1.2.1. Secondary Data Collecting and Analysis

The research team collects and analyzes secondary data including legal documents of the central and provincial governments such as the Document of the Provincial Party Congress for the term 2020 - 2025, the Provincial Statistical Yearbook, the local government's official report providing for the research team about socio-economic characteristics, legal regulations, political will, facts, and figures, as well as accessibility and use of public administrative services and online public services for people at the province, district and commune levels. In addition, the research team also consulted the statistics of the General Statistics Office, PAPI, PAR-INDEX, SIPAS, ICT Index, and DTI indexes of Soc Trang, Quang Tri and Hoa Binh provinces.

1.2.2. Discussion and Interviewing Methods

- Discuss directly and interviews with officials of standing People's Committees, public security agencies, insurance agencies, and leaders of specialized agencies; Standing committee of the People's Committees of communes and wards and especially officials at the Department of receiving and returning results and documents (one-stop-shop), aiming at understanding the needs, aspirations, and difficulties of these target groups when providing this procedure to the people in both face-to-face and online forms.

- In-depth interviews with people who come to implement public administrative procedures at the People's Committees. This is to find out whether people have used online public services. If they have not used it, do they not know; know but they have not been interested in using it; have difficulties (equipment, Internet, language, technical factors, interface, etc.)? What are the inappropriate, unnecessary, and bottleneck points in the process of providing online public services of the National and Provincial Public Service Portal?

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[2] Prime Minister (2015), Prime Minister's Decision No. 714/QD-TTg dated May 22, 2015 on promulgating a list of national databases that need to be prioritized for deployment, creating a foundation for government development electronics, HN.

[3] Government (2020), Decree No. 45/2020/ND-CP of the Government on the implementation of administrative procedures in the electronic environment (Article 21), HN.

- Observing directly the process of public services (including residency registration and implementation of the "3 in 1" procedure), and the process of connecting in one-stop shops with the Public Security Agency and social insurance agency. To know how to implement the two groups of procedures in the online environment, and at the same time evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the interface and utility of the Portal as a customer/user, the research team members also pretended to be villagers and tried to access the Provincial Information Services Portal at: https://dichvucong.soctrang.gov.vn/home for Soc Trang province, https://dichvucong.quangtri.gov.vn/ for Quang Tri province and, https://dichvucong.hoabinh.gov.vn/hoabinh-portal/ for Hoa Binh province.

- Consult with interdisciplinary experts to assess and suggest appropriate solutions and policy recommendations aiming at improving delivery quality and accessibility for the two selected public administrative procedures. The research team had an in-depth working session with leaders of the Department of Information and Communications and heads of affiliated departments to discuss the research results, and exchange, share, and provide initial feedback of this agency before developing the official consulting report for the province.

1.2.3. Research Limitations

This report focuses on analyzing the findings from the field study in Soc Trang, Quang Tri, and Hoa Binh in order to document the existing conditions of all levels of government in the province, especially at the commune level with large ethnic minorities proportion, in the provision of online public services and their accessibility to these services. Since then, the research team has proposed short and mid-term solutions to support Soc Trang, Quang Tri, and Hoa Binh province on the way to building an e-government, a citizen-centered digital government.

This report would be more comprehensive and in-depth if the research team had more time and ability to work with communes, wards, districts, and cities other than the 03 communes, wards, 02 districts, and cities already surveyed in each province. In particular, despite its desire, the research team did not have more opportunities to interview more people, especially ethnic minorities. All voices and feelings of officials at all levels, people, and disadvantaged social groups are very important for the analysis, consultancy, and development of recommendations in this report. However, this gap is also an opportunity for the research team to continue to fill in with further studies on the same topic, in Soc Trang, Quang Tri, and Hoa Binh province in the near future.

II. KEY FINDINGS

2.1. Findings from Soc Trang Province

2.1.1. About Soc Trang Province

Soc Trang is a coastal province in the lower Hau River of the Mekong Delta with a natural area of 3.311,7629 km^2. The North and Northwest border Hau Giang province, the Southwest borders Bac Lieu province, the Northeast borders Tra Vinh province, and the East and Southeast border the East Sea. The province has 11 district-level administrative units (01 city, 02 towns, and 08 districts) and 109 commune-level administrative units (17 wards, 12 townships, and 80 communes)[4], of which, there are 46 communes in Region I (initially developed commune) and 17 communes in Region III (special difficulty commune)[5].

Soc Trang has many distinct features, along with a diverse culture, society and population. The province's population is about 1.3 million people, of which ethnic minorities account for about 35.41%, mainly Khmer and Chinese people living intermingled with Kinh[6] (In many communes, Khmer people are up to 92% of the population). There are 9 religions recognized by the State as legal religions: Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao Buddhism, Pure Layman Buddhist Association of Vietnam, Tu An Hieu Nghia, Buu Son Ky Huong, and Baha'i, with 719 belief and religious establishments, 616 dignitaries, 1868 monks, 3,887 worship positions with establishments mostly located in communes, wards and towns[7]. The rate of poor and peri-poor households by the province's multi-dimensional standards is still high compared to the whole country; the educational level, awareness, psychology and accessing information technology conditions of the people, especially the ethnic minorities, are still limited.

The 2021 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) of Soc Trang is 40.04 points (in the group of 16 lowest score provinces), of which the content index "e-governance" only reached 2.19 scores on a scale of 1 to 10, and is the lowest scoring content in the 8 contents PAPI measures. Other content indexes such as the Satisfaction Index of People and Organizations with the Service of State Administrative Agencies (SIPAS) 2021 reached 89.51% (ranked 9 out of 63 provinces and central cities)); the State Administrative Reform Index (PAR-INDEX) 2021 reached 87.54 points (ranked 18th out of 63 provinces and

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[4] See: Soc Trang province portal, access link: https://soctrang.gov.vn/Default.aspx?sname=ubnd-stg&sid=4&pageid=467&catid=54253&catname=ban-do-dia-gioi-hanh-chinh

[5] Prime Minister (2021), Decision No. 861/2021/QD-TTg dated June 4, 2021 of the Prime Minister approving the list of communes in Region III, Region II and Region I in the region. ethnic minorities and mountainous areas in the period of 2021 - 2025, HN.

[6] LP (2020), "Soc Trang well implements the ethnic policy to constantly strengthen the great national unity bloc", Website of the Party Committee of Soc Trang province, access link: https://soctrang.dcs.vn/Default.aspx?sname=tinhuy&sid=4&pageid=469&catid=54320&id=285689&catname=Bao-ve-nen-tang-tu-tuong&title=Soc-Trang-thuc-hien-tot-chinh-sach-dan-toc-nham-khong-ngung-cung-co-khoi-dai-doan-ket-toan-dan-toc

[7] Ngoc Diem, "Soc Trang performs well the state management of religion", Soc Trang Province Portal, access link: https://soctrang.gov.vn/Default.aspx?sname=ubnd-stg&sid=4&pageid=469&catid=54273&id=332564&catname=D%u00e2n+t%u1ed9c%2c+t%u00f4n+gi%u00e1o&title=soc-trang-thuc-hien-tot-cong-tac-quan-ly-nha-nuoc-ve-ton-giao

central cities). However, the Vietnam Information and Communication Technology Application and Development Index (ICT Vietnam Index) 2020 moderately reached 0.3188 (ranked 53rd compared to the whole country); Provincial Digital Transformation Index (DTI) in 2021: 0.2897 (ranked 56 compared to the whole country), while in 2020 ranked 57. The above results show that there are still many challenges in the efficiency of the provision, accessibility and use of level 3 and 4 online public services for the people, especially ethnic minorities. This is also the main concern of the research team.

2.1.2. Facts and figures of online public service provision in Soc Trang province

In the first 9 months of 2022, the whole province received 410,136 dossiers from citizens, resolved on time 409,702 dossiers (rate of 99.89%), and 434 dossiers being processed (rate of 0.11%). At the time of updating data for the research team (September 16, 2022), the province received 1,855 dossiers, the highest at the provincial level (1,416 dossiers), the district level (274 dossiers) and the commune level (165 dossiers). file). In which, dossiers are received and processed online at level 2 (494 dossiers), level 3 (362 dossiers) and level 4 (999 dossiers).

The commune level is the closest level to and has direct contact with citizens, but the number of dossiers received and processed online at levels 3 and 4 is the lowest compared to the district and provincial levels (see Figure 2.1). This need to be studied, especially for two types of procedures: (i) residency registration and (ii) "3 in 1" interconnection procedures for citizen in some selected communes and wards.
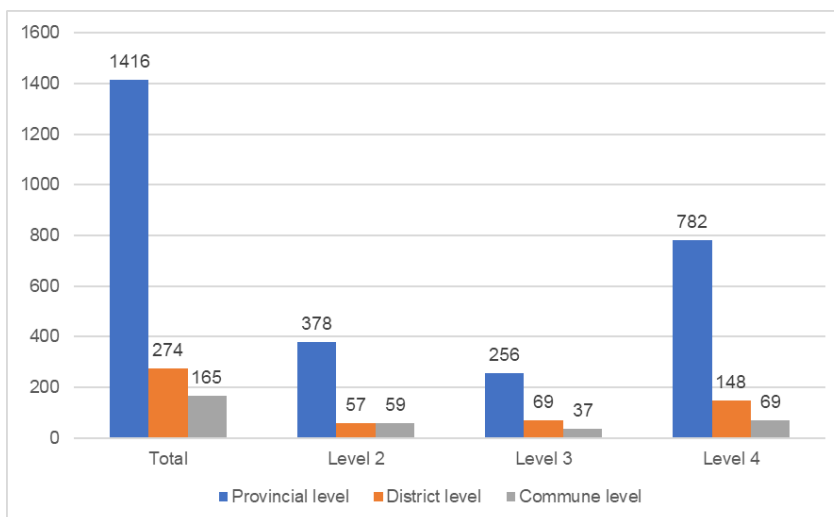
Figure 2.1: Online public service provision at the time of study

2.1.3. Residency Registration for Citizens

According to Soc Trang's report, all 109 communes, wards and towns of Soc Trang have implemented permanent residency registration for citizens online at level 3. In 2021 and the first 9 months of 2022, the province solved 181 online permanent residency registration procedures, while the face-to-face dossiers were about 156 times more (28,374 dossiers). Discussing with officials, most of the online transactions for permanent residency registration procedures at the commune level are implemented by officials who did them for citizens. There are almost no dossiers from citizens who did them remotely.

According to current regulations, [8] the process of granting permanent residency registration to citizens can be outlined in Diagram 2.1.

a. Experience and evaluation of the research team

The research team has directly accessed and manipulated this procedure in the [Registration, Residence Management] > [Residency Registration] section on the Public Service Portal of the Ministry of Public Security at https://dichvucong.bocongan.gov.vn or type keywords [permanent residence/ of permanent residency registration]> [permanent residency registration] on the national Public Service Portal at https://dichvucong.gov.vn. These public service portals all provide detailed instructions on procedures, application components (for each group of people in need), forms, submission forms, fees, processing deadlines, implementing agencies, implementation, requirements and conditions, etc.
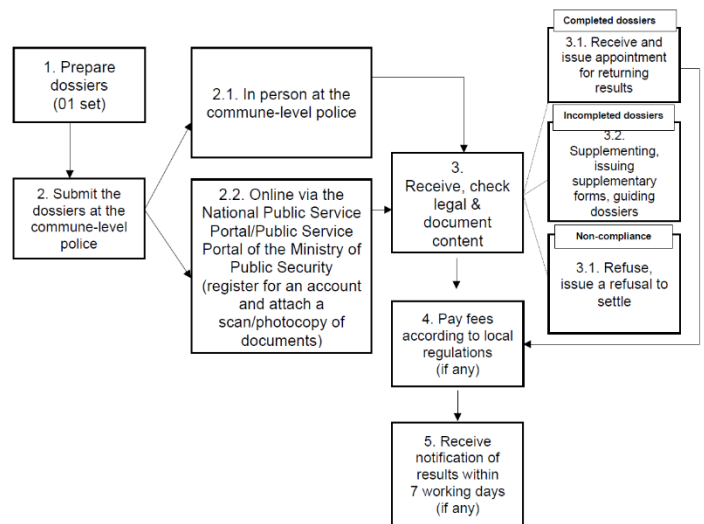
Diagram 2.1: Process of granting permanent residence registration to citizens (Source: the research team)

The Public Security sector, which has had residency management experience for a long time, has been invested in building infrastructure, especially the Public Service Portal well connected to the National Public Service Portal. However, the reception, connection, and implementation of online permanent residency registration applications through these public service portals from Soc Trang citizens are still very low. If this matter is due to the quality of the provision of online public services from the local government or the accessibility and use of online public services by citizens, it needs to be analyzed.

b. The local government official's perspectives

The online application form as shown in Figure 2.1 is still quite new to people. When people register for permanent residence in such an online environment, they need to have a computer/smartphone (with a genuine sim card) connecting to the Internet and know how to register for a personal login account, scan relevant documents, etc. However, the majority of people have not accessed nor known the above manipulations. There are a lot of required scanned documents, and sometimes it has to be done many times. Many people are afraid of losing personal information. Therefore, people often choose to submit documents directly at

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[8] Current regulations include Law on Residence 2020, Circular No. 55/2021/TT-BCA dated May 15, 2021 of the Ministry of Public Security detailing a number of articles and measures to implement the Law on Residence, Decision No. No. 5548/QD-BCA-C06 dated July 6, 2021 of the Ministry of Public Security on the announcement of newly promulgated, amended, supplemented and annulled administrative procedures in the field of residence registration and the field of residence registration. Immigration is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Public Security.

the commune-level police office.

Besides, due to the population database, national data sharing, and connection infrastructure still being completed, the online residency registration also has certain difficulties. An important cause is due to the regulation of providing a personal identity number/citizen identity number on Declaration Form CT01.

According to officials in the commune/ward selected for the study, there are three causes. Firstly, the citizen's ID number at the time of registration has not been issued (not yet available), or is incorrect (does not match), etc. so officials could not solve for citizens right away or it takes a lot of time to check and compare the information. Second, residential data management software is being tested and completed, so there are technical problems (no connection, slow connection, hang-up, etc.). Thirdly, police officers have overloaded duties when they have to collect information for citizen identity numbers, handle permanent residency registration, and other political tasks.

c. Citizens' perspective through interviews

Interviewing with some people who implement administrative procedures at the One-Stop-Shop at My Tu District People's Committee, many people still have not known about online public services in general, and online permanent residency registration in particular. The interviewees shared that they have a habit of coming directly to the transaction office for guidance, even though the distance from home to the commune is quite far (the interviewed cases are about 15 km from home to the District People's Committee), and even some people are not interested in online public service.

Mr. T.Q.T returned from Binh Duong, went to Phu My Commune People's Committee to register for permanent residence, and said: "*I am also used to purchasing online, but I have not heard of online public service and online permanent residency registration ever, I do not know what's in it. I am used to transacting administrative procedures face-to-face, with enthusiastic guidance, real people*". When he was introduced to and guided on how Public Service Portal works, Mr. T.Q.T found it interesting, and said that "it saves time and travel costs a lot if I have the opportunity, I will use it" (male, 35 years old, Kinh ethnic group).

Interviews with 2 women, born in 1982 and 1985, secondary school level, workers, they went to the People's Committee of Ward 2 (Soc Trang City) to ask about procedures for permanent residency registration. They shared that: "*We do not know and have not heard about online public service and online permanent residency registration. The two of us still prefer to go to the ward to transact administrative procedures face-to-face because the distance is also close, we can ask the ward staff for guidance and it only takes a few days to receive the results. We have smartphones, but we mainly watch Tiktok and surf Facebook and Youtube*".

In general, the commune police officers are overloaded when dealing with face-to-face resident registration procedures, mainly due to a lack of equipment and difficulty in connecting to the database. Meanwhile, people are still not really interested in using online public services

to register for permanent residence, mainly due to the lack of information on how to use them, not knowing about the utilities of the online public services, and not having a computer/smartphone and Internet connection.

2.1.4. The "3 in 1" service

According to Soc Trang's report, the province currently has 109/109 communes, wards and townships implementing the online "3-in-1" procedure at level 3. In 2021, 8,683 dossiers have been directly resolved, but no online dossiers have been resolved. This is due to regulations from July 1, 2021, children who do have not personal identity number are not connected online. Citizens is worried about having their household registration book revoked when carrying out procedures to move their permanent residence. From the beginning of 2022 to September 16, 2022, in the whole province, only 7 out of 8,832 "3-in-1" dossiers implemented online (accounting for 0.001%).

a. Experience and evaluation of the research team

Through field survey, direct discussion and playing a role as people who need to implement "3 in 1" procedure at the People's Committee of Ward 2 and Ward 10 (Soc Trang City) and the People's Committee of Phu My Commune (My Tu district), the research team overviewed the process of dealing with "3 in 1" procedures to analyze defect points (see Diagram 2.2).

In the process of solving the "3 in 1" procedure directly and partly online, there are difficulties, obstacles and unreasonable points:

Diagram 2.2: Process of handling 3 in 1 connection dossiers in study areas (Source: the research team)

Firstly, although *the* content of information in the declaration is the same, the officials at the One-Stop-Shop must do it many times (at least 02 times). After people manually write the necessary information into the Declaration (according to the form) or the officials write it for them, they must re-enter this information into the civil status database on the ward/commune web portal which is integrated into the Provincial Public Service Portal, while the information
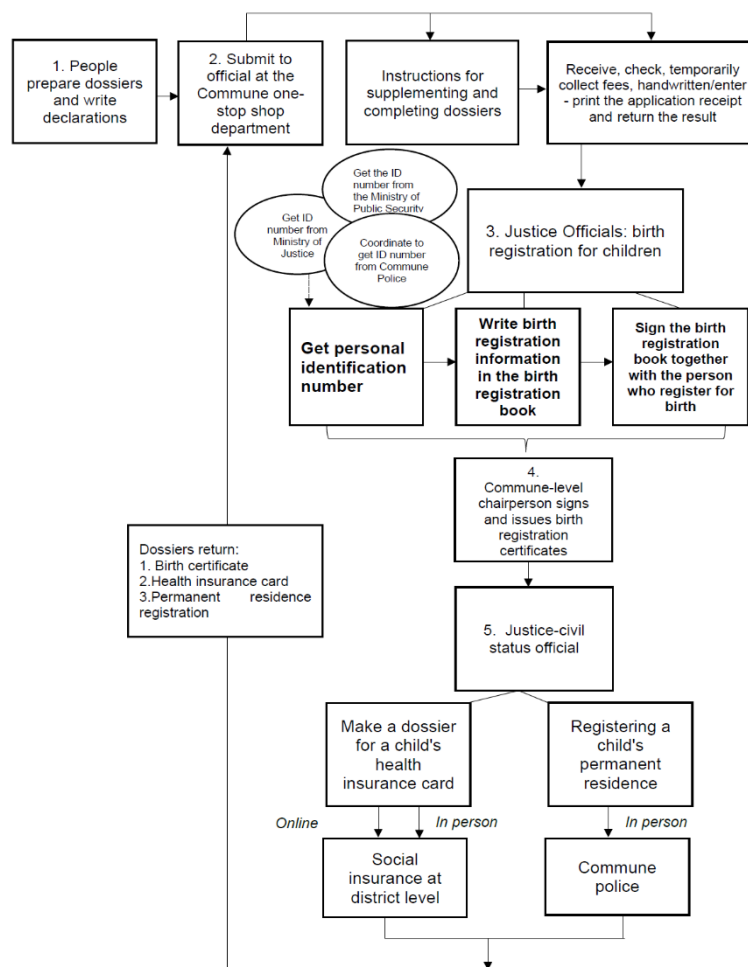
in the Declaration and the information field on the Portal are not too different to print the Application Receipt Certificate and the appointment to return the results. If the citizen declares and does it online, this manipulation does not have to be done with too many repetitions and it is not necessary to print the Appointment Letter. This makes the volume of manipulation increase significantly, having not yet counted other tasks that one-stop-shop officials must undertake; causing waste of stationery (printed paper, ink and computer atrophy, etc.) while it is possible to verify the electronic version as a pdf file or a screenshot if done online.

Secondly, the implementation of the "3 in 1" procedure to issue birth registration certificates (birth certificates) for children under 6 years old has problems right from the stage of obtaining the personal identity number for the child. After receiving the citizen's dossiers, the civil status-justice officer shall obtain the personal identity number from the software of the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Public Security. However, because the technical infrastructure is not synchronized and stable, the access and retrieval can not do it quickly, it sometimes wastes a lot of time for both citizens and officials. When officials are unable to get the personal identity number from the two databases mentioned above due to technical errors and decentralization of access rights, it takes time for justice officials to bring all the dossiers commune police officer to request personal identity number for the child, then they can complete the rest of the procedures and issue a birth certificate. This problem has caused difficulties and pressure for officials, and cost of transportation (gasoline) while officials are not supported this cost.

Thirdly, according to current regulations, the child's birth information must be recorded in the birth registration book and signed by the official in charge together with the person registering the child's birth. That makes the implementation of these online public services impossible. In addition, despite the same information on the birth registration declaration form, the birth registration book, and also the declaration of participation and adjustment of information on social insurance and health insurance, justice officer must be typed and rewritten many times. This due to these information fields have not been linked and integrated into a shared database system. This creates too great a workload for officials (in some places it is two times, in some places it is three times) and it is not suitable with the philosophy of building online public services, modern governance, and simplifying processes and administrative procedures.

In addition, people who use this form of face-to-face or online procedures have to go to the Commune People's Committee at least two times: one time to submit the application directly because of the birth certificate or written confirmation of birth, the child has been abandoned, marriage, surrogacy, birth registration authorization documents, etc. must be originals, because the copies when submitted online cannot guarantee the authenticity and legality for solving; and another time, people come to receive it directly to sign/roll in the Birth Registration Book. Regulations requiring the submitting of original documents when registering a birth make people travel many times (whether they apply online or not). In this case, handling face-to-face procedures is still more convenient and simpler for both officials and citizens than online.

In the list of compulsory online public services 2021 under Decision No. 406/QD-TTg dated March 22, 2021 of the Prime Minister, regulating the connection of birth registration, permanent residency registration, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old, level 4, Ministry of Justice presides over restructuring process, building a system of inter-connected online public services; The Ministry of Public Security coordinate in implementing the online connection process; presides implementation of online permanent residency registration in the inter-connected process; the Vietnam Social Insurance Agency coordinate in implementing the online connection process; presides implementation of issuing health insurance cards in the online connection process; and, the People's Committees of the provinces implement based on the guidance of the Ministry of Justice; implementation time in the third quarter of 2021.

However, by the end of 2021, the ministries have not completed their work, so the provinces do not have a ground to implement. Currently, Soc Trang still carries out the "3 in 1" process according to the old regulations, the online public service is only at level 3 and tries to digitize each part. In fact, most of the current transactions are only "2 in 1" between the justice agency and the social insurance agency. Some stages are still overlapping, scattered, and not connected because of the requirement to keep paper records together with electronic ones, the shared data has not been completed, some data has not been connected, central agencies lack coordination in building integrated software, etc.

In discussions, local leaders all said that they had made efforts to propagate through radio leaflets, through "village teams to support digitalization", "smart radio", and social networks (Zalo, Facebook), asking officials to instruct step-by-step so that people can gradually get used to accessing online public services for the "3-in-1" connection procedure in particular and other popular online public services, even taking measures "assigning targets" to settle online public services for localities, for public officials in the political system.

Soc Trang province, Soc Trang city and districts have initially made efforts to build application infrastructure, equipment, and connection in the immediate future to gradually improve the quality of online public services. The province is completing and piloting the operation of the "Soc Trang Citizen" application to unify the applications for providing online public services throughout the province, operating apps "Viettel Call center: 02991022", "smart radio", "Soc Trang City smart". These apps have more than 10,000 access. The province is also completing the Provincial Public Service Portal, interacting with people via social networks such as Zalo, Facebook, etc. In general, localities identify this as a difficult, long-term job that needs time, finance and human resource, and a process of changing perception.

Officials at the department of receiving and returning results in communes/wards said that when people come to transact face-to-face or online, they are guided and supported enthusiastically, and even officials write declarations for them (illiterate people, elderly people). Some communes like the People's Committee of Phu My commune (My Tu district)

have a "supported writing team", "support desk", etc., including representatives of unions who take turns helping people with difficulties when carrying out direct procedures and propaganda, mobilize people to access to online public services. However, in reality, people are still used to going to the commune/ward People's Committee to transact administrative procedures because they do not know or do not want to use online public services.

After implementing online public services for the "3-in-1" procedure, commune and ward officials said that this procedure has basically shortened a lot of time compared to before, convenient for people. However, the simultaneous implementation of some online and in-person stages along with the difficulties analyzed above makes it difficult to improve the quality and accessibility of online public services for "3 in 1" procedures. "3 in 1" still has many challenges, especially for commune-level officials because they are overwhelmed by the pressure to meet the requirements of implementing procedures in the online environment from their superiors.

c. Citizens' perspective through interviews

Interviewing people who came to transact at the study areas, some people said that they had not heard of online public services in general and the "3 in 1" in particular.

N.T.N.H., a teacher in Thuan Hung commune, 15 km from home to the district's headquarter, came to make birth certificates for her child, sharing: "*I have used a smartphone, and have also made online transactions such as transferring money or buying online but I have never heard of online public service. Administrative procedures are still carried out directly, although the distance to the People's Committee headquarters is quite far and it takes time to travel*". After seeing the features of the Public Service Portal, Ms. H found it useful and wanted to try it out in the future (female, 40 years old, Kinh ethnicity).

Unlike the above case, T.T.L. (who is not proficient at writing letters) went to the commune's one-stop-shop to carry out medical insurance procedures for her son. Ms. L confided: "*I never used online shopping or transfer services and have never heard of online public service*" (female, 39 years old, Khmer). When she was introduced to the Public Service Portal and utilities, she did not care much. Ms. L. said that she is used to working directly, being guided by enthusiastic staff and being easy to understand.

From the perspective of the people, the main reasons why people do not use and pay little attention to online public services are that they do not have the habit of using the Internet, only some of them have a smartphone, they are not fluent in Vietnamese, need the direct guidance of officials, and it does not take much time or trouble when going to transact directly.

2.1.5. Main Causes

(1) Public services infrastructure towards building e-government, digital government and e-governance

The province's information technology infrastructure conditions of are still difficult, unable to immediately meet the access and use of level 3 and 4 online public services for the

people. Soc Trang's DTI index in 2021 ranks 10th out of 13 provinces and cities in the Mekong Delta and 50 out of 63 provinces and cities nationwide. Equipment is still lacking compared to actual needs, especially in the period of urgently cleaning population national data, identification, electronic authentication, and providing online public services for citizens. The software system that connects civil status data is often faulty; interrupted connection, overload during working hours, and equipment for accessing and using online public services have not fully equipped.

Many communes/wards lack computers for people to use online public services at the one-stop-shop or in case of having enough computers, some of these are outdated to use. For example, at Phu My Commune People's Committee, computers are up to 13 years old and have been repaired many times. In addition, the percentage of households with Internet connections at home, 3G, 4G, and wifi connections is still quite low[9].

In addition, organizing centralized asset bidding makes procurement and allocation of new equipment to localities and agencies take a long time, even though the purpose of centralized procurement is to avoid spreading and wasting money. Meanwhile, the rate of depreciation of electronic equipment is very fast. New software put into use is not compatible with old, outdated computers. The assignment of additional tasks but not assigning or supporting adequate machinery and equipment is also a great difficulty for the process of promoting the provision of online public services in Soc Trang province.

Provincial and district governments have implemented many models and solutions to promote digital transformation. Many smart software and applications have been built and deployed. However, the biggest difficulty is fragmentation, lack of connectivity, lack of synchronization, lack of connectivity between applications, lack of specialized human resources, and untimely content institutionalization, management, and operation mechanisms to deploy officially.

In addition, some causes from the National Public Service Portal and the Provincial Public Service Portal should also be mentioned. These public service portals all require account opening and login while people do not use online public services often, so they tend to forget. For many people, this is a complicated, unfamiliar step. Many people only do it once a year, so when they do it online, they have to open a new account or reopen it before they can log in to the online public service site to complete the procedure. Some of the information that people are required to provide when opening an account is not clear, making them not sure how to provide information. For example, in the "address" section, some people a with different household registration status do not know what information to declare. In particular, many Khmer people in the province have not used smartphones with Internet/wifi connection, have not used official sim cards, or have no email addresses. This affects the registration, creation, and confirmation of the account in process of transaction of online public service. In addition,

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[9] In My Tu district, Internet coverage at people's homes is about 26.77%, the percentage of people using 3G and 4G is very low, mainly watching news; low percentage of people using smartphones, email and official sim cards.

the interface of the Soc Trang Provincial Public Service Portal is not friendly and is quite complicated for people, especially the disadvantaged group due to how the design makes accessing, searching to manipulate, and complete the online procedures.

(2) Financial conditions and the level of current local priorities

Soc Trang province and authorities at all levels still face many economic difficulties, for the province does not have enough money to modernize equipment and build basic infrastructure to improve the quality of online public services. According to the leaders of the People's Committee of My Tu district, the annual budget revenue of the district is about 40 billion VND but is spending about 500 billion VND, even the budget of 10-12 million VND to write and equip the district's software is difficult to implement. In some surveyed localities the annual budget revenues are not enough to spend, so it is necessary to balance and prioritize socio-economic development tasks, ensuring social security for people and ethnic minorities than investing in improving and enhancing the quality of online public services.

(3) Propaganda and dissemination of online public services

Although localities have propagated and disseminated online public services, it is not strong and has not achieved the expected effect. All 7 people interviewed, including teachers and people in Soc Trang City, who have better access to information, said that they "have not known" or "have not heard" about online public service. Leaders in the studied localities also said that the locality does not have a channel/form to support people to access and use public services effectively, and the support for ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups to access online public service is even more difficult.

(4) Awareness and habit of administrative procedure transaction

People still have the habit of direct administrative transactions than online. Provincial and district leaders show high determination, relatively good understanding of online public service, have a certain interest in this work, but in the lower the commune level, awareness and concern about this issue reduces gradually.

Meanwhile, people are familiar with and feel more convenient, safe, and secure with administrative procedure transactions in a direct form because they can ask and talk directly with officials. Some people think that when they come to work directly, they can present their opinions in detail and provide more information, thereby having a beneficial impact on them, such as compensation and social support procedures.

Interviewing Mr. T.S., he said: "*People in Phu My commune mainly work in agriculture, have the habit of going directly to the Commune People's Committee to transact administrative procedures. People before the 8X generation use Vietnamese not very well. Many people do not know how to read and write Vietnamese, so they have to come to the commune base for the administrative transaction to guide and help them. Elderly people here know little about activities and transactions on the Internet. Young people, in the last 1 year or so, have known about online activities but not much, have little habit of trading, buying and selling online, so*

they do not have the need to use online public services". (male, 41 years old, ethnic Khmer).

In fact, the research team's experiment shows that applying for permanent residency registration or connecting the "3-in-1" online procedure is much more complicated and cumbersome than face-to-face. This partly explains people's disinterest in online public services and is also a challenge for communication to raise awareness and change the behavior of the authorities at all levels.

In addition, those who have a lot of time or flexible time do not pay attention to the loss of time due to travel and waiting in line when processing direct procedures. They have not yet felt the pressure of needing to change to save time and travel costs. When briefly interviewing some people waiting for administrative procedures at the one-stop-shop of Phu My Commune People's Committee, everyone said that, besides not knowing online public service, the distance from their house to the headquarters of the Commune People's Committee is not far, the staff enthusiastically guided and helped, and even do it for them. It does not take much time, so they often take advantage of coming from work directly in their free time. It seems that the habit of making direct records makes people not interested in using online public services.

<u>(5) Human resources, capacity, management and operation skills of online public service system</u>

The arrangement of officials working at the one-stop-shop as well as directly serving the digital transformation process and providing online public service must now comply with the Law on officials 2008, other relevant legal documents, and implementation of the Party's instruction on ensuring effective and efficient state apparatus. At the provincial and district levels, Soc Trang has 87 officials attaining the intermediate level and over 3 years of experience in charge of information technology, of which 36 are concurrent. However, the arrangement of specialized personnel in this field at the commune level has not been possible due to the current regulations on commune-level government apparatus.

The capacity of officials in charge of information technology has not yet met the requirements. Some officials have not yet consciously improved, innovated working methods, nor applied information technology to improve work efficiency. The results of the information technology proficiency test show that many officials have not met the job requirements. At the People's Committees of the communes/wards, especially the one-stop-shop, officials are in shortage due to quitting, changing jobs, downsizing staff, and difficulty in recruiting and signing additional labor contracts. These are challenges in improving the quality of online public service provision at the commune level in the coming time.

In the transition period, the combination of providing public services in the traditional and online manner, the context of reducing the size of the workforce make the volume of officials increase two to three times. In addition to dealing with direct administrative procedures and online public services, officials also have to complete other professional and political tasks while the salary is low and benefits and other incentives lack. They work but

also lack of equipments and facilities. These reasons make officials lack motivation in implementing online public service and improving the quality of public administrative service delivery to the people.

(6) Training and retraining for officials at all levels, especially at the commune level

According to the report, the Department of Information and Communications has focused on advising the province to organize regular training courses on digital transformation, online public services, information security skills for officials at all levels, and integrate these contents into the annual examinations. In the period of 2016-2020, the province has deployed 95 training courses with 1.971 turns of staff in charge of information technology at agencies. However, the level of interest to absorb and apply knowledge and skills through training courses of officials is still low.

The leaders of surveyed communes said that they have not been able to apply the trained knowledge and skills in practice, so it is not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of these training courses. The main difficulties and limitations were discovered such as advanced knowledge, online form, lack of practical computers, too many students in a class, not separating different groups to have a form of appropriate training (e.g., officials over 50 years old, youth union members, and young people in the community digital transformation team need different training).

(7) Mechanism of coordination between governments at all levels, central agencies, and the business community in strengthening capacity for connection, data interoperability and provision of online information services

This may be the key issue, but there are many limitations. First of all, the digitization of dossiers, connecting the province's population data with the national population database and the Ministry of Public Security's electronic identification and authentication system has not been implemented yet, although local data is ready to connect. This leads to difficulties in personal electronic identification, building electronic data sources, shared databases by regulations, and the exploitation of population data for the purpose of providing online information services at levels 3 and 4 towards building digital government.

Next, the coordination between governments at all levels and businesses such as Military Industry and Telecommunications Group (Viettel), Vietnam Posts and Telecommunications Group (VNPT), and Vietnam Post to unify coordination, financial plans (fees) for co-providing messaging services, shipping charges for documents, and administrative procedures after being resolved online have not yet been deployed.

In addition, the coordination of communication, development of content, form, language, etc., reflecting in the propaganda bulletins on administrative procedures and online public services for ethnic minorities between different levels of government and departments, unions, and agencies in charge of managing ethnicity and religion, with self-governing institutions such as churches and pagodas, is still loose and not given adequate attention.

2.2. Findings from Quang Tri Province

2.2.1. About Quang Tri Province

Quang Tri is a province in the North Central region, bordering Quang Binh province to the North, Thua Thien - Hue Province to the South, Savannakhet province and Salavan province, Laos People's Democratic Republic to the West (with 179,345 km borderline), the East borders the East Sea (with 75 km coastline). Quang Tri's natural area is 4,737.44 km2, accounting for 1.43% of the country's area[10]. Quang Tri province has 10 district-level units, including 02 mountainous districts with 125 commune-level units; There are 44 communes and towns in ethnic minority and mountainous areas. The population in 2021 is 638,627 people[11], of which there are 94,981 ethnic minorities people, accounting for about 13.32% of the province's population. Currently, there are 28 ethnic minorities living in the province, the largest being Bru-Van Kieu people with 74,079 people, accounting for 79.8%, then Ta Oi-Pa Ko people with 18,663 people, accounting for 20.1%, and other ethnic groups account for only 0.1%[12]. In the surveyed localities: Tan Lap commune, the percentage of ethnic minorities is 25%; Huong Hiep commune has a rate of 86.6% ethnic minorities; Ba Long commune has over 85% of ethnic minorities[13].

Quang Tri's PAPI in 2021 reached 45.89 points, belonging to the high average group of the country. In which the content axis "e-Governance " achieved 2.86 points, belonging to the high average group, but this is the content axis with the lowest score compared to other content axes. The annual administrative reform evaluation indexes of the province such as: the State Administrative Reform Index (PAR-INDEX) in 2021 reached 84.82 points (ranked 53/63 provinces and cities nationwide)[14], satisfaction index of citizens and organizations with the service of state administrative agencies (SIPAS) in 2021 reached 85.69% (ranked 46/63 provinces and cities nationwide)[15]; Readiness index for development and application of Vietnam's information technology and communication (Vietnam ICT Index) in 2020 reached 0.4534 (ranked 27th out of 63 provinces and cities nationwide)[16]; Quang Tri's Digital Transformation Index (DTI) 2021: 0.2897 (ranked 57/63 provinces and cities nationwide)[17].

2.2.2. Facts and figures of online public service provision in Quang Tri province

The report of the People's Committee of Quang Tri Province for the Research Team

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[10] See Portal of Department of Foreign Affairs, Quang Tri Province, Overview of Quang Tri (quangtri.gov.vn), accessed on 6/11/2022.

[11] General Statistics Office of Vietnam, https://www.gso.gov.vn/, accessed on 6/11/2022.

[12] Portal of Quang Tri Provincial Party Committee, https://tinhuyquangtri.vn/, accessed on November 6, 2022.

[13] Report on evaluating the effectiveness of implementing online public administrative procedures for the research group of Huong Hiep, Tan Lap and Ba Long communes.

[14] Ministry of Home Affairs (2022), PAR Index 2021 report of ministries, ministerial-level agencies, people's committees of provinces and centrally run cities, PAR Index 2021.

[15] Ministry of Home Affairs, Vietnam Fatherland Front, Vietnam Veterans Association (2022) "Satisfaction index of people and organizations with the service of state administrative agencies in 2021 (SIPAS 2021).

[16] Government portal, Vietnam ICT index 2020 ranking results (chinhphu.vn), accessed on November 6, 2022

[17] Ministry of Information and Communications, https://dti.gov.vn, accessed on 6/11/2022.

shows that along with other provinces and cities in the country, over the years, the province's leaders have been promoting administrative reform, building e-government and expanding the provision of online public services.
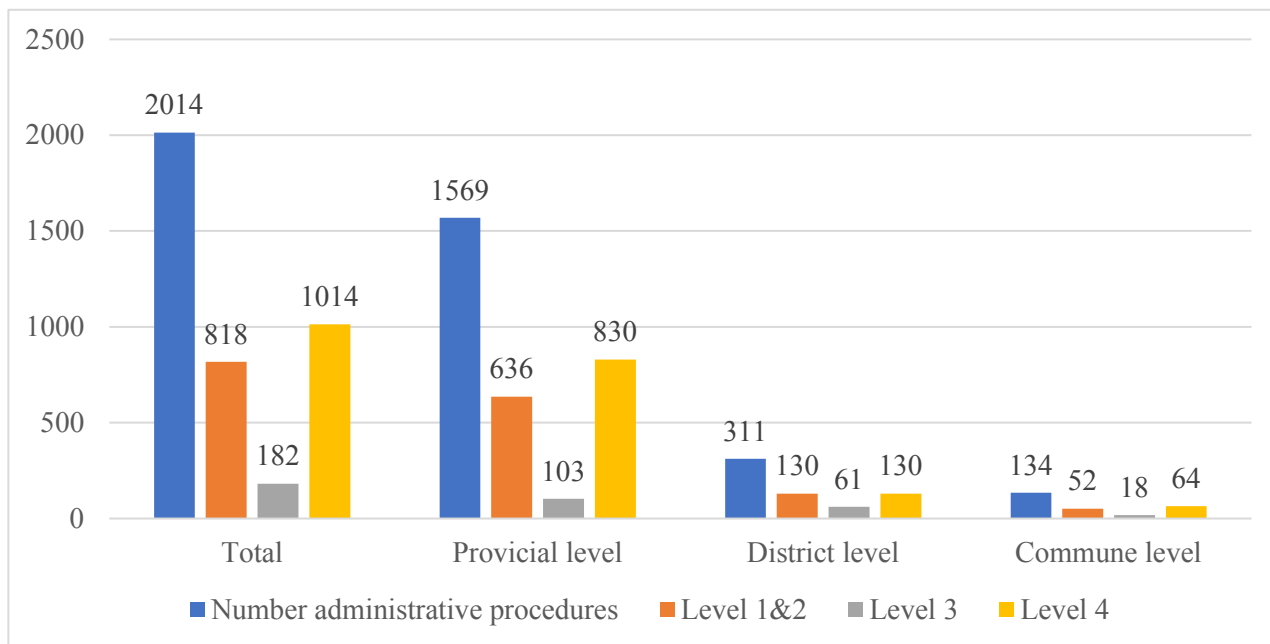
Figure 2.1: The level of readiness to provide online public services at the time of the study

Until September 15, 2022, Quang Tri's online public service portal has integrated 2,014 administrative procedures, of which there are 1,014 online public services at level 4 and 182 online public services at level 3 accounting for 59.4% of total administrative procedures. Quang Tri has integrated 1,048 online public services at level 3 and level 4 on the national public service portal (ranked 19th out of 63 provinces and cities in terms of services integrated on the national public service portal)[18] (figure 2.1).

According to a report by the People's Committee of Quang Tri province, in 2021, the whole province has 87,555 online dossiers (16,523 online dossiers at level 3 and 71,032 online dossiers at level 4) out of a total of 389,337 dossiers, accounting for 22.5%; Until September 15, 2022, the whole province has 101,363 online applications, (including 15,872 level 3 and 85,491 level 4) out of a total of 304,807 dossiers, accounting for 33.3%[19].

The report of Huong Hoa District People's Committee shows that in the first 9 months of 2022, there were a total of 1,501 applications for the issuance of birth certificates and health insurance for children under 6 years old, but no procedures were carried out online; out of a total of 6,307 permanent residence applications, 79 (reaching a rate of 1.3%) are processed online[20]. In Dakrong district, in the first 9 months of 2022, 202 out of 2,565 permanent

[18] Quang Tri Provincial People's Committee (2022), Report No. 214/BC-UBND on the implementation of online public services in the province; Governance and Public Administration Performance Index of Quang Tri province in 2021.
[19] Quang Tri Provincial People's Committee (2022), Report No. 214/BC-UBND on the implementation of online public services in the province; Governance and Public Administration Performance Index of Quang Tri Province in 2021.
[20] Huong Hoa District People's Committee (2022). Report on evaluating the effectiveness of administrative

residence applications were processed online, reaching a rate of 7.9%[21] and there is no "3 in 1" application transacted by citizens online.

2.2.3. Permanent Residency Registration for Citizens

Permanent residence registration procedures are carried out in four groups: permanent residence, temporary residence, temporary absence, and notification of stay. According to Report No. 214/BC-UBND dated October 13, 2022 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri, after one year of implementing the Law on Residence (From July 1, 2021 to July 1, 2022), the whole province has received and processed 50,758 permanent residence applications, of which 2,856 applications were made via online public service (reaching 5.6%); 4,820 applications for temporary residence registration, of which 433 applications were made via online public service (reaching 9%); 1,085 declaration dossiers were temporarily absent, of which 40 dossiers were made via online public service (reaching 3.7%); 28,355 applications for notification of stay, of which 24,940 were made via online public service (reaching 88%)[22].

a. Experience and evaluation of the research team

Because the police department has just issued identity cards for all citizens, it is equipped with quite good computers. Currently, procedures for permanent residence registration for citizens have been greatly simplified compared to the past when household registration books were still used. Citizens' freedom of residence is being realized, but when applying for residency, people still have to prove a place of permanent residence and other identification documents.

The research team directly accessed and manipulated the registration features to handle this procedure on Quang Tri's public service portal at https://dichvucong.quangtri.gov.vn. On the homepage, the research team searched with the keyword "permanent residence registration", and the results were "Inter-administrative procedures for birth registration, permanent residence registration, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old". When entering the "Executing agency" section of the Provincial Police, or "Commune-level procedures", there is no procedure for "permanent residence registration" (See Appendix 2).

b. Local government officials' perspectives

According to the 2020 Residence Law, the procedure for permanent residence registration has been greatly simplified than before. However, when citizens perform online public services, they have to make copies of necessary personal documents, use smartphones with official sim cards, bank accounts to pay, connect to the Internet, and must know how to

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procedures implementation in fields in Huong Hoa district.

[21] Dakrong District People's Committee (2022). Report on evaluating the effectiveness of administrative procedures implementation in fields in Dakrong district.

[22] Quang Tri Provincial People's Committee (2022), Report No. 214/BC-UBND on the implementation of online public services in the province; Governance and Public Administration Performance Index of Quang Tri Province in 2021.

register personal accounts on the online public service information page. Therefore, it is very difficult for citizens to carry out this procedure by themselves because they do not have scanners, few citizens use genuine sim cards, few citizens have bank accounts, etc.

Police in Tan Lap, Huong Hiep, and Ba Long communes said that most of the online applications are done by the commune police on their computers to help citizens in order to achieve targets assigned by superiors. According to a commune police chief, in recent times, the work pressure of the police has been very great due to the fact that they have to do the citizen identification card for all citizens, while still performing other tasks of the police branch. During the process of registering for permanent residence for citizens, technical problems such as error transmission and computer malfunction lead to slow processing. The police said that, at times, doing it in person in the traditional way is even faster than doing it online. Particularly, Ba Long commune is often flooded when it rains and has power cuts, so it is not possible to perform online public services in such conditions.

c. Citizens' perspective through interviews

Results of interviews with 11 citizens who came to carry out administrative procedures at the People's Committees of districts and communes in the surveyed area (in which 4 people have completed the procedures for permanent residence registration, 3 people have completed the procedures "3 in 1" and 4 other applicants) indicate that some of them are unfamiliar with online public services.

A resident in Huong Hoa commune said: "*When using online public services, citizens have to pay money online or by phone, but the sim card is not genuine. The procedure is to use an identity card, but the sim card has previously registered an identity card number, the phone has not updated the identity card number, so it is difficult to transact online. In these cases, officials cannot handle online public service procedures to help citizens*". When asked about the help of officials in carrying out online public services, this person said: "*The staff at the instruction desk are also enthusiastic to help citizens, but their networks are not stable and computers are too outdated, the online declaration procedure is also quite cumbersome, I have to scan documents to send… so it's better to do it in person*".

There are 6 citizens who think that in the circumstance that they are far from the commune People's Committee, and it is difficult to travel, doing public services online will be good. Out of 11 respondents, 9 people think that they will transact online if they get help, guidance, and quick procedures. When asked about the public postal service that transfers documents to people to reduce travel, 7 out of 11 respondents said that they are willing to pay for the public postal service to deliver documents to their homes. However, there are 4 people who do not agree to use this service because their house is close to the commune People's Committee and it is very quick to go to the commune People's Committee, so they will get the results directly.

When asked about the activities of the "Community Digital Technology Team", 8 out of 11 people said that they did not know or had just heard of this team. As the research team suggests, in the coming time, the "Community Digital Technology Team" will help people

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declare and carry out administrative procedures on online public services in villages, hamlets, and neighborhoods. Moreover, most of the respondents are supportive and think that this group, once put into operation, will be useful for citizens in places far from the commune People's Committee, finding travel difficult, people who do not have internet, and those who do not know how to use a smartphone. However, they also wondered about the activities and structure of the team as well as the ability of its members to use IT.

2.2.4. The "3 in 1" service

Quang Tri implements "3 in 1" inter-procedures both online and in person at the one-stop shop. While linking birth registration at the commune level with health insurance at the district level (linking the "2 in 1" procedure) is done online from the commune People's Committee to the District Social Insurance Department, the connection between the procedure for birth registration and permanent residence registration for children under 6 years old is provided by judicial officials who directly transfer the dossiers to the commune police to assist citizens. In 2021, the number of dossiers for inter-processing of "2 in 1" procedures by online form was 442 out of a total of 3,705 dossiers, reaching 3.2%; in the first 9 months of 2002, there were 828 out of 7,642 applications, reaching a rate of 10.8%[23].

a. Experience and evaluation of the research team

The inter-procedures for registration of birth, permanent residence, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old have not been implemented at level 3 or 4 on the province's public service portal. Research result shows that online linking has only been made between the issuance of birth certificates (implemented by the Commune People's Committee) and the issuance of free health insurance cards for children under 6 years old (implemented by the district social insurance agency). The registration of permanent residence by the commune police has not been linked to the issuance of birth certificates. After the commune judicial officer receives the citizen's dossier, he/she must take it to the commune police station for permanent residence registration and receive the results to return it to the citizen. This is due to the civil status management software of the Ministry of Justice and the permanent residence registration system of the Ministry of Public Security having not been connected.

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[23] Quang Tri Provincial People's Committee (2022), Report No. 214/BC-UBND on the implementation of online public services in the province; Governance and Public Administration Performance Index of Quang Tri province in 2021.
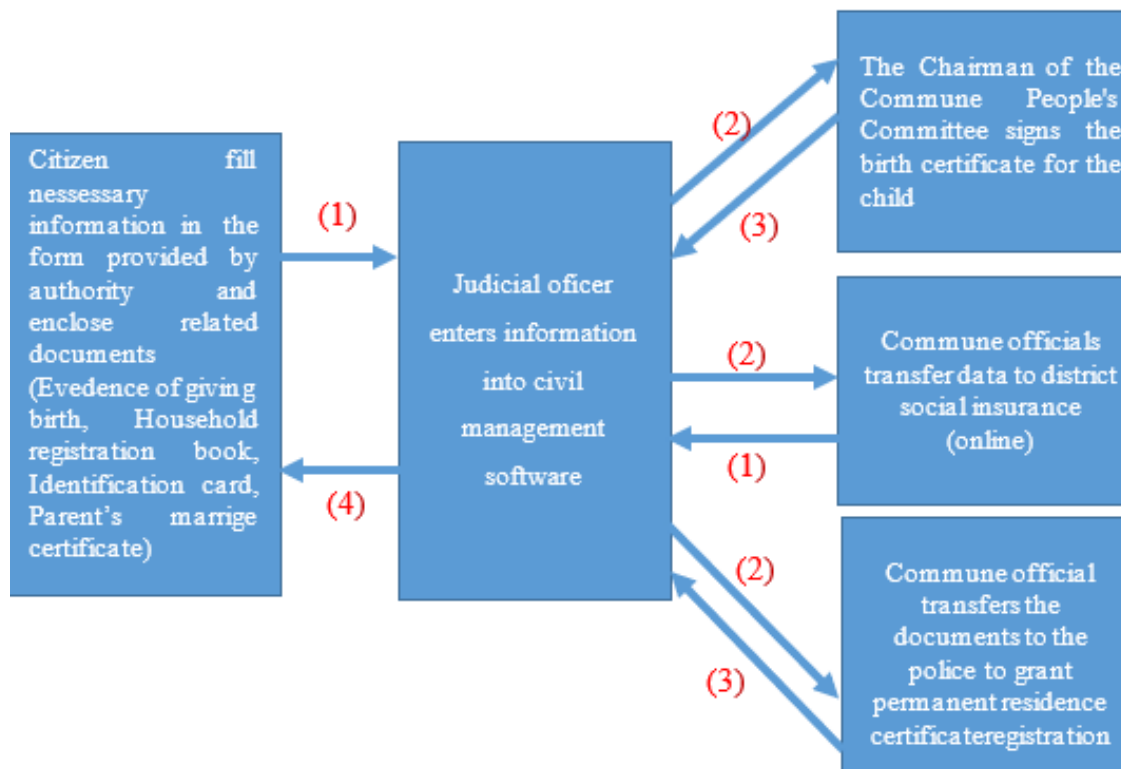
Diagram 3: The 3-in-one Service Process

The process of linking birth registration, permanent residence, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old, as shown in Diagram 3, can be summarized as follows:

(1) Citizens who want to carry out inter-procedures for birth registration, permanent residence, and health insurance cards for children under 6 years old need to bring their marriage certificate, identity card, and birth certificate to the one-stop shop commune level, fill in the information in the declaration, and submit it to the judicial officials.

(2) Judicial officials enter information into the software of the judicial branch, transfer the information to the Ministry of Justice (online linking) to obtain identification numbers for citizens, then print birth certificates and submit them to the chairman of the Commune People's Committee to sign and transfer data to the district social insurance, and bring the dossier to the commune police; record in received dossier book.

(3) Social insurance issues health insurance for the child and send it back to the commune judicial officer (possibly via the public postal service). Commune police issue permanent residence registration for children (through judicial officers).

(4) Commune judicial officer returns the results to the citizens, records the results in a book, and keeps the dossier at the Commune People's Committee (permanently saved).

In the three surveyed communes, citizens have to sign in the dossier submitting book and sign when they receive the dossier, and the dossier must be submitted in paper to be kept at the Commune People's Committee. Commune judicial officials still have to use written books and

archives of citizens' information over the years. Therefore, providing online public services does not make sense, even for judicial officials, because their work becomes overloaded.

The research team directly accessed and manipulated these procedure features on the public service portal of Quang Tri at https://dichvucong.quangtri.gov.vn. With the keyword "permanent residence registration", it is easy to find "inter-administrative procedures for birth registration, permanent residence registration, health insurance card issuance for children under 6 years old". This is an administrative procedure that has been provided by Quang Tri at level 3.

To carry out this procedure, users must upload the "Birth Registration Declaration" page after manually entering information and submit electronic documents of all kinds of paper documents, including "Birth Certificate", "Registration of Marriage Certificate", or "ID card" of parents. For ethnic minorities, this is quite difficult to do. Furthermore, according to judicial officials in the surveyed communes, after submitting an online dossier, citizens still have to bring paper documents (including original birth certificate, copy of identity card, parents' permanent residence registration and marriage certificate, etc.) to submit at the Commune People's Committee to store and sign for submitting and receiving the results. With this current method, citizens will not have the demand to carry out this procedure online.

Thus, although the reports of localities in Quang Tri all confirm that Quang Tri has not yet implemented the "3 in 1" procedure, it has only implemented the "2 in 1" linking (between the issuance of birth at the commune level and health insurance card at the district level) in the online environment. However, the research team affirmed, from the perspective of users of online public services, Quang Tri is still implementing the "3 in 1" connection, but the permanent residence registration process is directly connected instead of online.

Moreover, observations in the field show that the process of declaring information on procedures is repeated at least 3 times: (i) citizens declare information according to the form; (ii) the judicial officials enter information into the software of the judicial branch; and (iii) when the dossier is transferred to the commune police, this department re-enters the information into the citizen data software of the public sector.

In addition, the current difficulties for commune-level judicial officials include the equipment in the one-stop shop being outdated and lacking, and the Internet connection being slow and unstable. All the work that judicial officials are doing in the "3-in-1" procedure combining both online and in person makes their work increase significantly. Regulations on submitting paper dossiers, signing submission books and receiving dossiers at the one-stop shop make the implementation of online public services meaningless. If implemented directly, citizens do not have to wait too long, while still being able to submit a dossier to archive and sign books according to regulations.

Implement Decision No. 406/QD-TTg dated March 22, 2021 of the Prime Minister, regulating the interconnection of procedures for registration of birth, permanent residence, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years of age at level 4 and Official Letter No. 338/VPCP-KSTT dated June 1, 2022 of the government office announcing the direction of Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam on the implementation of the electronic linked process, in Quang Tri, online linking has only been done between the commune level and the district social insurance department (health insurance). Meanwhile, in order to register a child's permanent residence, the commune judicial officials must directly take the citizen's file to the commune police.

Propaganda on administrative reform and implementation of online public services have been carried out regularly, but citizens have not directly opened accounts and logged in to transact online, and judicial officials continue to log in and even write information on the declaration form for citizens. Thus, they both have to write information into the book as before and enter data into a computer to upload to an electronic database and spend a lot of time guiding people. According to an official of the People's Committee of Tan Lap commune, Huong Hoa district, the implementation of online public administrative procedures is slower than in person.

While the province's target is that 50% of citizens' dossiers must be done online, many citizens do not have enough equipment (no smartphone, slow internet connection, and some households do not even have electricity for a living) to directly open an account for an online transaction. Currently, judicial officials have to help citizens, which takes more time when processing a set of dossiers.

In order to perform online public services, citizens (under current conditions, civil servants are transacting on behalf of citizens) must take a photo of each type of dossier in the application and upload it to the online public service page, while the processing speed of computers and internet connections is often slow, which takes a lot of time for officials.

There is a shortage of scanners and excess of outdated computers (equipped about 10 years ago and only upgraded and repaired). Even in Ba Long commune, the headquarters of the People's Committee is often flooded when it rains. These objective factors that hinder the implementation of online public services at the commune level.

Thus, although the "3-in-1" inter-procedure service in the communes has been implemented online in Quang Tri, accounting for over 3.2% in 2021 and 10% in the first 9 months of 2022, it was mainly done by officials at the Commune People's Committee.

c. Citizens' perspective through interviews

As mentioned above, interviewed citizens in the communes all said that they have not heard of "online public services" or have just heard of it and have a desire to use it if it is convenient. However, due to some difficulties such as not understanding the process, not

having a bank account number, not using an official phone sim card, etc., they cannot access these types of online public services.

2.2.5. Main Causes

From the results of discussions with officials and interviews with citizens, the research team believes that the following reasons are making people less likely to use online public services.

<u>a. From the government side</u>

- Decree 45/2020/ND-CP dated April 1, 2020 of the Government on the implementation of administrative procedures in the electronic environment took effect from May 22, 2020, but so far there have been no specific instructions from the government.

- The Ministry of Public Security has not shared population data and has not integrated permanent residence registration for children, so communes have not been able to carry out the "3-in-1" procedure in the online environment.

- The quality of the transmission is not stable, often congested and stopped for maintenance, affecting the process of accessing and performing online public services. When discussing with the Department of Information and Communications, it is known that the internet connection is slow partly because the communes rent the transmission line with not high enough speed to save money.

- The surveyed communes of Quang Tri province faced many difficulties in infrastructure, computer equipment, and internet. The equipment of all three Commune People's Committees has been put into use for over 5 years, so they do not meet the current work requirements.

- Commune-level judicial officials are overloaded with work when they have to do both face-to-face and online, especially before students enroll, making work efficiency not high.

- Propaganda and dissemination of online public services to citizens have not been carried out extensively and appropriately. Many people do not know or understand the requirements of online public services.

- The design of the information pages https://dichvucong.quangtri.gov.vn and https://dichvucong.gov.vn is not user-friendly, especially for users who are ethnic minorities. Users themselves also have to perform many stages and steps, and submit a variety of related documents. There are no instructions with pictures or short films so that citizens who are not fluent in Vietnamese can follow and perform these actions.

- The establishment of "Community Digital Transformation Teams" has been implemented in recent times but has not been put into practice and has no practical regulations.

b. From the users' side

- Many citizens, including ethnic minorities, are unable to perform public services online because they have not had access to the internet, do not have smartphones, do not have computers, do not have photocopiers, or do not know use copy software on smartphones.

- Some citizens think that they live near the commune People's Committee, so when transacting administrative procedures, they go directly to the government agency for more specific instructions.

- Many citizens do not have a genuine sim card, so they cannot open an account, or do not have a bank account to pay online.

- Some citizens refuse to open an online public service account because they believe it is unsafe to upload their personal information online.

2.3. Findings from Hoa Binh Province

2.3.1. About Hoa Binh Province

Hoa Binh is a province in the Northwest sub-region of the Northern midland and mountainous region, with an important and strategic position in terms of economy, politics, security and defense. The province is home to the famous Hoa Binh culture - the cultural cradle of the ancient Vietnamese. Hoa Binh has an important and strategic position in the North as being the gateway to the capital of Hanoi; to the Northwest region, it is the hinge between the Northern Delta, the North Central region, and the Northwest, and the gateway to the North of Upper Laos.

The province has 10 districts and a city with 151 communes, wards, and towns, with a natural area of 4,590.3 km2, bordering Phu Tho province to the North, Hanoi city to the East, Son La province to the West, bordering the provinces to the South: Ninh Binh, Ha Nam, Thanh Hoa. At the time of April 1, 2019, the province has 854,131 people with major ethnic groups, such as Muong, Kinh, Thai, Tay, Dao, Mong, and some other ethnic groups. In which, the Muong ethnic group accounts for about 64%[24]. Kinh accounts for 27.73%; the Thai ethnic group accounts for 3.9%; the Dao ethnic group accounts for 1.7%; the Tay ethnic group accounted for 2.7%; the Mong ethnic group accounted for 0.52%; other ethnic groups accounted for 1.18%. In 2020, implementing Resolution No. 830/NQ-UBTVQH14, dated December 17, 2019 of the National Assembly Standing Committee on the arrangement of district and commune administrative units in provinces, Hoa Binh province reduced to 10 administrative units at the district level (decreased by 1 district because Ky Son district merged to Hoa Binh city), and 151 main commune-level administrative units (131 communes, 10 wards, 10 townships)[25]. Hoa Binh province has a high percentage of Muong people, and there

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[24] Hoa Binh Provincial People's Committee (2022). Report on assessing the status of online public services serving people in the province.
[25] See: https://www.hoabinh.gov.vn/web/guest/dia-chi

are communes with nearly 100% Muong people with a good level of proficiency in Vietnamese, and the merger of communes makes the distance from the house to the headquarters of the Commune People's Committee longer. These are favorable conditions to promote citizens' use of online public services.

According to the PAPI Index 2021, Hoa Binh province achieved the highest scores on the following content axes: people's participation at the grassroots level (5.24 points); corruption control in the public sector (7.55 points); and environmental governance (3.82 points). The content axis publicity, transparency and accountability to the people reached 5.3 and 4.45 points, respectively, at a high average level. Public administrative procedures and public service delivery are in the low-medium group (7.04 and 7.65 points respectively). Particularly, the province's e-Government content axis is in the lowest group, with 2.42 points[26].

2.3.2. Facts and figures of online public service provision in Hoa Binh province

a. Information technology infrastructure

- According to the report of Hoa Binh province, the province's information technology infrastructure has been relatively completed, and modern in the whole province. According to the report, 100% of departments, branches, districts and commune People's Committees have been invested in, equipped with computers, LAN and Internet systems to ensure and deploy the application of shared software and specialized software in each unit. In addition, 100% of departments, agencies, districts and commune People's Committees have connected to the specialized data transmission network and intra-provincial WAN network.

- The province's Data Integration Center has basically completed the interconnection to all departments, departments, branches, districts, and cities, and integrated and shared data links between units, ensuring information safety and security.

- The province's public administration service centers, one-stop shop at the district and commune level have been invested with modern equipment to meet the needs and serve people and businesses in handling administrative procedures.

- The province's data sharing and integration platform (LGSP) has been deployed since 2019 connected to the national data sharing and integration platform (NGSP) and serving the connection of the Public Service Portal /Hoa Binh province's electronic one-stop information system with the National Public Service Portal to serve the reception and settlement of administrative procedures by online form. The province has also connected the public service portal / the province's electronic one-stop shop information system with information systems of central ministries and branches to share information and exploit data to serve the needs of state management, handle administrative procedures such as: national information system on business registration issued by the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the shared judicial calendar

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[26] See: https://papi.org.vn/ho-so-tinh/?tinh=hoa-binh.

management software of the Ministry of Justice, registration management software issued by the Ministry of Planning and Investment, change driver's license of the Ministry of Transport, etc.

b. Applying information technology services, providing public services to serve people and businesses

- Hoa Binh province's administrative information system with the domain "http://dichvucong.hoabinh.gov.vn" currently provides 1,927 online administrative procedures. According to the province's report, currently, agencies and units in the province are providing 1,671 online public services at levels 3 and 4. It is known that the system has integrated, one-time log in, synchronizing administrative document dossiers, synchronizing status, and statistics on the handling of administrative procedures dossiers with the national public service portal; 1,378 online public services are integrated with the national public service portal; integrated and shared online payment system of the province with the national public service portal. Online public services are integrated on the National Public Service Portal, including: changing the Driver's License issued by the Transport sector; announcement of promotional activities; issue judicial record cards to Vietnamese citizens and foreigners residing in Vietnam; issue judicial record cards to procedure-conducting agencies (subjects are Vietnamese citizens, foreigners residing in Vietnam); issue judicial record cards to state agencies, political organizations, socio-political organizations (subjects are Vietnamese citizens, foreigners residing in Vietnam).

- The electronic one-stop information system and the Provincial Public Service Portal have merged according to the provisions of Decree 107/2021/ND-CP dated December 6, 2021 of the Government with the name "Hoa Binh administrative procedure handling information system". This system has been deployed and used at state agencies at the 3 levels of province, district and commune to receive and handle administrative procedures according to a one-stop-shop mechanism.

The Ministry of Information and Communications evaluated that until September 2022, Hoa Binh province is one of the localities with the highest performance results for the indicator of online processing rate (87.02%) and ranked fourth for the indicator of the percentage of online public services that generate online records (93.98%) compared to other provinces in the country[27].

- Statistics on the information system on handling administrative procedures in Hoa Binh province in 2021, the whole province has received and processed 462,046 administrative procedures dossiers, of which online dossiers are 299,589, accounting for 64.84 %; in the first 9 months of 2022, the whole province received and processed 336,416 dossiers, of which 281,816 were received online, accounting for 83.77%[28].

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[27] Department of Information and Communication of Hoa Binh Province (2022). Report on assessment of the current state of public service provision in Hoa Binh province to serve the delegation of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.
[28] Hoa Binh Provincial People's Committee (2022). Report on assessing the status of online public services serving

2.3.3. Permanent residency registration for citizens

Registration of permanent residence for citizens is a procedure carried out on the online public service portal of the Ministry of Public Security and is determined at level 3. There is no independent permanent registration procedure on the provincial administrative procedure information system but it is only a procedure in the 3-in-1 inter-procedure, which will be discussed in the following section.

The total number of people residing in Hoa Binh province is 936,344 people (in which 467,596 women, and 728,421 people aged 14 and over), belonging to 218,944 households. In detail, the permanent residentpopulation is 935,487 people, belonging to 218,931 households; the temporary resident population is 15,446 people, belonging to 5,919 households; the temporary absence population is 321 people.

According to the report of the Hoa Binh Provincial People's Committee, 151/151 communes in the province have provided permanent residence registration for citizens at level 4. However, in 2021, there are 3 online applications but there are up to 5,907 dossiers made directly. In the first 9 months of 2022, there were 14,443 online applications and 9,568 face-to-face transactions[29]. Provincial police have directed units to focus on promoting digital transformation in management activities, public service provision, changing administrative management methods from traditional to modern, contributing to the formation of digital citizens and enterprises, and promoting the development of the digital economy and digital society, especially after the provincial police established Project 06 working groups at all levels. The software system came into stable operation, receiving and processing dossiers in the field of residence management registration in the whole province have changed markedly (from April 25, 2022 to the present, the Provincial Police have received and processed 16,408/20,526 dossiers, reaching 80%, of which, permanent residence: 7,697/11,510, reaching 67%, temporary residence 827/1,132, reaching 73%, staying: 7,884/7,884, reaching 100%)[30].

<u>a. Experience and evaluation of the research team</u>

The research team has directly accessed and manipulated the registration features to handle this procedure in the section [registration, residence management] > [permanent residence registration] on the Public Service Portal of the Ministry of Public Security at the address: https://dichvucong.bocongan.gov.vn or type [permanent residence/registration of permanent residence] > [register for permanent residence] on the National Public Service Portal at https://dichvucong.gov.vn. These public service portals all provide detailed instructions on procedures, application components (for each group of people in need), forms, submission forms, fees, processing deadlines, implementing agencies, implementation

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people in the province.

[29] Hoa Binh Provincial People's Committee (2022). Report on assessing the status of online public services serving people in the province.

[30] Hoa Binh Provincial Police (2022). Report on results of registration and management of permanent and temporary residence in Hoa Binh province.

requirements and conditions, etc. In order to apply for permanent residence registration, the requester needs to have a legitimate account on the National Public Service Portal, or an electronic Identity account issued by the Ministry of Public Security (VNeID). Most of the officials and people who come to transact have not used or do not have these two types of accounts.

When the research team directly manipulated on the computer, especially in Suoi Hoa commune, Region III, there was a problem with the transmission, the hung machine, or the process being slow. This situation is consistent with the reflections of officials who often have difficulty accessing the internet in general and administrative procedures in particular.

b. Local government officials' perspectives

When working with officials at all levels, especially at the commune level, they complained about some difficulties in online public services:

Firstly, technical issues related to information infrastructure, transmission and software errors. Transmission errors are very common when police officers manipulate on online public service software. The transmission error caused interruption of work and a loss of time for police officers and citizens. The software of the Ministry of Public Security is in the process of being completed, needing to be adjusted, and the amount of access at the same time is too large, causing the transmission to be overloaded. Software errors and inconsistent data connections between the information fields of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Security caused some cases to be re-verified (about ethnicity). The provincial police's information technology infrastructure has not met the requirements of administrative modernization. The transmission connecting with professional departments of the Ministry of Public Security is sometimes interrupted, affecting the time to return results to citizens and businesses. Computer systems in many communes in the province are outdated and slow, making it difficult for police officers to complete their work on schedule. The issue of privacy, security, and network safety is being considered, making the data of national residents unable to be connected. Birth and death data are not connected.

Second, data issues. In the previous period, the information declared by the citizens was unclear and had inconsistencies, including age, date of birth, full name, etc., which made the data not synchronized. It is very time consuming to check the traceability and synchronize resident information. The education level of a segment of citizens in the province is still low, especially in remote and isolated areas, people face many difficulties in accessing, applying, and implementing the process of declaration of documents and basic procedures in the electronic environment. Due to the data of the Judiciary branch not matching the information field with the public security, many cases do not match the ethnicity. In detail, when registering as a Tay, Nung, or Dao ethnic group, when receiving, it is a Hoa ethnic group. This makes citizens have to declare this information again.

Third, causes from the citizens. Citizens are still used to face-to-face transactions and are afraid to use technology. The people who come to transact are mainly elderly family members

who come to transact for their children and grandchildren, even in difficult type III communes such as Suoi Hoa or a ward that has initially developed (type I). Many of them are not familiar with computers and manipulations of online public services, and they are annoyed when the computer is running slow or hung, so police officers have to explain and convince. This makes it difficult and time-consuming for police officers and citizens. Many people only transact once a year, so if there are instructions on online public services, they don't remember and do not care.

Fourth, issues of work pressure and equipment conditions, and policy inadequacies. In current time, due to the pressure to complete the citizen identification in a short time, some police officers were overloaded with work, and there were some errors in the data entry. There is a shortage of staff for registration and residence management. Currently, the provincial police have fully arranged 05 regular police officers in 1 commune. However, the volume of work is huge, the staff's information technology skills are still limited, and the population data system has new functions, frequently updated and upgraded, making it difficult for staff to implement. Police headquarters in many communes in Tan Lac district are cramped, and the lack of facilities affects the quality of providing online public services to the citizens. According to the Law on Residence that took effect July 2021, those who stay when they change their residence information after this period will have their red books and household registration books confiscated. This makes population management difficult.

c. Citizens' perspective through interviews

Most of the people interviewed at the one-stop shop of the commune/ward and district/city said they had not heard of "online public service". However, when it is simply explained that "online public service" is "transacting with all kinds of documents and administrative procedures online", some people have heard of it, and some people know it for the first time, but the common point is that they have never transacted online public service on their own. Most people want to go to the People's Committee of the commune or district, depending on the administrative procedures they transact, when the distance is not too far, to be directly guided by the officials for sure. People when introduced feel that online public services are very convenient and ready to perform public services online if they are guided in detail. Many people, especially in the communes of Region III, do not have Internet-connected telephones.

Mr. Dinh Van Le (male, 43 years old, Tam Bat hamlet, Phu Cuong commune, Tan Lac district) went to the People's Committee of Tan Lac district to register for a business license to open a grocery store. In an interview, he said: "*I have heard of online public services but have never done it myself. The distance from my house to the District People's Committee is about 14km, whenever I need to transact administrative procedures, I go directly to the People's Committee because the distance is not too far and I am guided by officials, so I feel secure. My daughter used to perform public services online, declare information to make a red book. About 20-30 days after submitting the application, commune officials come to the house to measure the land and provide documents. I feel very convenient and ready to perform public services online if detailed instructions are given*". However, Le's daughter works far away

and is not at home often, so there is no one to guide him through online public administrative procedures at home.

Ms. Bui Thi Ha (female, 30 years old, Muong Lo hamlet, Phong Phu commune, Tan Lac district) went to the Commune People's Committee to make a bank loan application for business. She shared: "*I have not heard of online public service. Before going to the Commune People's Committee to transact, I called the commune official to ask about the documents to prepare. When I transacted the procedures at the Commune People's Committee, I have not introduced online public services by officials. I am busy with work and taking care of small children, so I do not have much time to watch TV or listen to the radio, mainly update news through channels such as Facebook, Zalo but cannot approach any information about online public services. When I made a birth registration certificate for my child, I asked my mother to go to the Commune People's Committee to do it, not directly do it by myself*". She did not know that she could make birth certificates for their children at home on the online public service portal.

Ms. Bui Thi Quyen (female, 33 years old, Tham hamlet, Suoi Hoa commune, Tan Lac district) shared: "*I have never heard of online public services. The phone I am using is not capable of connecting to the Internet. In my house, there is only one smartphone for my daughter's learning (grade 9). When I need to do any administrative procedures, I go directly to the Commune People's Committee*". She said that she had a problem of not carrying enough necessary identification documents, making simple administrative procedures such as notarization of documents also time-consuming because she had to return home to get a citizen's identity.

Ms. Huyen (female, 33 years old, Hoa Binh city) has heard about online public services. She shared: "*In the past, I spent a lot of time registering for temporary residence at the ward police station because I did not understand the process and did not prepare all the necessary documents*". When she was introduced to the online public service portal, Ms. Huyen found it very convenient and ready to do it.

2.3.4. The "3 in 1" service

Previously, citizens had to go to three different agencies to handle each procedure (the People's Committee for birth registration, the police for permanent residence registration, and the social insurance agency for the issuance of health insurance cards). This causes a waste of time and costs for both citizens and the state agencies because each agency has to make a set of documents, declaring many duplicate personal information over and over again. When implementing all 3 procedures, citizens only need to go to one place, which is the reception and result return department according to the one-stop mechanism of the commune-level People's Committee to submit documents and receive three results together at this place.

According to the report of the Provincial People's Committee, since the end of 2019, Hoa Binh province has put into use the common civil status registration and management

information system for the Departments of Justice built by the Ministry of Justice. The Department of Justice has issued documents guiding the implementation of civil status registration and management through the civil status registration and management information system of the Ministry of Justice. Continue to deploy to the district-level People's Committee to implement the province's Plan No. 115/KH-UBND dated July 31, 2020, aiming to digitize and update civil status data from civil status books to contribute to building the electronic civil status database of the province in particular and the whole country in general, including birth registration data. The current electronic birth registration system is being successfully integrated with the province's information system for handling administrative procedures, linked with the Ministry of Public Security's personal identification number system and Social Insurance's social insurance card issuance system. The results of successful birth registration will be stored in detail, which is the basic information of the individual, recorded in the civil status book, birth certificate, and updated in the electronic civil status database and national population database. Profiles of individuals related to birth registration information must be consistent with the content of the birth registration of that person.

According to the report, in 2021, Hoa Binh handled 9,655 inter-connected dossiers related to administrative procedures on birth registration, permanent residence registration, and health insurance card issuance for children under 6 years old. In which, there are 7,830 online applications, 1,825 applications made directly at the Department of receiving and returning results according to the commune-level one-stop-shop mechanism. In the first 9 months of 2022, Hoa Binh province has handled 6,859 inter-connected dossiers, including 5,941 online applications and 918 direct applications. The rate of late return of results to citizens accounted for only 1.1% of the total number of cases processed.

<u>a. Experience and evaluation of the research team</u>

In the process of inter-solving the "3 in 1" procedure directly and partly online, many difficulties, obstacles, and unreasonable points hinder the progress and efficiency of the provision of online public services. Specifically:

Although the same content of information is in the declaration, officials at the one-stop-shop must do it many times (at least twice). After people manually write the necessary information into the declaration (on the form) or officials write it for them, they must re-enter this information into the civil status database on the ward/commune web portal which is integrated on the Province's Public Service Portal, while the information in the declaration and the information field on the portal are not too different to print the Application Receipt Certificate and make an appointment to return the results. If the citizen declares and does it online, this job does not have to be done with too many repetitions and it is not necessary to print the Appointment Letter. This greatly increases the workload of officials to handle this type of procedure, not counting other tasks that one-stop shop officials must undertake, and causes waste of stationery (printed paper, ink, etc.) while it is possible to verify the electronic version as a pdf file or a screenshot if done online.

The implementation of the inter "3 in 1" procedure to issue birth registration certificates for children under 6 years old has problems right from the stage of obtaining personal identification numbers for children. After receiving the citizen's dossiers, the civil status - judicial officer shall obtain the personal identification number from the database of personal identity through the software of the Ministry of Justice or the Ministry of Public Security. However, because the technical infrastructure is not synchronized and stable, sometimes accessing and obtaining personal identification numbers from the above two sources has problems, crashes, very slow processing speeds, or is inaccessible. This makes citizens have to wait. When officials are unable to obtain personal identification numbers from the two databases due to technical errors and access authorization, they must take time to bring all the dossiers to the commune-level police to request for a personal identification number for the child, then they can complete the rest of the procedures to issue a birth certificate. This has caused difficulties and pressure for officials, and cost of transportation (gasoline) while this cost is not supported by civil servants.

According to current regulations, the child's birth information must be recorded in the birth registration book and signed by the acting official together with the person registering the child's birth, making it impossible to perform online public service in this procedure. In addition, the information on the birth registration paper, the birth registration book, and also the declaration of participation and adjustment of information on social insurance and health insurance have the same information fields, but judicial officials must have it typed and rewritten many times because these fields have not been linked and integrated on a shared database system. This creates a great workload for officials (in some communes it is 2 times or 3 times) and it is not suitable with the philosophy of building online public services, modern governance, and simplifying administrative processes and procedures.

In addition, citizens transacting in person or online at least visit the Commune People's Committee two times: one time to submit the application directly because of the birth certificate or written confirmation of birth, abandoned child, surrogacy, birth registration authorization documents, etc. must be originals because the copies when submitted online cannot guarantee the authenticity and legality for settlement; and another time people came to receive it in person to sign/fingerprint in the birth registration book. Regulations requiring the presentation of original documents when registering a birth make citizens travel many times (whether they apply online or not). In this case, handling procedures in person is still more convenient and simpler for both officials and citizens than online.

b. Local government officials' perspectives

Currently, the linking of administrative procedures for birth registration and issuance of health insurance cards has been carried out via electronic software of the Ministry of Justice and Social Insurance, linked to the system of personal identification numbers of the Ministry of Public Security. The commune-level officials reported that the permanent residence registration procedure has not yet been carried out through the software, and the transfer of dossiers to the police office for permanent residence registration is still done by the paper dossier transfer method. The failure to link all 3 procedures through the software of ministries

and branches affects the progress of completing administrative procedures for citizens.

Officials and civil servants in Phuong Lam ward, Hoa Binh City said that since the beginning of 2022, they have had to process about 6,000 applications. Every day, each civil servant processes 20-30 dossiers, but has to update through 4 different software of the judicial branch, both to enter information on the software and to keep the books on paper. Meanwhile, the judicial branch's software has yet to connect with the police. It is known that wards in Hoa Binh City often have 7 times more dossiers than communes, and the workload needs to be handled a lot, so the pressure on judicial officers is great. Equipment for online public services in Phuong Lam ward also affects the work progress of officials due to some outdated computers, crashes, and internet errors.

Meanwhile, the majority of citizens, who come to transact on behalf of households, are usually the elderly, who use smartphones, bought and registered by their children. It is difficult for them to perform online public services. The digital transformation support teams have not yet brought into full play their effectiveness, although their members (the core is the residential group - 10-20 members, secretaries, team leaders, officials with computer proficiency, each team has 1 civil servant and the regional police) has been trained three times.

According to the Office of the Government's official letter No. 3381/VPCP-KSTT dated June 1, 2022 on the implementation of the electronic communication process, the Ministry of Public Security is assigned to urgently develop an interoperable software for birth registration, permanent residence registration, and health insurance card issuance for children under 6 years old, and pilot implementation at suitable scale before nationwide deployment. However, until now the software has not been completed, and the Department of Justice is waiting for the direction and implementation of the ministries and branches to put it into practice.

Information system civil status registration and management of the Ministry of Justice is still being completed, upgraded and changing, adding a number of functions that make commune/ward officials' implementation of online public services of more difficult and pressuring. Most cases of overdue birth registration for children born before July 1, 2021 are returned by the identification number system of the Ministry of Public Security with an error in the date of birth, unabling the issue of a personal identification number. These cases may be due to the fact that citizens have entered the household registration of their children before registering the birth or have answered the population census form of the police branch, leading to some cases having personal identification numbers in the population database of the Ministry of Public Security), and some cases do not have personal identification numbers.

For these cases, although there is no specific guidance document, the Department of Information Technology - Ministry of Justice has guided localities to do the following:

(1) The civil status - judicial officer asks citizens if they have registered the household registration book for their children or have ever answered the police ballot that resulted in the child having an identification number. If yes, then go to the police station to confirm the identification number.

(2) If you have not done both, the civil status - judicial officer shall follow these 4 steps:

+ Step 1: Issuing a birth certificate without an identification number and carrying out import procedures for the child

+ Step 2: Citizens go to import for children or judicial officers transfer to the police to actively import and issue identification numbers.

+ Step 3: Commune-level police carry out import procedures and issue identification number certifications for children.

+ Step 4: Based on the identification number confirmation, the judicial and civil status officer shall additionally record the identification number in the birth registration book, birth certificate and software.

However, commune-level officials complained that due to the lack of official coordination documents and instructions from the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Justice, the implementation is difficult and confusing. There are schools that transfer dossiers to the commune police to carry out importing children's household registration in order to be issued with a confirmation of the identification number, which is not done by police officers. This not only causes difficulties for citizens in the process of registering a child's birth, but also prolongs the time for handling inter-administrative procedures. Not only that, but it also affects the synchronization and sharing of data between the National Population Database and the Civil Status Database.

c. Citizens' perspective through interviews

Interviewing some citizens who came to transact administrative procedures in surveyed areas, they said that they have not performed online public services in general and connected the "3 in 1" procedure in particular.

Mr. Dung (male, 25 years old, Phuong Lam ward, Hoa Binh city) said: "*I have heard about online public services but have not done it. Today I went to Phuong Lam Ward People's Committee to make a certificate of marital status. When I came here, there was no official to introduce or guide this procedure on the online public service portal. I was only required to provide identification to submit with the hand-filled declarations issued by the officer*".

Ms. Bui Thi Hon (female, 38 years old, Ong hamlet, Suoi Hoa commune, Tan Lac district) shared: "*I have heard about online public services. I use a smartphone but mainly access Facebook, Zalo to update news. I can't access any information related to online administrative procedures*". When introduced to online public services, Ms. Hon said that she is willing to do it because it saves a lot of time and doesn't have to wait as long as working directly at the Commune People's Committee.

Ms. Bui Thi Le (female, 18 years old, Ong village, Suoi Hoa commune, Tan Lac district) also said: "*I have not heard of online public services. Today I went to the Commune People's Committee to authenticate my personal resume to apply for a job. This is the first time I go to the Commune People's Committee to transact administrative procedures*".

2.3.5. Main Causes

a. General conditions

Hoa Binh is a mountainous province with a socio-economic starting point; the level of ownership of information and telecommunications equipment such as networked computers and smartphones is still low. The education level and conditions for accessing and applying information technology of the citizens, especially in Region III communes of the province, are still limited. Citizens, officials, and civil servants are still afraid when interacting with innovation, especially in remote areas. This is the general context affecting the implementation of online public services.

b. Conditions of human resources and technical and technological infrastructure

IT infrastructure in some areas of the province is not good. In Hoa Binh province, there are a number of hamlets and villages that are in "recessed" areas (no internet available). The investment in infrastructure is very expensive, but the economic efficiency is not high because there are few transactions. The province is considering whether to invest or rent (technical infrastructure) because investment in technical infrastructure is very expensive, the efficiency of use is not high, and the rental price may or may not be stable over the years. The equipment for the implementation of online public services in some units, localities, and commune-level police units is still lacking with low configuration affecting the work. Especially, in the current period of urgent cleaning of residential data, identification, and electronic authentication, the transmission is sometimes interrupted. Some electronic equipment is damaged without replacement and must wait for repair, affecting residence registration in general, permanent residence registration in particular, and the administrative procedures progress for citizens.

Hoa Binh lacks personnel with expertise in security, and skills in managing and operating the local online public service provision system. The arrangement of cadres and civil servants working at the one-stop shop as well as directly serving the digital transformation process and providing information services must now comply with the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants 2008 and other regulatory documents. Violate other relevant laws, implement the Party's policy on renewal, streamline the organizational structure, and operate effectively and efficiently. The capacity of the contingent of cadres and civil servants in charge of information technology has not yet met the requirements, and a part of them has not been aware of improving and renovating working methods and applying information technology to improve the efficiency of their work. According to the test, the information technology level of civil servants has not kept up with the requirements of the job. In addition to dealing with direct administrative procedures and public services, they also have to complete other professional and political tasks while the salary is low and there is a lack of benefits and other incentive mechanisms. There is also a lack of machinery and equipment, or the working conditions of the equipment are not good, making cadres and civil servants overloaded with work.

A small number of civil servants have not improved or renewed their working methods, and the facilities are not guaranteed, especially in the stage of implementing the digitization of

records and papers, the results of handling administrative procedures and the application of information technology to serve people and businesses. There is a shortage of staff in charge of registration and residence management, and their information technology skills are still limited.

Skills training for the implementation of online public services is still limited because the content and training methods themselves do not guarantee the development of mature and up-to-date skills for users, including staff of civil servants.

c. Conditions for connecting databases, processes and procedures are not suitable for the digital environment, online service portal interface

In the list of compulsory online public services in 2021 according to Decision No. 406/QD-TTg dated March 22, 2021 of the Prime Minister, stipulating the interconnection of birth registration, permanent residence registration, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old at level 4, the Ministry of Justice assumes the prime responsibility for restructuring the process, building an interconnected online public service delivery system; The Ministry of Public Security shall coordinate in implementing the electronic communication process; assume the prime responsibility for organizing the implementation of electronic permanent residence registration in the inter-connected process; the Vietnam Social Insurance Agency shall coordinate in implementing the electronic communication process; assume the prime responsibility for organizing the implementation of the issuance of health insurance cards in the electronic communication process; and the People's Committees of the provinces organize the implementation based on the guidance of the Ministry of Justice; implementation time in the third quarter of 2021. By January 2022, the above work will be assigned to the Government Office to assume the prime responsibility and the Ministry of Public Security to coordinate implementation (Project 06)[31].

However, so far the ministries have not completed their work, so the provinces do not have a basis to do so. Currently, Hoa Binh still implements the "3-in-1" procedure according to the previous regulations, and the public service is only at level 3 and tries to digitize each part. In fact, most of the transactions arising today are only "2 in 1" between the judiciary and social insurance. Some stages are still overlapping, scattered, and not connected because of the requirement to keep paper records in addition to electronic ones, the shared data warehouse is incomplete, some data is not connected, central agencies lack cooperation in building integrated software, etc.

The digitization of records, the results of handling administrative procedures, have basically not met the requirements of the Government Office. Hoa Binh province has not been able to connect to the national database on population and the system of identification. The electronic authentication of the Ministry of Public Security leads to many difficulties in

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[31] Prime Minister (2022). Decision No. 06/QD-TTg dated January 6, 2022 Approving the project to develop the application of population data, identification and authentication for national digital transformation in the period of 2022 - 2025, with a vision to 2030.

identifying individuals and building an electronic data management warehouse according to regulations.

The interface for performing online public administrative procedures is currently not user-friendly. Although in some departments that receive and return results, there are billboards guiding the online public administrative procedures, consulting, support, and even "replacement" desks. However, the Direct interaction on the network is not friendly and will not encourage users to do public administrative procedures online.

<u>d. Citizens' awareness and habit of handling administrative procedures</u>

Online public service is a relatively new field, so most people still have the habit of performing administrative procedures directly. Efforts to propagate and mobilize people to perform online public services, despite their best efforts, when the implementation is relatively complicated, are difficult. Most families of young people go to work during office hours and the people who go to do it are their parents, mother, grandfather, or grandmother, who have little understanding of this issue, so the implementation is difficult. Moreover, even with instructions, they sometimes go to do administrative procedures but do not practice often, so it is easy to forget accounts and operations.

Propaganda and mobilization of people to participate in online application submission when carrying out administrative procedures on the National Public Service Portal has been carried out regularly, but the effectiveness is not high because some people do not understand the requirements, benefits of public services, how to do it, account registration, the complicated application process, especially administrative procedures that declare many forms and declaration forms (such as land administration), and the implementation of information declaration on information technology devices is still difficult.

Regarding the use of public services when registering for permanent residence, this is a fairly new form. When it comes to implementation, it requires an internet connection, a computer, or a smartphone with relatively good configuration, so it is difficult for many citizens to perform. Most citizens do not approach, learn, know how to do, nor how to create an account on the National Public Service Portal... so many people choose to submit dossiers directly at the police office. Moreover, some people are concerned about information security when using online public services, so they want to apply directly at state agencies.

A portion of the people are rural laborers, living in remote areas with many difficulties, and conditions for accessing and using information technology devices (computers, smartphones, computers, etc.) are still limited, so it is difficult to register an account on the National Public Service Portal as well as to apply online. People want to do it directly at the Receiving and Returning Department because the distance from home to the office is close and convenient, so the need for online public services has not become urgent.

The community digital transformation teams have been established in many communes but have not yet brought into full play its effects. It will take time to review and evaluate these activities in the coming time.

e. Training for commune officials, coordination among authorities at all levels in Hoa Binh province to support commune officials in performing online public services

Although commune-level judicial officers have been trained by the Department of Information and Communications, many of them have not yet fully understood the contents and manipulations of implementing online public services. Their workload, especially those of the Justice Department, is high, making it difficult to arrange training time. The coordination mechanism between authorities at all levels in Hoa Binh province to support the commune-level judicial officers in performing the tasks of implementing online public services still has not been good. Judicial officers at commune-level administrative offices have both been under pressure to assign quotas for the number of online dossiers from their superiors and pressure to deal with work on time from the people while there are many overlapping legal documents. Obviously, some officials are not familiar with how to do online procedures without timely guidance.

III. CONCLUSIONS, SOLUTIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Conclusions

Building an e-government and digital government is one of the key contents of the National Digital Transformation Program to 2025, with a vision for 2030 and the State Administration Reform Master Program for the 2021-2030 period. However, how the online public services provided by the authorities at all levels must become suitable with the requirements, aspirations, and conditions of the people, helping them to easily access and exploit utilities requires a lot of effort, determination, investment, and change of mind of the authorities as service providers and citizens as "customers" and beneficiaries.

The actual research in Soc Trang province shows that the leaders of the province, district, specialized agencies advising, and communes have made efforts and devoted much attention and resources to gradually improve the efficiency of serving citizens and businesses by improving the quality of online public services. However, the online information service for permanent residency registration and "3 in 1" procedures has only been implemented at level 3 with most of the online dossiers done by officials. The rate of people knowing, interested in, and using online public services for these two procedures is still low.

Through fieldwork, the provision and enhancement of accessibility of online public services in Soc Trang province remain challenging. In which, the most challenging is still the inadequacy, cumbersome and complicated implementation of the two groups of procedures in both online and in-person forms. Next is the lack of synchronization between electronic platforms and population databases provided by Ministries related to the "3 in 1" procedure. Especially, the commune one-stop-shop lacks the necessary equipment to meet the needs of

handling administrative procedures in the electronic environment. Objective factors related to users include difficult economic conditions, many population groups (including ethnic minorities), lack of access to Internet devices, unfamiliarity with online administrative services, and not yet being fluent in reading and writing Vietnamese.

However, there is a lot of room for favorable and positive factors for breakthroughs, such as the advantage of the "later", consensus, and high political determination of leaders of provinces and districts. The improvement of the socio-economic appearance of Soc Trang in recent years or the religious and cultural diversity itself can be a factor that can significantly help solve the above difficulties.

According to the report, Quang Tri has achieved achievements in implementing online public services for many administrative procedures at levels 3 and 4. These significant results mark the transition from in-person to online public services in the current national digital transformation program.

However, the research team's survey data in Quang Tri on online public services at levels 3 and 4 for two groups of administrative procedures carried out at the commune level including permanent residence registration and inter "3 in 1" procedure shows that there are many reasons, both subjective and objective from the government and citizens' side, that still make citizens' access to online public services difficult.

Localities in the province have many difficulties that need to be overcome in order to successfully implement the goals towards digitization of these two online public administrative services. Until now, in the localities where the research team studied, these two procedures have only been implemented online at level 3, but all are done by officials and there are no dossiers arising from the citizens. The outdated equipment, and slow and unstable internet connection at the one-stop shop are also difficulties for commune-level officials. In fact, difficulties with computer equipment, smartphones, and internet connection at home make the rate of citizens knowing and interested in performing these two procedures online is still very low.

Digital transformation is an inevitable trend. The authorities and officials at all levels have been making great efforts to make online public services bring many benefits to citizens. However, this process is putting more pressure on officials because there are many stages that still have to be done directly (writing on dossier receiving and returning books, helping citizens declare information forms, archival records…). For ethnic minorities in Quang Tri, accessing online public services is extremely difficult or even impossible at this time.

Although leaders at all levels of Hoa Binh province have made efforts, been determined, and devoted much attention and investment resources to gradually improve the efficiency of serving people and businesses through improving the quality of online public services in many fields, online public services for registration of permanent residence and inter-administrative procedures "3 in 1" have only been implemented at level 3 and the percentage of people who understand, care about and use such services for two procedures is also very low.

The difficulties and inadequacies in providing online public services in Hoa Binh province come from many causes, both objective and subjective. In which, the most prominent are the difficulty of investing in telecommunication infrastructure in the mountainous province with financial difficulties, the habit of transacting direct services of citizens is not easy to change overnight, equipment used for online public services, transmission problems, cleaning and data connection between agencies, consistency and synchronization in documents from ministries, professional qualifications of officials, the issue of data security, and people's information. These difficulties and inadequacies are the main reasons make efforts to deploy online public administrative services in Hoa Binh province have not achieved the desired implementation results.

3.2. Key Solutions for Each Province

3.2.1 Soc Trang Province

a. Improving the online public service infrastructure to gradually improve e-government, towards building digital government

(1) The Soc Trang government needs to remove difficulties and obstacles, especially the progress of approving the procurement list, the province's current centralized bidding to prioritize the purchasing approval and allocation of equipment in order to speed up the process of modernizing the provincial administration, improving the quality of the application of online public services; priority should be given to disadvantaged, underdeveloped, remote areas with a large number of ethnic minorities.

(2) The Department of Information and Communications advises the Provincial People's Committee, and provides professional and technical guidance to the People's Committees of districts and communes to clearly identify the necessary components in establishing and implementing investment, improvement, and upgrade province's infrastructure plan in creating a synchronous, systematic and smooth manner with the national infrastructure system in the coming time. It should be focused on four important groups of infrastructure, including: (i) database infrastructure; (ii) application infrastructure; (iii) connection infrastructure; and (iv) equipment infrastructure.

(3) All levels of government from the provincial to the commune level need to have a mechanism for regular maintenance of the information technology system to serve the administrative management and provision of online province's public services.

(4) The Department of Information and Communications should have integrated, multitasking and user-friendliness designation for the application "Citizens of Soc Trang" which is being continued to be developed by the province. It is necessary to integrate this app with the Provincial Public Service Portal, the "Soc Trang Smart City" application, the "Smart Radio" model, and other online platforms being operated in the province, avoiding the dispersing of input resources. The application "Citizens of Soc Trang" needs to be designed to be more citizen-friendly, paying attention to the demographic characteristics of the province's

disadvantaged social groups (elderly, low-educated, ethnic minorities, etc.) and integrating more hotlines for advice, guidance, and answer questions operating 24/7 based on the self-reception and feedback of the "operator" who is artificial intelligence (AI).

Media publications on administrative reform, utilities, approaches, and use of online public services should be integrated right into this application with various forms such as video clips, infographics, diagrams and illustrations. Concise, easy to understand, intuitive and multi-language (Vietnamese, Khmer, etc.). The access and search for administrative procedures and related information can be done by typing characters or through AI voice recognition applications.

In addition, in order for the application of "Citizens of Soc Trang" to soon be piloted and deployed on a mass scale, the Department of Information and Communications needs to complete the document and consult relevant agencies on the apparatus structure, structure, and operation of this platform.

b. Solutions to improve step by step the propagation and dissemination of traditional services among the people, especially ethnic minorities

(1) Research, pilot, and gradually replicate the model of "Soc Trang pagoda/church sites mutually support digital transformation" together with digital transformation support points at the current commune/ward People's Committee. Soc Trang has about 167 Southern and Northern Buddhist temples, Chinese pagodas, and dozens of viharas, monasteries, and monasteries[32]. Each month, pagodas in Soc Trang usually have 2-3 religious activities at these locations, so the political system at all levels, especially the grassroots level, can be integrated through religious dignitaries and reputable people in the community to organize propaganda and training sessions on digital transformation and digital government, as well as on utilities, procedures, ways to access and use online public services and even support to solve administrative procedures but in an online form for people through these activities.

In addition, places of religious activities can install a number of slogans, instruction boards, and QR codes to link to suitable portals and websites, serving to teach, explain and support people to perform online public services when needed (for example, the application "Citizens of Soc Trang").

(2) Research, pilot, build and proceed to deploy the communication model "Soc Trang students, students and teachers with digital transformation" towards the goal under the direction of the Prime Minister "each family must have at least 01 person who can use online public services". Instead of focusing on mass communication, functional agencies and authorities at all levels can set up clubs and teams to coordinate with the "community digital technology group" to gather, conduct activities, and organize meetings, talks, contests, etc., to

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[32] Song Le (2022), "Buddhism Soc Trang - a place to unite religious beliefs and human values", Soc Trang Newspaper online, https://www.baosoctrang.org.vn/dai-doan-ket/phat-giao-soc-trang-noi-gan-ket-niem-tin-ton-giao-va-gia-tri-nhan-van-57233.html

communicate about digital transformation and digital government; about utilities, processes, procedures, methods of accessing and using online public services for young, educated, and skilled people in information technology (students, teachers, lecturers) colleges in the province. These people will be propagandists, and trainers for their families, community and people where they reside.

(3) Upgrading and replicating the model of "Smart Radio & Television" that integrates propaganda on benefits and thereby encourages people to use public services, especially people in rural, remote areas, and ethnic minority areas.

Currently, some communes have implemented the "Smart Radio" model such as Soc Trang City with a radio voice in three regions and in Vietnamese and Khmer. The Department of Information and Communications is also having a project to strongly develop this model and gradually expand it to other communes/wards in the province. Therefore, in the coming time, it is necessary to study to develop the organization, operation, technical plans, and broadcast content, including content on the readiness and utility of the online public services, and soon to pilot.

Communes also need to take advantage of the strengths of social media such as Facebook, Zalo, and TikTok to make propaganda content faster and more accessible to people, especially youth groups to gradually change awareness and habit of using online public services.

(4) Diversify publications, forms of propaganda, channels and media.

- *About design:* Propaganda publications need eye-catching, concise, easy-to-see, easy-to-follow, and easy-to-understand designs such as leaflets, notices with QR-Code, video clips with vivid images of ethnic groups in the province, infographics, pocket manuals on online public services (including e-books, audiobooks), information bags stating the shortened process of implementing a number of administrative procedures with proportionality top performers, listing these shortened processes online and in person.

- *In terms of form:* Combining personal communication, group communication, mass media (via radio, television, province's smart communication models, etc.) and social media. In addition, it is possible to set up, deploy and connect social media channels by residential groups, villages and hamlets.

Publications and forms of communication (radio, television, leaflets, audiobooks) should take into account social characteristics such as age, education, and rural/urban. In particular, in areas with a large number of ethnic minorities, publications need to include the local language in writing or in the native language (ethnic language and Vietnamese).

In addition, the coordination with the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs, the Committee for Religion at the provincial level, and the district management agency for ethnicity and religion to research and develop the content, form, and propaganda products that are psychologically characteristic and culturally appropriate of ethnic and religious communities also need to be paid attention to in the coming time.

<u>c. Solutions to improve awareness, attitude and capacity, management skills, and operation of the local online public service delivery system</u>

(1) It is necessary to seriously certificate some officials, including leaders of some districts, communes/wards, and civil servants who directly serve the people but have an indifferent attitude, backtrack, lack determination, and have not taken the initiative to overcome difficulties and gradually improve online public service provision. Thereby gradually overcoming the situation that the province is "hot" with high determination, but the closer to the grassroots, the more "cold", lack of closeness" in implementing and improving the quality of online public services.

On the contrary, the provincial and district levels also need to look at the actual working conditions of commune-level officials as well as the geographical conditions and socio-economic development of each commune to allocate targets and investment funds in upgrading infrastructure for commune's online public services, avoiding pressure to emulate achievements leading to false reporting.

(2) To overcome the shortage of specialized information technology personnel, the competent authorities of the province, district and commune can consider the following solutions:

- The People's Councils at all levels consider, according to their competence, transferring payrolls or balancing the budget within the framework prescribed by law to strengthen specialized personnel in information technology, and digital transformation at a one-stop shop in the commune/ward.

- Having a mechanism to sign labor contracts to provide consulting services and support to upgrade and improve the application of online public services for commune authorities, instead of recruiting permanent staff.

- On-the-job training and retraining for officials at one-stop shops on knowledge and skills of digital transformation, information technology application, and online public service, paying attention to calculating support costs and incentives appropriate for personnel doing this work at the grassroots level.

 - Having a mechanism to attract and use high-quality human resources in information technology for the province with reasonable remuneration.

(3) Continue to innovate contents, models, and methods of organizing training courses on digital transformation, online information services, and information security skills for officials at all levels, in which, attention should be paid to the form of class organization suitable to the characteristics of the learners being officials or members of the Community Digital Transformation Support Team, students, teachers, elderly and young people by "hands-on work", to ensure efficiency. The principle of "1+1+1" can be applied, meaning that a person who is trained should try to have a practical and appropriate application to solve problems for the current work of the commune and is responsible for introducing and retraining another person.

The training needs to be associated with practice, serious assessment of learning results, close to the actual work; have a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of applying knowledge and trained skills into the commune's reality of the person sent to study periodically.

In addition, the training needs to integrate the propaganda of guidelines, viewpoints, and policies on digital transformation and administrative reform to improve the learners' awareness and behavior.

(4) Redesigning the Soc Trang's Public Service Portal to ensure compatibility with the National Public Service Portal and the Public Service Portal of the Ministry of Public Security, while ensuring ease of use and accessibility for all people. For ethnic minorities, there should be instructions in short films (video clips) with images and spoken or written language of the people. It is recommended to integrate existing or soon-to-be-implemented applications (such as the "Soc Trang Citizen" application) on the interface of the Soc Trang Provincial Public Service Portal. The province can refer to the public service portal model of Thua Thien Hue province.

d. Solutions to solve current financial difficulties to modernize local administration and improve the quality of online public service provision

(1) Connecting and proceeding to sign cooperation agreements, supporting the transfer of experience, application of information technology, digital technology, and e-governance with advantageous provinces, research institutes, education institutions, and businesses with strengths in this field:

- In terms of learning modern governance models and building smart cities, Soc Trang can study experiences through signing cooperation agreements with Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Duong (Southern region), Quang Ninh (Northern region) or Da Nang (Central region).

- Mobilizing wisdom, transferring management methods, and applying advanced digital technology (even at Soc Trang's own order) for training institutions and research institutes: Ho Chi Minh City Research and Development Institute, Ho Chi Minh City National University (University of Natural Sciences, University of Science and Technology, University of Information Technology, etc.).

- Support to build digital infrastructure from the information technology business such as Viettel, FPT, VNPT, etc.

The signing model of the Socio-economic Development Cooperation Program, in which digital transformation and modern governance, has been successfully implemented from the practice of linking Tay Ninh, Dong Nai, Binh Duong, Binh Phuoc, and Long An with Ho Chi Minh City National University, VNPT Group, and Viettel Group are also suggestions for the province.

(2) In addition to saving and balancing expenditures, adjusting the annual development investment spending structure from the provincial and local budgets to invest in improving

access and quality of supply online public services, Soc Trang should pay attention to the maximum use of resources, mechanisms and legal corridors allocated and authorized by the Central Government in three current national target programs including: (i) National Target Program on new rural construction; (ii) National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction; and (iii) National Target Program on socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas.

(3) Mobilizing socialization resources from businesses and investors in the province to support IT equipment for poor communes. Specifically, encourage the business community to contribute sets of computers, scanners as well as equipment upgrade and repair services to communes that do not have enough IT equipment at the one-stop shop.

<u>e. Some other specific solutions</u>

(1) The People's Council and People's Committee of Soc Trang province need to arrange the organizational apparatus, payroll, and employment positions aiming at increasing human resources capable of digital transformation, information technology to support the commune level to modernize the administration and improve the people's ability to access and use online public services. It is also necessary to have forms of material support and encouragement (increase allowances) for officials in charge, directly related to the provision of online public services and support for digital transformation at the commune/ward level in the province. While waiting for these decisions, the Commune People's Committee needs to have a flexible mechanism such as hiring and contracting consultants from businesses and experts.

(2) It is necessary to clearly define the roadmap, goals, and specific steps for digital transformation and improvement of the provision of online digital services to the people. In the implementation, it is necessary to study specifically on the actual approach and use of the people and disadvantaged groups, thereby finding ways to deploy flexibly, actively, and creatively in the process of digitizing public administrative services. Combining the implementation of direct and online public services to ensure that all people, especially ethnic minorities who do not know Vietnamese, the elderly, and people with disabilities easily access services. In particular, it is necessary to avoid formality and haste, and instead follow the imposed achievement targets, pay attention to doing the real thing, and avoid creating too much "double" pressure for officials.

(3) Gradually strengthen the organization and operation regulations, and equip funds and tools for the province's community digital transformation support teams to operate efficiently. In which, it is necessary to pay attention to the reasonable number, structure, and quality of the staff of the Community Digital Transformation Support Team.

(4) Consider building and deploying the model of a "mobile public service team" in the province, especially giving priority to sending the team to people in remote, isolated and ethnic minority areas to both support handling administrative procedures, while propagating, mobilizing and guiding people in this area to step by step change their awareness, access and use of online public services.

3.2.2 Quang Tri Province

In this section, the study team proposes some short-term and medium-term solutions for governments at all levels of Quang Tri in order to effectively implement programs and plans developing e-government, digital government, and digital transformation in the public sector towards 2025 according to Decision No. 749/QD-TTg dated June 3rd/ 2020 of the Prime Minister.

In order for Quang Tri citizens to use online public services at levels 3 and 4 and strive for a roadmap to 2025, all the citizens of the province will use online public services to do "3 in 1" procedures for children under 6 years old and administrative procedures related to granting permanent residence registration to citizens is a reasonable and feasible policy. The research team proposes the following solutions:

First, prioritize investment in the technical infrastructure of online public administration. The Quang Tri government needs to remove difficulties and obstacles, and prioritize spending on equipment procurement for the commune-level one-stop shop in order to speed up the process of administrative modernization and improve the quality of people-centered-online public services. The province should pay special attention to prioritizing difficult and underdeveloped areas, remote areas, and areas with a large number of ethnic minorities. In the context of budget difficulties, it is necessary to invest with focus, prioritize some communes for investment, then summarize and draw experience to invest in the following localities more effectively.

Second, redesign the page https://dichvucong.quangtri.gov.vn in a user-friendly manner. Ensuring personal information security for citizens is necessary but designing too many steps to perform online public services will make it difficult for citizens. Promote "digitization" of public administrative services instead of just "electronization" through photos and pdfs dossiers, so that people can easily use them, without having to use cameras, scanners, and photocopies when transacting administrative procedures online. One of the models that can be learned is the online public service portal of Thua Thien - Hue province.

Third, encourage citizens to perform online public services. Commune-level units can use 1-2 days a week to provide online public services without direct public services for people to get acquainted.

Fourth, give citizens more options when paying fees. In the context that some ethnic minorities do not have bank accounts or smartphones, the Department of Information and Communications can design online public services so that citizens can pay fees by phone charges deducted. Citizens when applying online will be given a dossier number, then, when paying the fee, people send a message to a number of switchboards provided by the government with a certain syntax, which includes information about the application code and the amount to be paid, and then it will be transferred to the government agency and charged to the customer's phone bill.

Fifth, promote propaganda and information on online public services to citizens through traditional and modern communication channels such as the commune/ward loudspeaker, residential meetings; television (daily news); portal of commune/district/province, videos, clips on how to use the portal of online public services; social networking channels such as Facebook, Zalo (OA), Youtube; leaflets; banners in visible places. Develop and upload to the province's online public service portal short videos on how to use online public service portal with voices of ethnic minorities.

Sixth, promote well the role of the "Community Digital Technology Team" by attracting educated youth to participate in these teams' activities in supporting citizens to perform public services in villages and hamlets.

Seventh, provide mobile online public services by bringing computers, scanners, and wifi/3G/4G transmitters to villages, remote and isolated villages, and areas without Internet coverage, 3G, and 4G. The Community Digital Technology Team then guides and helps citizens carry out online public procedures.

Eighth, deploying online public services suitable to the conditions of each population group. Everyone should not be required to perform public services online right away. The implementation of online public services should give priority to urban populations with better economic conditions and higher qualifications. For the population group with more difficult economic conditions and lower qualifications, it is necessary to deploy a "mobile one-stop service". Periodically, civil servants come to the village, solve administrative procedures for villagers, or promote the role of the community digital technology team, and those who have smartphones and are trained in online public services come to help villagers do them at home.

3.2.3. Hoa Binh Province

The merger of administrative units of the province in recent times has made the distance from the house to the headquarters of the Commune People's Committee longer, and the new administrative apparatus with the same payroll has to handle more work than before. This is also the motivation to ask officials and citizens to take advantage of the superiority of online public services. Although Hoa Binh is a province with a large number of ethnic minorities, with the Muong people accounting for over 64% of the province's population, the majority of people can use Vietnamese quite fluently, so the language is not the main barrier in implementing online public services. In order to improve the effectiveness of online public services and serve citizens, especially the ethnic minorities in the province, it is necessary to:

a. Research and develop a roadmap to deploy online public services for citizens

The province needs to clearly define the roadmap, goals, and specific steps in the digital transformation and provision of online public services. In the process of implementation, it is necessary to study the actual approach and use of citizens, especially ethnic minorities, people in remote and isolated areas, the poor, people with low educational attainment, people with disabilities, people who are not fluent in Vietnamese… from these, proposing a flexible,

proactive and creative way to implement digital transformation and provide online public services.

In order to improve the efficiency of implementing online public administrative services in Hoa Binh province, it is necessary to demonstrate in reality to citizens and businesses the clear benefits and convenience of this service. This requires great efforts from the authorities at all levels and the investment of resources from the central government and the synchronization and consistency of policies.

Integrating policies, taking full advantage of resources from other policies and programs (such as the National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction, New Rural areas, Socio-economic development in ethnic minority areas; ethnic minorities and mountainous areas…) support resources for the development of online public services in disadvantaged communes in the province.

Combine in-person and online public service delivery to ensure convenient service access for all. Avoid "achievement disease", formality, haste, need to do substantive, make sure and effective in each stage; avoid putting too much pressure on officials and civil servants.

<u>b. Increase resources, human resources, improve information technology infrastructure</u>

It is necessary to have a mechanism to remove difficulties and obstacles in the progress of approving the procurement list and organizing the current centralized bidding; giving priority to difficult, underdeveloped, and remote areas with a large number of ethnic minorities. Having a mechanism for regular maintenance of the information technology system in service of administrative management and provision of online public services throughout the province.

Mobilize from socialization sources to equip the online public service departments and commune police to achieve 3-4 sets of computers/commune or ward. This is so that citizens, especially young people, do it themselves, and they guide, propagate and disseminate to family members how to use it.

Clearly identify the necessary components when formulating and implementing investment plans, improving and upgrading the province's infrastructure in a synchronous, systematic, and smooth manner with the national infrastructure system in the coming time aiming at applying IT and moving towards digitization of public administrative services, in which focusing on 4 important infrastructure groups including: (i) database infrastructure; (ii) application infrastructure; (iii) connection infrastructure; and, (iv) equipment infrastructure.

Arrange and organize apparatus, payroll and employment positions towards rationally increasing human resources capable of digital transformation and information technology to support communes in modernizing the administrative system, improving their ability to access and use online public services. In the meantime, these agencies need to have flexible mechanisms such as hiring, signing consulting contracts from businesses, external experts, etc., and soon find the form of material support and encouragement (increase in expenses) for civil servants in charge, directly related to providing online public services, supporting the digital

transformation of communes/wards in the province.

On-the-job training, coaching, and retraining for civil servants in the commune-level one-stop shop on digital transformation knowledge and skills, information technology application, and online public services, paying attention to the calculation of appropriate support costs and incentives for personnel doing this work at the grassroot. Next, focus resources on training and guiding each residential cluster, then each family has at least 1 person who is proficient in online public services. These individuals are an important nucleus to help expand the number of people who are proficient in and perform online public services.

Having a mechanism to encourage material and spiritual support for public officials with high working intensity, for example, Justice officials and commune/ward police, in performing online public services.

<u>c. Improve the effectiveness of propaganda, advocacy and skill training</u>

In front of administrative offices at all levels, it is necessary to install a number of slogans, instruction boards, scanning QR codes linking to necessary portals and websites, serving to learn and answer questions and support people to perform online public services when needed.

Renovate the contents, models, and methods of training courses on digital transformation, online public services, and information security skills for officials at all levels. In which, attention should be paid to the form of class organization suitable to the characteristics of the subjects being cadres, civil servants or members of the Community Digital Transformation Support Team, students, teachers, seniors, and young people towards "hands-on work", to make sure they can master the manipulations and use it right away.

Take advantage of the strengths of social media on the Internet such as Facebook, Zalo, and TikTok to bring faster and more accessible propaganda content to people, especially youth groups and gradually change awareness and habit of using online public services.

<u>d. User-friendly engineering and technology</u>

Redesigned the interface of the province's online public service portal to be simple and friendly to users of all levels so that citizens and businesses can easily manipulate and perform online public services when needed. Officials, when instructing people, need to pay attention to the questions and problems that people often ask for statistics, then they can adjust the interface or assemble into a set of available answers/instructions so when citizens wonder or don't understand they can see.

In the future, if the province plans to build an application of "smart citizens or digital citizens", besides the function of receiving and reflecting citizens' information, it is necessary to ensure the ability to integrate and connect with the province's administrative procedure information system so that people can carry out administrative procedures in a simple way (the function of performing essential public administrative procedures as requirements and objectives of the Scheme 06). Also, officials are required to set up accounts on the national public service and electronic identification accounts issued by the Ministry of Public Security (VNeID).

Along with the advice and support of officials, it is necessary to consider the mechanism of signing labor contracts, consulting contracts, and support and improve the application of online public services for commune authorities instead of recruiting permanent staff.

Each commune regulates a fixed day in the week and widely informs citizens that it is the date of performing the online public services so that people are aware and guided to familiarize themselves with this type of service.

The province also considers building and deploying the model of a "mobile public service team" in the province, especially giving priority to sending the team to citizens in remote areas and ethnic minorities to both assist in handling administrative procedures, while propagating, mobilizing, and guiding people step-by-step to change their awareness, access and use of online public services.

3.3. Policy Recommendations to Central Agencies

In the process of developing policies, programs, and projects on digital transformation, online digital services, administrative reform, and localities should pay attention to the principles of going from the ground up, mobilizing the participation of stakeholders, and being evidence-based. This means that the way to deploy online public services needs to derive from the participation of all stakeholders, especially from the actual approach and use of the people, disadvantaged groups in society, and businesses, especially from the grassroots level, the closest level to the people, avoiding subjectivity or lack of scientific and practical evidence for proposing policies on this content.

3.3.1. For the National Assembly

- Consider revising relevant provisions in the Law on Civil Status and relevant legal documents such as Decree No. 87/2020/ND-CP dated July 28, 2020 on the electronic civil status database and online civil status registration with the provisions that the requester must be present in person at the civil status registration office when doing and receiving the results of the procedure. Narrowing the scope of civil status procedures that are required to be done directly in-person. Using personal identification numbers to avoid troubles and travel times for people and creating favorable conditions to promote online public services.

- Building a legal framework soon such as the Law on Electronic Transactions 2005 (amended) on electronic authentication for documents that have been issued by competent authorities to minimize the number of documents to be submitted for each management process and procedure on the National Public Service Portal and the Provincial Public Service Portal.

3.3.2. For the Government and Relevant Ministries

- The Government and central agencies need to review and resolutely ensure implementation on schedule according to the list of integrated online public services, provided on the national public service portal under Decision No. 406/QD-TTg in 2021, Decision 422/QD-TTg in 2022 and especially Decision No. 06/QD-TTg in 2022 of the Prime Minister

approving the Scheme to develop the application of data on population, identification and electronic authentication for national digital transformation in the period of 2022 - 2025, vision to 2030. In this project, the guiding point of view affirms that *the national population database, electronic identification and authentication are the fundamental basis for digital transformation in the way of life, work and production methods based on digital technologies.*

- The Government commands the Government Office and the Ministry of Information and Communications to consider and upgrade the network system of the National Public Service Portal to meet the fast and successful submission of applications. Simplify account registration, online application submission, and payment of fees and charges (if any) on the National Public Service Portal so that citizens can easily access it, aiming at improving the efficiency of online public service for the people of the country in general and in the locality in particular.

- Basing on Decree No. 42/2022/ND-CP dated June 24, 2022, the Ministry of Information and Communications urgently develops and issues guiding documents on minimum standards for interface design of provincial service portals, ensuring user-centered, user-friendly, accessible, and easy-to-use standards that take into account specific user groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, the elderly and people with disabilities); and regularly review the compliance of local authorities at all levels.

- Administrative procedures are largely issued by the central level, so central agencies are responsible for restructuring these procedures to put them into operation in a digital environment, and then guide the local government to implement them uniformly. Priority should be given to the immediate implementation of online public services directly related to people's lives; avoid deploying too many unnecessary online public services at once, wasting resources, and not solving the most urgent needs of citizens and businesses.

- The Government needs to request ministries related to each group of public administrative procedures and online public services to urgently build synchronous, interconnected software or a common platform; take the personal identity code as the user profile root; take the electronic signature attached to the personal identity code of officials responsible for approval of the dossier (electronic authentication), minimizing the use of paper and electronic copies but at the same information or too much duplicate information.

- Integrating policies, taking advantage of resources from other policies and programs (such as the National Target Program on Sustainable Poverty Reduction, New Rural Areas, and Socio-economic development in ethnic minority and mountainous areas) to support resources for the development of online public services in disadvantaged areas.

- It is necessary to emphasize the actual efficiency and avoid taking the quota of quantity that is formalistic. There are many online public services without any transactions in a year, which need to be adjusted or eliminated to avoid unnecessary pressure on localities. The implementation of online public services is a process, and it is necessary to have a roadmap

for each stage and take into account the socio-economic characteristics of each locality to assign online public service targets appropriately and effectively. In avoiding "achievement obsession" in online public service provision, it is necessary to pay attention to the actual effectiveness and feasibility in each stage.

3.3.3. For the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Security in relation to the "3-in-1" joint administrative service

- Completing the mechanism for sharing the national database of the population between the Ministry of Public Security and other ministries and branches, in which the Ministry of Justice links with the electronic civil status database, according to Decision 06/QD-TTg of the Prime Minister.

- Integration and interconnection, ensuring the same information fields in the forms including birth registration declaration, participation declaration, adjustment of information about social insurance, health insurance, or digital birth registration books for children on the basis of effectively exploiting the national database of the population that has been connected nationwide; minimize command operations in the electronic environment for "3 in 1" procedural interoperability.

- In addition, the two ministries need to upgrade for interconnection, decentralization of access rights, and reasonable exploitation of information in the national database of the population to serve the fastest and most convenient online public services; avoiding technical problems must directly intervene in the "3-in-1" procedure for children, especially in the process of applying for personal identity code.

- Overcoming the delay in granting personal identity codes in the implementation of inter-connected birth registration procedures; slow civil status software, one-way interaction due to the support switchboard without listener support. In the connection with the Ministry of Public Security to issue identity codes for new-born babies, the software system is slow and has errors

3.3.4. For the Ministry of Justice

According to current regulations, civil status books and civil status registration dossiers are preserved and stored permanently and digitized. Currently, the direct and permanent storage and preservation of these types of dossiers combined with digitization are creating great pressures and challenges for communes' officials. Therefore, the Ministry of Justice needs to have more detailed guidance documents so that local authorities, especially commune-level authorities, can actively digitize and store civil status books and other dossiers in a way that is both consistent and suitable to the direct and electronic context.

3.3.5. For the Ministry of Public Security

- Pay attention to and command agencies and localities to review and supply computers, printers, scanners, and other necessary supporting equipment for the commune-level police to perform well the task of providing online public services according to current regulations.

- Review and support the assurance of information security on the internet network so that provinces and cities can soon integrate the provincial population database with the Ministry of Public Security's national population database and the identification and authentication system to deploy the exploitation of population data for the purpose of providing online public services at levels 3 and 4 for the development of e-government and digital government./.

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31. Decision No. 06/QD-TTg dated January 6, 2022 of the Prime Minister on Approval of the Scheme to develop the application of population data, identification and authentication of test electricity to serve the national digital transformation. period 2022 - 2025, vision to 2030.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: List of relevant documents of Quang Tri province

+ Plan No. 5584/KH-UBND dated December 21, 2020 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri Province on promulgating the Plan on IT application to develop digital government and ensure network information security in the operation of provincial State agencies. Quang Tri in 2021 and the period 2021 - 2025.

+ Plan No. 5980/KH-UBND dated December 28, 2020 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on implementing the national digital transformation program to 2025, with orientation to 2030 in Quang Tri province.

+ Plan No. 6012/KH-UBND dated December 29, 2020 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on the development of telecommunications infrastructure for digital transformation in Quang Tri province in the period of 2021 - 2025.

+ Decision No: 29/2020/QD-UBND dated December 7, 2020 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri Province on the issuance of operating regulations of the public service portal and the electronic one-stop information system.

+ Decision No: 496/QD-UBND dated 3/3/2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on promulgating the operating regulations of the Smart Control Center of Quang Tri province.

+ Decision No. 708/QD-UBND dated March 26, 2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on the promulgation of regulations on the use, management and exploitation of the information and reporting system of Quang Tri province.

+ Decision No. 688/QD-UBND dated March 26, 2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri Province on promulgating the plan for training and fostering cadres, civil servants and public employees in 2021 and assigned the Office of the Provincial People's Committee to preside over the organization. Organize training on digitizing results of administrative procedure settlement for officials, civil servants and officials in handling administrative procedures at their agencies.

+ Decision No. 878/QD-UBND dated April 14, 2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on promulgating regulations on the use and management of scene reflections in Quang Tri province.

+ Decision No. 1567/QD-UBND dated June 24, 2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on approving the adjustment of the project to build e-government in Quang Tri province.

+ Decision No: 2928/QD-UBND dated October 7, 2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri province on promulgating ICT architecture for smart city development in Quang Tri province.

+ Decision No: 2926/QD-UBND dated October 7, 2021 of the People's Committee of Quang Tri Province on Promulgating the Quang Tri Province e-Government Architecture version 2.0.

+ Decision No: 958/QD-UBND dated April 5, 2022 of Quang Tri Provincial People's Committee on promulgating training and retraining plan for cadres, civil servants and public employees in 2022.

Appendix 2: How to get to the "3-in-1" service on Quang Tri E-Service Portal