One-Stop Shops as a Mode of Public Service Delivery
Experience Collation
## Contents

Definitional issues .................................................................................................................. 3
OSS experiences ...................................................................................................................... 4
Co-habitation before integration: Denmark ........................................................................... 4
Integration before cohabitation: Norway ................................................................................. 4
OSS as vehicles of new public management: Georgia .......................................................... 5
Physical presence of government chiefs: Tajikistan .............................................................. 5
OSS as the principal service delivery mechanism: Vietnam .................................................. 6
OSS operating in each and every local government: Bangladesh ......................................... 6
Adopting a viable business model: Bhutan ............................................................................. 7
State models under a national plan: India .............................................................................. 8
OSS as means of administrative decentralisation: Laos ......................................................... 9
OSS as a strategy to promote civic engagement: Mongolia ................................................... 9
Demand-driven design: Myanmar .......................................................................................... 10
End-to-end delivery and product closure: Pakistan ............................................................... 10
Location-based model of OSS: Sri Lanka .............................................................................. 11
Conceptual aspects of OSS ................................................................................................... 12
OSS: Theoretical background ............................................................................................... 13
  Design issues ....................................................................................................................... 14
  Evaluating OSS .................................................................................................................. 15
  OSS for business registration ............................................................................................. 17
Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 17
Appendix I: Overview of the OSS models ........................................................................... 19
References ............................................................................................................................. 22
Introduction
Public service delivery is one of the core learning themes of LOGIN. At the 3rd General Assembly of LOGIN, held in December 2015, One-Stop Shops (hereafter, OSS) was suggested as one of the possible topics on which learning could be pursued under the theme. Towards this end, an experience collation was undertaken to bring together various examples of OSS. This paper is a product of the collation. The paper intends to bring together knowledge from Asian experiences of implementing OSS models for public service delivery; and also look at relevant OSS models attempted in select European countries. The paper however has refrained from critical appraisal of efficacy and usability of any of these models.

While OSS experiences have been well documented in the developed countries, and to some extent in Africa and Latin America, experiences from the Asian region have yet to be systematically collated. The OSS experience consolidated in this paper is expected to bridge that gap and serve as key knowledge resource for LOGIN members considering to implement One-Stop Shops for public service delivery.

As a model of public service delivery, OSS have been in vogue for many decades now. OSS operate towards the simple goal of making public services available under a single roof. OSS come in various designs, institutional arrangements and financing models, and provide different baskets of services in different contexts. While some provide the services of a single level of government (national/provincial/local), others provide services of more than one level. This paper looks at some of these definitional issues and maps some of the recorded examples. The conceptual underpinnings of the OSS idea as emerging from the example and other theoretical works are then detailed. The concluding section brings out some necessary and certain desirable conditions for the setting up of sustainable OSS. A quick overview of the examples mapped is provided in Appendix I.1

The paper relies on an extensive survey of literature, including policy documents, project information sheets of donors, government websites, media stories, academic articles, third-party evaluation reports and case studies recorded by non-governmental organisations, among others.2 The focus of the paper is on examples from LOGIN countries, though other countries have also been looked at, where appropriate. LOGIN members could use the paper to get an elementary overview of the various OSS experiences in the region and identify areas of further learning. A major constraint in the preparation of this report has been the lack of resources in the English language. As such, the report should be treated as a living document that can be updated with the availability of new resources.

Definitional issues
There are various terms that denote the idea of OSS. Some of the available English terms are one-door services, single-window services, community service centres, citizen service centres, information centres/kiosks, e-enabled service centres and so on. There are arguably significant differences between each of these terms. Broadly, OSS provide two kinds of facilities: (a) those that provide information, and (b) those that provide services. In this paper, the term OSS has been used as a generic term to describe any public facility that provides a

---

1 This paper serves as a first input to LOGIN membership. Further work in updating the report and analysis of approaches may be undertaken based on interest and demand from LOGIN membership.
2 This paper is for informational purposes only. Copyright has been acknowledged wherever diagrams and photographs have been reproduced from the original sources.
single access point to information and/or public services for citizens. In fact, most OSS fall somewhere between the two concrete types – some focusing on information provisioning more than end-to-end service provision\(^3\), and others focusing more on delivery of services that are directly delivered to the citizens by the government. This specification excludes the entities / facilities for providing services related to ease-of-doing business, such as business registration, recreation etc.

**OSS experiences**

The following experiences present a range of models of OSS from various parts of the world. The case studies are meant to provide an indication of the various types of OSS. For paucity of information, the paper does not rank them or recommend any particular model.

**Co-habitation before integration: Denmark**

The most common example of OSS that exist today in Denmark is the municipal job centres. These centres provide information on employment and social benefits in a single window, thereby combining the government functions of livelihood provision and social welfare in the same system. It must be noted however that it is a model of co-habitation of government services, rather than functional integration (Askim et al. 2011). The model is now present in 77 municipalities. Responsibilities related to service provision are shared between the municipalities and the national government. Both parties initially agree on the internal organisation of the job centres. The service demands of the uninsured citizens are taken care of by the municipality, while those of the insured citizens are taken care of by the state – probably because the uninsured needs more attention with regard to finding employment and seeking welfare benefits, which can be provided best under local care. The staff of the OSS are employed by the municipality as well as the state. They work jointly in each OSS to cater to the clients.

In another model, present in 14 municipalities, a single-level OSS is established to provide services. These are locally known as ‘pilot job centres’. All responsibilities are borne by the municipalities in this model, i.e. both the insured as well as the uninsured citizens are catered to by the municipal administrations.

**Integration before cohabitation: Norway**

In contrast to Denmark, the model available in Norway is an example of OSS established after the integration of government functions. A set of reforms, locally known as NAV reforms, were initiated in 2001, wherein the parliament requested the government to merge the three main departments related to welfare provision – national insurance, employment and municipal social services. The parliament argued that the merger would increase workforce participation and make the administration of welfare schemes more user-friendly, holistic and efficient. A new, merged department called the New Employment and Welfare Administration (NAV in Norwegian) came into existence in 2005. NAV merged national insurance and employment, but municipal social service was retained as a local government responsibility. As its interface with the citizens, the NAV reform established an OSS in each

---

\(^3\) End-to-end service provision refers to scenarios where the OSS is responsible for all stages of service delivery, starting from assistance in filling out of application forms to delivery of the processed delivery of service output to the applicant.
municipality. The local government services were also provided through these OSS. Thus, in the Norwegian case, integration preceded cohabitation of government services.

**OSS as vehicles of new public management: Georgia**

OSS were introduced in Georgia for provisioning of public services, as part of public administration reforms introduced in 2004. OSS in Georgia exist in two forms: Public Service Halls (also known as Justice House) and Community Centres. The Public Service Hall is a public space to deliver approximately 300 services nationwide which are exclusively provided by the Ministry of Justice, Government of Georgia. Documents such as identity cards, passports, birth, death or marriage certificates, land registry, real estate ownership certificates, document legalisation, notary registration etc. are provided by the PSH. Community centers resemble the public service delivery model of PSH, except that their operation is maintained by the municipal authorities under an agreement executed between local authorities and Public Service Development Agency (PSDA). The operators serving at the centres are employees of the concerned municipal authority. The centre operator can accept application for ID, passport, civil acts registration, citizenship and migration related application, application on amnesty, residence registration application, property registration, besides, it issues documents related to public services offered by PSDA.

In the 2014 study, Vashakidze found that the introduction of OSS has helped in replacing the older extractive model of service delivery with a new inclusive model. The service delivery procedures are simple and transparent; embracing ICT has played pivotal role in the success of reform. Citizen recipients are satisfied with speed, quality and user friendliness in the delivery of public service; even though public engagement in service delivery decisions is inadequate. The other pending challenge has been formulation of a financial model to guide income and cost structures.

Vashakidze observes that the reforms were not an effort at decentralisation but recentralisation of power\(^4\), 25% reduction in public employment, introduction of ICT and reunification of identity documents. However, a different observation is offered by Dolidze (2015), who characterises the reforms as part of the conscious choice of the policymakers to adopt New Public Management (NPM, discussed later) seen in the abolition of unnecessary departments and divisions, adoption of simplified procedures, emphasis on quality of service delivery and introduction of a contract system of employment.

**Physical presence of government chiefs: Tajikistan**

In the One-Stop Shops of Tajikistan, the chiefs of most government departments would come together in one building to provide speedy services once a week (UN Women 2012). The services provided relate to education, health care, social protection, land tenures, passports and civil registration – all provided under one roof. Information on government services is also available at these centres.

---

\(^4\) The initial model of decentralized public service delivery, which was inefficient with widespread petty corruption, was replaced with a vertically integrated structure of public administration by empowering the Ministry of Justice and later, state agencies directly responsible for the delivery of public services.
OSS as the principal service delivery mechanism: Vietnam

In Vietnam, OSS is not just another public facility, but an integral part of the service delivery system of the country. OSS are administrative service centres that provide several administrative services through a single office. Examples of administrative services include: business registration, notarisations and confirmations, public information, land administration, construction permits, cultural activities licenses, social affairs et. al. After the introduction of OSS, administrative services in many areas, including rural provinces, have improved in terms of accessibility, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness (Swiss Humanitarian Aid, 2003). OSS in Vietnam operate in the model of one door, many windows, as presented in the accompanying illustration:

The factors that have been found essential for the effective functioning of OSS are: (1) Providing access to the central e-government platform (Client Gate) and helping clients fill in electronic forms (such as the declaration of entrepreneurial activity); (2) Informing and advising customers on the process of the eight types of administrative procedures; (3) The clients’ requests and attached documents are received and forwarded by the Government Window officers (in 39 types of procedure, e.g. the authorisation of construction activities) (ibid).

OSS operating in each and every local government: Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, a network of government-run OSS, the Union Information Service Centres (UISCs) have been established to enable citizens’ access to public services. These are in addition to various privately owned such facilities5. The USICs are run through PPP (public-private partnership) model and are located at the Union Parishad (UP, the lowest tier of local government) premises. (Hoque and Sorwar 2015). There are 4501 USICs currently operational, one in each UP. Each UISC is run by two local entrepreneurs – a male and a female – under the guidance of the UP Chairman.

The government has divided the services offered by the UISCs into three: government, information and commercial. Government services relate to government documents such as citizenship certificate and birth certificate. These services are offered for free. Information services refer to provision of information related to agriculture, health, education etc. These are provided at a low, subsidised cost. Commercial services including banking, insurance, printing, photocopying etc. are offered at commercial rates. A study based on 50 interviews in three UPs showed that the UISCs had positive effects, including that these centres helped persons with disability access information (Hoque and Sorwar 2015). In another study conducted in 275 UPs, it was found that 68% residents were aware of the facility, of which only 52% visited and used the UISCs (CPRSouth 2013). A large number of women have

---

5 There are about 3000 telecentres run by various private actors such as D.NET, GrameenPhone, GrameenBank, Young Power in Social Action etc.
received bank accounts, and youth have received computer training through UISCs (A2I 2014). It was also found that UISCs provide the important service of healthcare service related information in rural areas (Seddiky, Ara and Yasmin 2014). UISC provide information on the services available at the Union Health Centre, availability of doctors, immunisation programmes and appointments for specialist doctors.

**Adopting a viable business model: Bhutan**

The OSS in Bhutan were set up with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the United Nations agencies and the Government of India. Here, the practical difficulties of difficult terrain and distance from the capital and district headquarters gave rise to the idea of OSS as a solution. The OSS combine IT and service provision to make services available under one roof. The reform measures under the Integrated Public Service Delivery Systems sought to make services available under one roof (ADB 2014). These were supported in part by the Local Governance Support Programme (LGSP) (GNHC 2014).

The Community Centres established through OSS mode were being run by Bhutan Post and served as IT centres. In 2015, their operations and management were transferred to the Bhutan Development Bank to make financial services available in all local governments (gewogs). The Ministry of Agriculture has also attempted to adapt the OSS model to make seeds, fertilisers, tools and information available to farmers (Bhutan Observer 2010). A separate UNDP-supported project established OSS for the processing of permits related to extraction of timber, firewood, bamboo etc. (UNDP 2012). Department of Local Governance of the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, the Department of Information Technology & Telecom of the Ministry of Information and Communication, and the Government to Citizen Project, under the Cabinet played major role in the establishment of OSS as part of the service delivery reforms in Bhutan.

The services available from OSS/CCs are: (1) Department of Civil Registration & Census: birth registration, death registration, family tree/ household information, census transfer; (2) Department of Forests & Park Services, MoAF: rural timber permit, permit for flagpoles and firewood, (3) Open services: department of adult & higher education services, security clearance, audit clearance, labour and employment services; (4) Ministry of Economic Affairs: micro-trade service. A total of 29 services are available from the OSS/CCs, including photocopying, printing, scanning, and in most cases, sale of legal stamps and vouchers for recharge. The CCs are established in all the 205 gewogs, but some centres experience poor connectivity. Pem and Rabten (no date) observes that some of the pressing challenges making all CCs ‘online’ (connected to the internet), provision of a larger basket of services and financial viability.

An important lesson from the Bhutan experience of establishing OSS is the way costing and revenue model, and viability gap funding was considered as part of the original proposals to ensure that the poor socio-economic status of citizens does not pose a major threat to the

---

6 The data available from earlier models of community centres was used to calculate the number of services availed by citizens. Added to this was revenue from renting out the OSS for events. The expenditures included minimum income for the OSS manager (composed of transfer from the government plus fee for services availed), cost of office equipment, IT maintenance and insurance. Accordingly, the subsidy required from the government side was calculated. There are additional costs for the government which included depreciation, monitoring and evaluation and supervision (Persson 2010a).
viability of the OSS. It was acknowledged that the use of services, especially those enabled by information technology, would be much lower in the case of poor households, and thus local units which are remote may avail OSS facilities only to a limited extent.

**State models under a national plan: India**

A wide variety of OSS models exist in India, with each state showcasing at least one model. While some of them are backed by state-level legislations, others are merely policy initiatives taken up as part of the wider trend towards computerisation of government department. Significant in this respect is the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) under which 100,000 Common Service Centres (CSCs) have been established; and another 150,000 CSCs are being established to cover all Gram Panchayats\(^7\) of the country. CSC is a dedicated facility for the delivery of services to citizens, administered by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY), Government of India. The services are made available through the CSCs: electronic access of forms to apply government entitlements, e-District services, Aadhaar\(^8\) enrolments and printing of e-Aadhaar card, agriculture services, educational services, rural banking and insurance, passport services, digital life certificate for pensioners; and commercial services such as printing, photocopying and internet browsing.

In addition there are initiatives spearheaded by provincial governments. In Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, the OSS facility Mee Seva (‘at your service’) offers 348 public services of 34 departments of the State. Together, there are more than 7000 Mee Seva kiosks running in the two states. Similar to Mee Seva, the Nemmadi Kendras of Karnataka provide 478 government services under Sakala initiative (Karnataka Guarantee of Services to Citizens Act, 2011). The Government of Madhya Pradesh has institutionalised a network of 334 Lok Sewa Kendras (“Public Service Centres”) to expand access of 126 services to citizens within the ambit of Madhya Pradesh Lok Sewaon Ke Pradan Ki Guranatee Adhiniyam 2010 (the Madhya Pradesh Public Services Delivery Guarantee Act 2010).

Such kiosks have a long history in India. For instance, Gyandoot (‘Purveyor of Knowledge’) was initiated by the Madhya Pradesh government as an internet-based service portal (Paramjit Singh, no date). The project sought to link rural citizens with the government through information provision; 38 kiosks were established covering 38 villages (World Bank, no date). The Government of Himachal Pradesh has implemented a scheme known as Lokmitra that offers e-governance services such as farm product prices, complaint registration, information regarding land records, income certificate, caste certificate etc. The Government of Rajasthan has implemented a facility known as e-Mitra, which has been implanted through the public-private-partnership model, wherein the private partner is paid for services offered by the government. Services provided include payment of utility bills, tax payment, ticket reservation, passport application, birth/ death registration etc. (Das and Chandrashekhar, no date). The Government of Kerala has implemented OSS known as Akshaya centres that provide services such as identity cards, ticket reservations, health schemes, passport application etc. The public-private partnership model used in this project has been termed fast, efficient, hassle free and accessible (Nissar 2014).

---

\(^7\) The Local Government Institution at the village level in India.

\(^8\) Aadhaar is India’s unique identification initiative whereby each citizen receives unique identity that hold all pertinent details including biometric signature of the individual. It involves issuance of a 12 digit Aadhaar number and an Aadhaar card.
**OSS as means of administrative decentralisation: Laos**

One-Door Services (ODSs) in Laos are seen as a mode of administrative decentralisation. ODSs are also seen as a cost-efficient way of delivering services in the wake of budget constraints. Laos adopted Vietnam’s model that has been around since 1996. There are 17 ODSs in total now; different ODSs carry out functions at different levels of government.

ODSs were established in Laos in 2006 under the Governance and Public Administration Reform (GPAR) programme, which aims at increasing government responsiveness to citizens, especially at the local level. Specifically, ODSs were initiated under the Support for Better Service Delivery project under the programme, managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Services are centrally determined and thus supply-driven. The ODSs are located in the reception area of provincial and district administration buildings. They are open during normal working hours. Each ODS has a steering committee that oversees its functioning. The chief of the steering committee is a bureaucrat appointed by the district chief or the province governor.

ODSs are to provide services related to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and sometimes others. The actual range of services provides in an ODS can vary depending on mandate and space availability. There have also been instances of services being withdrawn from an ODS as they were too complicated for the ODS staff to handle.

ODSs are run by the district or provincial administration where they are housed and depend on the care-taker administration for all its funds. The staff is also appointed by the care-taker administrations. Different ODSs set different fee structures for their services, leading to a lot of heterogeneity across the country. 70% of the fee collected is given to upper levels of government in return for their participation in the ODS. Thus, only 30% is available for the improvement of an ODS. The staff is appointed by the care-taker administrations. Thus, merit or technical skills do not count as criteria and no formal training is provided.

**OSS as a strategy to promote civic engagement: Mongolia**

Starting in 2007 and implemented nation-wide since 2013, the OSS deliver social protection and employment counselling services, as well as notary and banking services at aimag (provincial) and soum (district) levels. Some of the services provided include social insurance, employment information, land management, civil registration, and bank and notary services. More than two third of OSS visitors are women.

There are close to 194 OSS functioning at aimag (provincial) and soum (district) levels, and in the capital Ulaanbaatar. They also collect citizens’ feedback. The establishment of the OSS took a major capital investment, and was supported by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Now Government of Mongolia has also launched mobile OSS van, which brings officials and the services to the doorstep.
**Demand-driven design: Myanmar**

In 2012-2013, 72 OSS were opened across Myanmar. These were set up to bring governance closer to people and provide services in an efficient manner (UNDP 2012).

Each OSS displays the services provided, time required to process applications and costs involved. A typical OSS will have desks of each of the relevant government departments such as the Departments of Development Committees, Electricity Supply Services, Police, Immigration, Public Health, Social Welfare, Fire Services, Internal Revenue, General Administration Department, and Agriculture, Land Management and Statistics. An OSS have some or all of these desks, depending on the local needs. For instance, in an area with many factory workers, there may be two desks of the labour ministry – one providing identity cards and the other receiving complaints.

Each desk has two staff members, who are actually staff of the mother department. They serve at the OSS desk for three months on a rotational basis. A desk is also dedicated to a monitor who oversee the day-to-day operations of the OSS.

---

**End-to-end delivery and product closure: Pakistan**

The Punjab province of Pakistan is experimenting with the idea of OSS with the establishment of Citizen Facilitation Centres or e-khidmat centres. The first such centre was opened in Rawalpindi. Subsequently, other centres were opened in Lahore and Sargodha, thereby establishing one e-khidmat centre in each division of the province. E-khidmat centres allow citizens to access a range of government services of central, provincial and local governments through a single window. The centres indicate guaranteed turn-around time and provide real-time tracking of applications. The citizen can simply collect a token for his/her application and track it online or toll free number or through the app known as ‘Asani Markaz’.

Some of the services offered are: Computerised National Identity card (CNIC), passport issuance, birth certificate, death certificate, marriage certificate, divorce registration, domicile registration, traffic fine collection, issuance of weapon license, issuance of route
permit, motor vehicle registration, and services of the local and district administrations. Interestingly, NADRA e-Sahulat, an e-payment platform of the Government of Pakistan to pay various bills as well as receive welfare disbursements, has been integrated with e-khidmat in the Punjab province.

![Diagram of e-Khidmat process]

Source: PK Politics 2015 ©

**Location-based model of OSS: Sri Lanka**
The most common form of OSS in Sri Lanka are Nenasalas; around 600 Nenasalas have been set up in rural and semi-urban areas to provide access to e-government services. Apart from providing information, this model is also tied with skill development. In a survey, 41 percent of Nenasala users reported that they found jobs using the computer skills they earned from these centres. 26 percent users reported that they found jobs using the internet facilities in these centres (Karunasena, Deng and Singh 2011).

Four different models of Nenasalas have been implemented in Sri Lanka: (1) Entrepreneurial/commercial model: These centres provide an array of IT facilities and information, and are tied to the objectives of social and economic development and peace building. Centres have been set up in local government units in the south and northeast, where the reach of ICT facilities is extremely poor. (2) Community model: These are centres where some facilities are provided for free and are cross-subsidised by certain other paid services. The model tries to provide a community environment with a library along with IT facilities. (3) Distance and E-Learning Centres: These centres provide state-of-the-art facilities required to connect to national and global distance learning networks, including video conferencing, multi-media computer labs etc. The objective is to develop key skills of the urban populations outside the capital city Colombo. (4) Tsunami camp Nenasalas: These centres are established in the tsunami-affected areas and provide information related to health, education etc. A database of the local population is also maintained. The database aids in checking what the residents...
possessed, how much assets they have lost and how much relief work is required. All services are provided free of charge (Nenasala 2016).

Four key criteria are used in the selection of location to establish Nenasalas: population (should be between 2000 and 5000 people), presence of a market (at least 15 wholesale vendors within a 5 km radius), presence of electricity and presence of a school (a ‘type 2’ school with at least 300 students). After the selection, a survey of the place is conducted to decide the appropriate Nenasala model. Following this, support institutions that can backstop the setting up of Nenasalas are identified; facilitators from the institution identified and trained; and the required IT equipment procured. In parallel, awareness campaigns are organised to sensitise people about the centres. This is followed by the identification and training of Nenasala operators.

**Conceptual aspects of OSS**

The examples surveyed above show a rich diversity of OSS models available. One of the primary concerns in the design of OSS has been the integration of services. As seen in the examples of Norway and Denmark, services can cohabit in an OSS with or without prior integration. For efficiency purposes, integration of the service delivery lines at the line department lines before cohabitation at the OSS seems advisable. This would ensure that the structure of the OSS is kept simple for the citizens, who may not be aware of the various channels from which services are provided to them.

Examining the overall characteristics of OSS, Vashakidze (2014) analyses the various available models of OSS and suggests that they have the following broad dimensions: structural, administrative and social. The structural dimension of OSS relates to issues of design, integration with government departments, geographical distribution, selection of the basket of services etc. The structural dimension becomes a challenge where there is a high fragmentation of government departments, more so in cases where the departments do not interact much with each other. Included in the structural dimension is the vertical and horizontal integration of government structures and functions. Vertical integration refers to integrating the services of different levels of government, while horizontal integration refers to integrating the services spread across one level of government. The administrative dimension, meanwhile, refers to the bureaucratic arrangements required to cater to the demands of the citizens. The social dimension relates to issues of social justice that provide the background for the establishment of an OSS. Jaeger and Thompson (2003, cited in Vashakidze (2014) argue that the setting up of OSS should be premised on the social commitment of making public services available to citizens. Thus, constraints, such as lack of internet facilities or geographical barriers, should not be the reason for not providing such improved services.

Various other arguments have also been put forward in favour of choosing OSS as a preferred means of public service delivery. Wattenhall and Kimber (1997) point out the following two reasons to support the establishment of OSS: (1) OSS could be used as a means of easing access to welfare services for the poor. Here, OSS are seen as an efficient mechanism of delivering schemes that otherwise remain scattered across myriad government departments. This argument falls in line with the social commitment argument mentioned above and sees OSS from the angle of social justice, going beyond mere service provision. (2) OSS could be seen as an opportunity to promote coordination between different government
departments. Here, OSS become the vehicle through which efficient links are established between government departments, avoiding the need for a separate project for the same. In another study, Bryden et al. (2007) suggest that OSS have the following advantages: (1) they make life easier for customers/clients, they enable the local provision of services, (2) services can be tailored to local needs, (3) they reduce costs through shared use of staff, buildings or vehicles, (4) they create synergies between government departments, (5) they can provide flexibility in the services offered, (6) they provide economies of scale over time, and (6) they can benefit from novel funding sources such as lottery. Overall, it can be seen that efficiency has been pointed out in the literature as a strong reason to go for OSS. In fact, all the countries that surveyed above have used the efficiency argument to go for OSS, especially in rural locations.

While OSS as an idea have mostly received appreciation, with the criticisms confined to the particular design and implementation issues involved in rolling it out, some criticisms against the very concept have also come up in recent times. For instance, Pearce (2013) calls for getting rid of OSS on the premise that they make local interfaces impersonal – citizens can no longer meet and present their case before local officials face-to-face. The author also argues that more often than not it becomes impossible to ensure customer satisfaction when a large number of services are offered under one roof.

**OSS: Theoretical background**

Askim et al. (2011) present the need for OSS in the form of the classic trade-off between coordination and specialisation. Specialisation by government departments often results in a function becoming the unique capacity of a particular department, leading to a scenario in which different departments become so autonomous that the overall picture of governance becomes one characterised by fragmented departments without coordination between them. This strand of literature, thus, places specialisation at odds with coordination. OSS has been pointed out as a sort of solution for such a scenario as they provide the opportunity to promote coordination between the specialised, but fragmented, departments. However, one can criticise this approach for the illusion of coordination that it creates – coordination is actually one that is mediated by OSS, rather than one that is organically established between the departments.

Another strand of literature places OSS in the genre of New Public Management (NPM) (Halligan 2004, cited in Askim et al 2011). NPM sought to emphasise efficiency in the provision of services by treating citizens as customers and viewing service provision as business. Principles that drive businesses in a market scenario are adopted to make service provision modern, including contracting out of services or parts of services to private actors. NPM is also characterised by measurable indicators to assess the performance of the network. Criticising NPM, MetCalfe and Richard (1991) point out that often outdated private sector policies get applied to the public sector. Askim et al. (2011) point out that not all OSS can be seen as a product of NPM. They give the example of OSS in the Scandinavian countries to show that OSS in these countries predated the era of NPM.

Closely related to the concept of NPM is the idea of process management. Ongaro (2004) places OSS in the category of process management, a thread in management studies that deals with business processes. The approach was initially developed for the business sector and then applied to the public sector. The purported argument of the concept has been the
advancement of customer-orientation and inter-organisational coordination in the public sector. Process oriented approaches came up in response to the following requirements: (1) The necessity of increasing organisational flexibility in order to adapt to a more and more complex and rapidly changing environment, (2) The priority given to the reduction of throughput times, usually a key factor in the provision of public services, (3) The development of organisational models that can exploit the potentials of ICT, (4) Fragmentation of public sector. Ongaro argues that both specialisation as well as decentralisation has led to this need for business process reengineering (BPR). There is also reliance on for-profit and not-for-profit organisations to deliver services, leading to further fragmentation.

The NPM model stands in contrast to the classic bureaucratic model of public service delivery. Bureaucracy was defined by Max Weber in terms of hierarchical offices with separate competencies. Bureaucrats are selected based on their technical qualifications. Bureaucrats do not own the means of administration and are kept under strict control. Weber opined that this hierarchical bureaucracy was the most efficient in accomplishing tasks (Weber 1964). The main difference between Weberian model and NPM is that the former sees citizens as subjects and the latter as consumers. As Gruening (2001) points out, citizen participation is one of the purported arguments used by advocates of NPM to distinguish it from the bureaucratic model.

**Design issues**

Kuluoglu (2010) suggests that the majority of citizens who visit an e-government facility has four main objectives: learn about something (information services), apply for something (downloadable forms), pay for something (e-transactions) or complain about something. Though this provides a glimpse of the kind of OSS facilities that can be made available, a large number of other services, such as obtaining processed services, can also be possible through such facilities. Complaint mechanisms offered by the OSS are driving accountability in many contexts: PWC (2012) observes that greater citizen awareness and expectations, budgetary constraints and greater global competition is forcing governments to improve public service delivery, including the setting up of OSS.

Kubicek and Hagen (2000, cited in Askim et al 2011) delineate three categories of OSS: first shop stops, convenience stores and true OSS. First-stop shops are mere information providers that only guide the citizens on relevant services. The term comes from viewing the facility from the client’s point of view, wherein the particular shop is just a first stop among many that the client will have to visit to receive services. Thus, a second stop is necessitated by this scenario, forcing the clients to be proactive in fetching services for themselves. In the convenience store, various transactional services are housed in a single office or on one website. Although the interfaces between services and citizens are integrated, convenience stores still require client action to access the full service required. By contrast, the true OSS delivers the product that you ask for. This model provides ‘product closure’, i.e. no further steps are required on the part of the client to receive a service. Rainey (1990) identifies a fourth type – the functionally integrated small units (FISUs) – that are simply single window entry points to a range of government departments. IRI (no date) makes a more stylised distinction between two kinds of OSS – single-window services and single-door services – as illustrated in the diagram below:
In terms of physical architecture, various models exist, but the most common design in a single building with a range of service providers. Buildings may be owned by the community, local government or a public agency, or they may be leased (Bryden et al. 2007). In terms of financing, OSS require long term funding as short term funding is wasteful, given the investments required for staff training.

The following challenges exist in the designing of OSS projects: (1) large capital investment in relation to the size of the population: a full-fledged OSS facility requires long-term capital investment in sizeable amounts to establish durable facilities. This may seem to be wasteful in the case of remote locations or in places with sparse population. However, one of the reasons to establish OSS is to cater to such populations. (2) Partnerships: where OSS are established with private sector partners, the exact revenue model and power arrangements will have to be figured out, along with sharing of responsibilities. This can result in a prolonged power tussle between the various parties involved. (3) Reconciling the needs of different users: Within the same services, different sections of the citizenry might have different requirements; (4) Difficulties in maintaining enthusiasm and time commitments among staff: this is especially a problem when the staff is drawn from the community for low salaries or when the OSS rely on volunteers to provide services.

OSS rely so much on e-governance that often the literature between the two overlap. This was evident in many of the examples that were reviewed in this paper. Kalsi, Kiran and Vaidya (2009) look at the e-governance programmes in India and point out that information provision has been revolutionised through the e-governance model. Richard Heeks (2001, cited in Kalsi, Kiran and Vaidya 2009) looked at the impact of new information and communicant technologies and link it to the wider good governance agenda. Meanwhile, Islam (2003) explores the link between the presence of a legal framework governing access to information and points out that it critically affects the quality of governance. Going by Lipsky’s (1980) observation on street-level bureaucracy, one can also say that formal and informal agents of service delivery at the grassroots level also matter for successful OSS and hence should be integrated into the concept of OSS. This echoes Gulick’s (1937) view that a unique feature of OSS that they bring the coordination of policy measures down to the level of the citizens. Gulick points out that OSS in this sense can be said to be centred on ‘person’, rather than place, process or purpose.

**Evaluating OSS**

Given the merits and demerits of OSS, frameworks that can aid the evaluation of OSS become necessary. A set of criteria to evaluate OSS is provided by Pasquier and Villeneuve (2012). This includes respect for rules, transparent procedures, equality of treatment and clear communication over decisions taken about administrative procedures. The criteria could be criticised for not including the size of the bureaucracy involved. Often it is assumed that OSS
minimise bureaucracy and avoid delays in the delivery of services. However, this may not be so in reality as OSS can come with their own set of officials and delays in the provision of services. OSS should also be evaluated for the basic infrastructure that they provide for the development of other support services. For instance, in rural Scotland, OSS have facilitated the extension of services on offer to rural communities and improvement of their quality. In many instances, new services were also offered that could not have been offered without the architecture of the OSS (Bryden et al. 2007). Based on these observations, Bryden et al. recognise the following factors that facilitate the success of OSS: community need, adequate revenue support, careful attention to design and location, and community-owned and run facilities. The study also points out that OSS should be seen as a means of including the local community in service delivery, rather than as a means of centralising services.

Another different framework is provided by Onxayvieng et al. (2015), who suggest four possible aspects of assessing OSS: governance, performance management, information sharing and workforce. Governance relates to the hierarchical position of the OSS in the administrative chain, including issues related to who funds the facility and who commands it. Performance management relates to the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that assess the functioning of an OSS. Information sharing refers to the range of services made available and the extent to which applications are processed by the OSS. Workforce aspects refer to human resource development, including training of staff and keeping the staff motivated to perform efficiently.

The country examples studied above bring out some additional dimensions of designing OSS. As discussed above, integration of services before cohabitation is key. In addition, OSS must ensure that the primary objective behind establishing OSS is to bring government closer to the people, and not to increase the distance between them. The example of Tajikistan, where government officials from line departments meet the citizens directly once a week, is a reminder that OSS are actually meant to bridge the distance between the government and the citizens, and that public officials are accountable to the people.

The examples also showed that two physical dimensions crucial to the design of OSS are cost and location. The Bhutan example clearly showed how costing has to be considered carefully, including depreciation of OSS equipment and possibility of income from renting out facilities. The example also showed a method of considering the costs that takes into account the income of the OSS managers as central to the calculations. Costing is especially important in the Asian context as the purpose and the reality – bringing service close to people and the poor socio-economic status of the rural population respectively – can seem to be at odds with each other. If OSS have to be sustainable, they need to be founded on a sound business model.

The Myanmar example additionally showed that it is possible to customise the OSS design, especially the range of services provided, according to the demands of the location. This examples thus shows that moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach is not impossible. Location is key to adopting the right OSS design also because it has implications for the availability of trained staff to manage the facilities available, with most staff preferring to work in urban locations.
Another important dimension that deserves careful consideration in the design of OSS is the process of making services available to the people. The example from Pakistan’s Punjab province demonstrates the case of making end-to-end services available through OSS. This shields the citizens from the drudgery of making trips to multiple departments. By contrast, many OSS models work only as application centres, leaving the responsibility of following up and ensuring the delivery of finished product on the citizens.

An important lesson the came out of the example of Nenasalas in Sri Lanka is the linking of the OSS facilities with income generation programmes through the provision in ICT training. This demonstrates that OSS have more advantages than ordinarily understood and that they can be used for social welfare provisions that go beyond information supply and acceptance of application forms.

**OSS for business registration**

Although not intended to provide service delivery by the government, OSS that allow easier business registration have been proven to have beneficial impact on local economic development. This is because they reduce the bureaucracy involved in getting enterprises registered, thereby allowing even small enterprises to be set up at the local level. For example, in Mexico, OSS were set up in the most populous and economically well-off municipalities led to an increase in the number of registered businesses by 5% (Bruhn 2011). The same reform also led to an increase in the number of registrations with the Mexican Social Security Institute by 5% (Kaplan, Piedra and Seira 2011). In Colombia, OSS were established in six major cities increased business registrations by 5% (Cardenas and Rozo 2009). In Brazil, a negative experience was found in Brazil where the Minas Facil Expresso programme in a province of Brazil. A World Bank study found that business registrations reduced (Brunh and McKenzie 2013). The study suggests that the probable reasons for the drop could have been the inexperience of the officials who were learning the mechanisms of the new system and the over-regulation of registrations. It is common in Brazil to have partial registration – for instance, register with tax authority but not the municipality which has zoning regulations that are difficult. OSS remove the possibility of partial registration, thereby discouraging new registrations.

**Conclusion**

From this literature review of the various models and experiences of OSS, a set of necessary and sufficient criteria for the design, implementation and management of these facilities can be deduced. Some of them are: (1) Back-end integration of services along with or before cohabitation, (2) Careful consideration of costing, including the accounting of low socio-economic status of citizens in rural/remote locations, (3) Customising OSS models according to the local demands, (4) Maximising the extent to which processed services/finished products are delivered to the citizens, (5) Keeping citizens as the focus of service delivery, (6) Keeping the processes simple, including the application forms, ICT tools and procedures, and (7) Providing essential public services for free or at subsidised rates, and (8) incentive structures for the staff to function effectively.

Apart from these, a set of further aspects that can make OSS more useful for the people as evident in the examples are: (1) Linking of OSS with social welfare services to make them more relevant to the local population, (2) Providing commercial services, such as photocopying and
printing (these can also be used to cross-subsidise the free services), (3) Facility for meeting the elected representatives at least once a week, (4) Legal backing to promote accountability, (5) Public-private partnerships, especially with telecom companies that already have the back-end infrastructure for OSS in place, and (6) Complementing OSS with helplines and website facilities to track the processing of applications.

Although the idea of OSS has gained wide popularity, it could also face certain challenges. Some of these are: (1) As the example of Laos demonstrated, retaining staff interest in working at OSS poses a crucial challenge on the management front as there may not be incentive structures that are favourable. This is especially true in the case of remote, rural locations. In addition, it was seen in a couple of examples that the manager of the OSS is a self-entrepreneur who makes a living through charged services offered at the OSS. If the business model is not carefully framed, these self-entrepreneurs may find the OSS an unsustainable means of livelihood. (2) Maintaining the quality of services: Monitoring and oversight are key issues in this regard as OSS often operate away from the line departments or local governments, and are run by staff under contract or self-employed entrepreneurs. Further, given the overlap between ICT and OSS, many OSS risk becoming merely computer centres with some internet connectivity. Care must be given that the presence of infrastructure is not taken as a marker of quality of services. (3) Sustainability: Many factors such as cost, changes in policies, and popularity, among others, influence the sustainability of OSS. Threat to sustainability can also be posed by competing technologies, such as mobile phones, that may phase out OSS as more and more public services get delivered through these technologies. Further, the physical infrastructure of OSS may lose quality with depreciation of the equipment and failure to maintain the ICT tools. (4) Digital divide: A related challenge is the economic and social inequality with regard to access to ICT, especially the internet that is characteristic of many countries reviewed here. The relevance of OSS as access points to government services in rural areas was emphasised in many of the examples. Poor internet connectivity, as noted in the example of Bhutan, can continue to be a problem, even as OSS are set up as a channel to bring those areas on the web.

The experiences collated in this paper provide many lessons to consider while setting up OSS as a mode of public service delivery. While this is not an exhaustive review of the experiences available, the paper provides a quick reference on the various conditions under which OSS are experimented with. Various arguments such as NPM, public administration reform, increasing access in remote locations, bringing governance closer to people etc. can be used in establishing OSS. However, a sound, sustainable OSS programme requires that the challenges are addressed early on in the design and implementation of the model adopted.
## Appendix I: Overview of the OSS models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Local Name</th>
<th>Services Provided</th>
<th>Distribution</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>Fee Charged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Union Information Service Centres</td>
<td>Government documents, information on sectors like agriculture, health and education, and commercial services like banking, insurance, photocopying and printing</td>
<td>One in each Union Parishad</td>
<td>Public-private partnership. Government agencies include Cabinet Division and Bangladesh Computer Centre</td>
<td>No fee for government documents, low fee for information services, commercial rates for other services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>One Stops Shops</td>
<td>A total of 29 services are available from the OSS/CCs, including photocopying, printing, scanning, and in most cases, sale of legal stamps and vouchers for recharge</td>
<td>All 205 gewogs</td>
<td>Parallel OSS models – both public and private</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Municipal Job Centres</td>
<td>Information on employment, employment insurance, social security</td>
<td>77 municipalities</td>
<td>Responsibilities shared between national and municipal governments</td>
<td>Model representing cohabitation of services before integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Community Centres, Public Service Halls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OSS used as a vehicle of recentralisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Various models</td>
<td>Largely information on government schemes, farm prices, application for identity cards</td>
<td>More than 100,000 CSCs across country, plus additional OSS in states</td>
<td>Various models ranging from government-run Mee Seva in Andhra Pradesh to PPP model in Kerala</td>
<td>The National E-Governance Plan provides the overarching framework</td>
<td>In most cases, yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Local Name</td>
<td>Services Provided</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>Fee Charged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>One Door Services</td>
<td>Services of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and sometimes others</td>
<td>17 (11 at district level, 5 at provincial level and 1 at national level)</td>
<td>District or provincial administration where the ODS is housed.</td>
<td>Supply-driven</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>198 at different levels of government</td>
<td></td>
<td>Separate OSS at each level of government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>One-Stop Shops</td>
<td>Services of government departments like Electricity Supply Services, Police, immigration, public Health, Social Welfare, Fire Services, Internal Revenue, General Administration Department, Agriculture, Land Management and Statistics etc.</td>
<td>In 72 cities and towns</td>
<td>General Administration Department</td>
<td>Desks are customised according to local needs (demand-driven)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>NAV centres</td>
<td>Information on employment and social security</td>
<td>All municipalities</td>
<td>New Employment and Welfare Administration</td>
<td>Services integrated before they were brought under one roof</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Local Name</td>
<td>Services Provided</td>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
<td>Fee Charged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>e-khidmat/ Citizen Facilitation Centre</td>
<td>Computerised National Identity card (CNIC), passport issuance, birth certificate, death certificate, marriage certificate, divorce registration, domicile registration, traffic fine collection, issuance of weapon license, issuance of route permit, motor vehicle registration, and services of the local and district administrations</td>
<td>All three divisions of Punjab province</td>
<td>Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) – autonomous body under the government of Punjab</td>
<td>Tracking possible through website, toll free number and mobile app</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Nenasalas</td>
<td>Depending on the model, information on government schemes, training in computer skills, database on tsunami-affected people, e-learning facilities</td>
<td>Almost every village</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Criteria used for the establishment of nenasalas: population, local market, presence of electricity, presence of schools</td>
<td>In most cases, yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>One-Stop Shops</td>
<td></td>
<td>All districts</td>
<td>OSS is the main public service delivery mechanism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Bryden, John, Frank Rennie, Amanda Bryan, Kristy Hay and Lucy Young-Smith. 2007. Critical Factors in the Success of One-Stop Shops as a Model of Service Delivery within Rural Locations. Iverness: UHI Millennium Institute


Contiades, Xenophon. 2007. Information Centres and One-Stop Shops: Albania, Montenegro and Croatia. European Union Social Institutions Support Programme


IRI. No date. What is a One-Stop Shop. Washington DC: International Republican Institute


Pearce, Valerie. 2013. To Improve Public Services, Get Rid of the ‘One Stop Shop’. The Guardian, February 1


PWC. 2012. Transforming the Citizen Experience: One-Stop Shop for Public Services. New York: Pricewaterhouse Coopers


Vashakidze, Girogi. 2014. One-Stop-Shop Access in the Delivery of Public Services: Its Impact on Service Effectiveness and Efficient Governance. Lausanne: Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration, University of Lausanne


Wimmer Maria A., A European perspective towards online one-stop government: the eGOV project, Electronic Commerce Research and Applications 1, Elsevier, 2002, pg. 94

