



## Governance and Participation

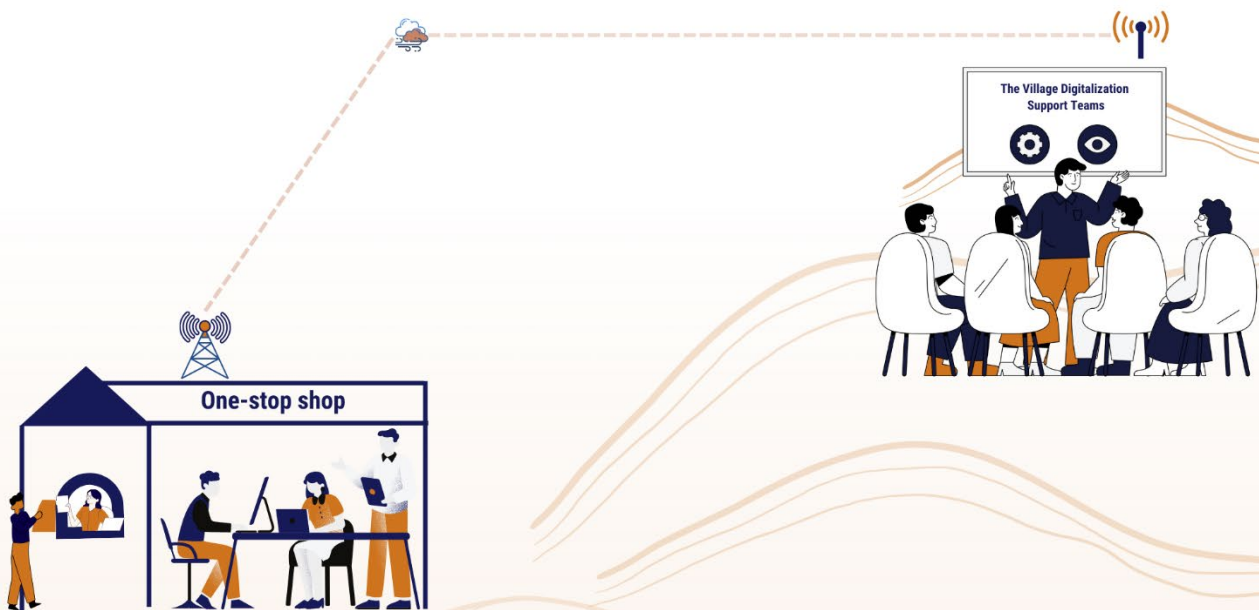
A Series of Policy Discussion Papers

# Advisory Report on Improving the Provision of Online Public Administrative Services in Binh Phuoc Province

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

### Two public administrative services under study

- (1) Issuance of marriage status confirmation certificates
- (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



Ha Noi, October 2023

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.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|     |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|
| SI  | Social Insurance               |
| HI  | Health Insurance               |
| CIC | Citizen Identification Card    |
| CCS | Cadres and Civil Servants      |
| PSP | Public Service Portal          |
| OPS | Online public services         |
| PIN | Personal Identification Number |
| PC  | People's Committee             |
| AP  | Administrative Procedure       |

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section summarizes the research report conducted in Binh Phuoc province, focusing on identifying the current situation, determining the causes, and proposing solutions to enhance access to and effective use of online public services (OPS) in Binh Phuoc province — a locality in the Southeast region of Vietnam with a significant population of ethnic minorities. The research was carried out from August to October 2023, focusing on two administrative procedures (AP): (1) Issuing marriage status certificates; and, (2) Interconnecting procedures for birth registration, permanent residence, and health insurance card issuance for children under 6 years old (interconnected procedure "3 in 1"). Field surveys were conducted in 02 communes in Bù Gia Mập district and 02 communes in Đồng Phú district, including 03 type I communes (Đa Kì, Thuận Lợi, and Tân Hoà) and 01 type II commune (Phước Minh).

### I. CURRENT SITUATION

#### 1.1. Infrastructure for Online Public Administrative Services and Digital Transformation

- 100% of agencies and units in Binh Phuoc province have internal networks (LAN), internet connectivity, and specialized data transmission lines.

- 100% of cadres and civil servants (CCS) have been equipped with computers for professional work.

- 100% Administrative service centres at provincial, district, and "one-stop" reception and result return units in 111 communes, wards, and towns are fully equipped for CCS to handle administrative procedure documents.

- 11 districts/cities and 111 communes, wards, and towns have implemented electronic authentication services and integrated electronic payment applications into the Binh Phuoc province administrative procedure settlement information system (Public Service Portal).

- 100% of provincial and district-level People's Committees have implemented the electronic "one-stop" information system.

- 843 hamlets and villages have public telecommunications infrastructure with high-speed internal network connections, 3G and 4G mobile networks, fixed broadband internet, and terrestrial digital television. 5G networks have been successfully tested and installed by VNPT and Viettel in the provincial square.

- 96% is the province-wide mobile coverage rate (Viettel accounts for about 98.5%).

- Telecommunications infrastructure in border areas is increasingly being invested in, with 38 BTS (Base Transceiver Stations) for mobile information broadcasting (covering 260 km of border patrol routes). The goal is to achieve 200 BTS in the coming time and 100% coverage for hamlets/villages with low and dispersed population densities by 2025.

- The province has established and put into operation the Integrated Data Center under the Department of Information and Communication. The provincial People's Committee has issued a

shared database list for Binh Phuoc province and is completing the plan to provide open data for Binh Phuoc province by 2025.

### **1.2. Digitalization of Records and Administrative Procedure Results**

Currently, the province's officials handling administrative procedures have not attached the results to the update section on the provincial DVC Portal, resulting in low synchronization of results on the portal:

- The rate of electronic result issuance on the DVC Portal is only 7.48%, ranking 52nd out of 63 provinces and cities.

- The level of digitalization of records and administrative procedure results is only 34%, ranking 49th out of 63 provinces and cities.

- Transparency of administrative procedure handling: 86.2%, ranking 7th out of 63, not achieving the goal of 100% transparency.

- Provision of online public administrative services: 80.3%, ranking 3rd out of 63, meeting the target of 80%.

- Implementation of online payment based on data: 29.95%, ranking 11th out of 63, not reaching the 30% target.

- Processing results of documents and administrative procedures on the portal: 90.94%, ranking 30th out of 63, meeting the 90% target.

### **1.3. Quality of the Province's Public Service Portal (PSP)**

- The provincial PSP has undertaken the connection, integration, data sharing, and results synchronization of administrative procedure settlements on the National PSP. As of July 12, 2023, the total number of synchronized records on the National PSP is 205,862 (76.62%), while the unsynchronized ones are 62,814 (23.38%).

- The total number of accounts on the provincial PSP is 3,000 accounts. This might have positioned Binh Phuoc as the 7th province with the most users on the National PSP, according to the 2022 Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) report.

## **II. CAUSES**

### **2.1. Regulations on Procedures and Processes for Handling Two Groups of Administrative Procedures**

- The current legal framework and practical application of regulations in building procedures for handling marriage status confirmation and "3 in 1" interconnected procedures online at the local level still face various obstacles and inconsistencies. There is a lack of updates, synchronization, and consistency between previous legal documents and specialized guidance documents, as well as their representation on the National PSP.

- In the process of transitioning the two researched administrative procedure groups to the



electronic environment, functional agencies seem to still carry the burden of traditional design thinking and institutionalizing processes and procedures.

## **2.2. Personnel and Capacity, Management Skills, and Operation of the OPS Supply System**

- In Binh Phuoc, the workforce in information technology is still limited both in quantity and quality, while the numerical workforce is a crucial part of the digital infrastructure.

- Allocating personnel with expertise in information technology, computer science, and data science at the commune level in the digital transformation process is essential but has not been realized.

- Low salaries, lack of benefits and other incentives, insufficient machinery and equipment, poor working conditions, etc., lead to a lack of motivation for public servants to implement OPS.

## **2.3. Training and Development for Officials and Civil Servants at All Levels, especially at the Commune Level**

Several issues arise regarding training and development based on local practices: (i) the level of interest in absorbing and applying knowledge and skills through classes, training courses for officials and civil servants, especially for older members, is limited; (ii) the design of course content, management methods, monitoring of learning progress on the OneTouch platform is not suitable for the specific requirements of each locality; and (iii) the forms of attracting and maintaining online learning habits on this platform in the population, communities, and society are not attractive.

## **2.4. Digital Infrastructure for OPS Towards Building E-Government, Digital Government, and E-Governance**

- The new 5G network has only been implemented experimentally in the city centre (but has not been licensed for operation). Other urban centres in the province have not yet been covered by the 5G network.

- The province still has 77 low-signal points, concentrated in deep, border areas with a dense population of ethnic minorities, low population, and widespread dispersion.

- Although the information technology infrastructure of many localities has been invested in, it is still not synchronized; the computers in use are too old (7 to 10 years), now degraded and difficult to install, incompatible with modern and powerful configuration software.

- Moreover, the investment level for each commune's internet connection is not uniform, failing to meet the requirements for OPS supply. For example, Thuan Loi commune uses a package costing 1.2 million VND/month, while Tan Hoa commune only pays 320,000 VND/month.

## **2.5. Financial Conditions and Priority Levels for OPS Today**

Binh Phuoc province and governments at various levels face numerous economic challenges, with insufficient budgets to modernize equipment and basic infrastructure for OPS. The province also lacks adequate conditions for investing in supporting the activities of Community Digital Technology Teams (CDTT) and Project 06 at the commune, hamlet, and neighbourhood levels.

## **2.6. Promotion and Dissemination of OPS**

- Since 2019, Binh Phuoc province and localities have made efforts to promote and disseminate OPS associated with digital transformation through various forms, but the effectiveness has not met expectations. Citizens are only familiar with and receive information about digital transformation and the usefulness of OPS through media channels such as newspapers, radio, television, CDTT, and Project 06. However, few citizens actively access, operate, and use OPS, mostly relying on direct assistance from commune-level civil servants or choosing to do it directly.

- Some support models for promotion and implementation of OPS for citizens, such as Youth Volunteer Teams in some localities, have temporarily ceased operations. Meanwhile, CDTT and Project 06 at the commune, hamlet, and neighbourhood levels face various difficulties (financial, equipment, manpower, technology, etc.).

## **2.7. Citizens' Perception, Psychology, and Habits When Handling Procedures**

- Citizens still prefer handling administrative procedures directly rather than online, a mindset deeply ingrained. Some are hesitant to learn or lack the means and devices (smartphones, internet, etc.). They are accustomed to and feel more convenient, secure, and reassured when dealing with administrative procedures directly, as they can ask questions and interact directly with civil servants.

- In practice, the process of handling administrative procedures for issuing marriage status certificates and interconnecting the "3 in 1" procedures online is still quite complex and cumbersome compared to handling them directly. For minority groups, this is an even greater challenge.

## **2.8. Implementation Practices of Community Digital Technology Teams (CDTT) and Project 06 at the Commune, Hamlet, and Neighbourhood Levels**

After more than a year of implementation, due to both subjective and objective reasons, 111 CDTTs and Project 06 at the commune level, as well as 843 teams at the hamlet, hamlet, and neighbourhood levels in the province, are facing many difficulties in operation, with activities being tentative and effectiveness falling short of expectations. In many hamlets/hamlets, CDTTs exist but are more form oriented. The coordination, collaboration, and connection between these teams and other forces such as regular civil servants, commune-level police, telecommunications businesses, etc., are still loose.

## **III. PROPOSED SOLUTIONS FOR BINH PHUOC PROVINCE**

1. To address the shortage of specialized IT personnel, authorized agencies at the provincial, district, and commune levels may consider the following solutions:

- The People's Council and People's Committee of Binh Phuoc province need to study and reorganize the organizational structure, staffing, and job positions in the direction of rational reinforcement of personnel with capabilities in digital transformation, information technology support for the commune level.

- Early research on forms of material support (increased allowances) for officials directly

responsible for providing OPS, supporting digital transformation at the commune level in the province.

- Study mechanisms to attract and use high-quality human resources in information technology working in the province with reasonable incentives.

2. The province should continue to leverage and maximize the features of the OneTouch open online learning platform for training and developing civil servants from basic to advanced levels. The province also needs to early research, compile, and design training programs that closely align with local, sectoral, and agency practices, proposing that the Ministry of Information and Communications grant integration rights on the OneTouch platform (<https://onetouch.mic.gov.vn/>).

3. The province needs to conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of the organization and effectiveness of the operation of 111 CDTTs and Project 06 at the commune level, as well as 843 CDTTs in hamlets, hamlets, and neighbourhoods in Binh Phuoc province.

4. Government levels from provincial to commune need to establish mechanisms for maintenance, upgrading, new procurement, as well as regular monitoring and evaluation of the information technology system, internet connectivity, telecommunications networks, etc., serving administrative management and OPS throughout the province, especially in remote areas.

5. The Department of Information and Communications should research and experiment with several models:

- Promoting digital literacy in the community through mobile online administrative service resolution, with the participation of four main forces at the grassroots level (including commune-level police, commune-level civil servants, telecommunications businesses, and CDTTs).

- Supporting communication "Binh Phuoc students, students, and teachers accompany the digital transformation."

6. The Department of Information and Communications should research and consider minimum standards for internet connectivity (minimum bandwidth) as well as minimum cost for monthly internet packages to serve administrative management and OPS at the commune level.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Overview of Research Area

Binh Phuoc is a province located in the South-eastern region of Viet Nam. It was re-established as a province in 1997 after being separated from the former Song Be Province. The province shares its borders with three provinces of Cambodia: Mondulkiri, Kratie, and Tboung Khmum, with a total border length of 260.433 kilometres. The natural area of the entire province is approximately 6,873.56 square kilometres. To the north, it borders Dak Nong Province, to the south it borders Binh Duong Province, to the east it shares boundaries with Lam Dong Province and Dong Nai Province, and to the west, it borders Tay Ninh Province. In the northwest, it also shares a border with Cambodia. Binh Phuoc is a region that serves as a crossroads between the South-central Highlands and the South-eastern region of Viet Nam. It features diverse geographical landscapes, including plateaus, hills, and lowlands. The province is administratively divided into 11 districts, comprising 1 city (Dong Xoai), 3 towns (Phuoc Long, Binh Long, and Chon Thanh), and 7 rural districts (Dong Phu, Bu Dang, Bu Dop, Bu Gia Map, Loc Ninh, Hon Quan, and Phu Rieng), with a total of 111 communes, wards, and townships<sup>1</sup>.



Source: Binh Phuoc Province's Geography.

The province includes 50 communes categorized as Area I (communities in the initial stages of development), 3 communes in Area II (challenged communities), and 5 communes in Area III (especially disadvantaged communities)<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, there are 3 border districts: Bu Gia Map, Bu Dop, and Loc Ninh.

Binh Phuoc is a region with distinct cultural, social, and demographic diversity. Currently, there are 41 ethnic groups residing in Binh Phuoc. As of the end of 2022, the province's population is approximately 1,034,667 people, with ethnic minority people accounting for about 19.67% of the population. The majority of these ethnic minority people include the Xtieng, Hoa, Khmer, Nung, Tay, among others. Urban population makes up only 23.7%, while the remaining 76.3% reside in rural areas. Many areas in the province have a high proportion of ethnic minority populations, such as Bù Gia Mập district (37.07%), Bù Đẳng district (28.95%), Loc Ninh district (12.70%), and Đồng Phú district

<sup>1</sup> Provincial Party Committee & People's Committee of Binh Phuoc Province (2015), "Binh Phuoc Gazetteer (Volume I: Nature - Population - Events - Figures, Districts, Towns)" National Political Publishing House - Truth, Hanoi, page 5; and, Binh Phuoc Province's official website, access link: <https://binhphuoc.gov.vn/vi/about/Tong-Quan-Binh-Phuoc.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister (2021), Decision No. 861/2021/QĐ-TTg dated June 4, 2021, of the Prime Minister approving the list of communes in Regions III, II, and I under the areas of EM communities and mountainous areas for the 2021-2025 period, Hanoi.

(10.10%), among others. The poverty rate in the province, as per the multidimensional poverty standard, remains high compared to the national average (at the end of 2021, there were 4,894 poor households, accounting for 1.76%), with 2,820 of these being ethnic minority households (57.91%)<sup>3</sup>. Educational attainment and the quality of education facilities in the province are still in need of improvement<sup>4</sup>. Access to information technology and digital technology among the population, especially among ethnic minority people, remains limited.

In 2022, the Provincial Administrative Reform Index (PAR-INDEX) of Binh Phuoc reached 84.46 points, ranking 29th out of 63 provinces and centrally governed cities, marking a 10-place improvement compared to 2021. Meanwhile, the Digital Transformation Index (DTI) in 2022 was 0.6385, ranking 12th nationwide, but it decreased by 3 places compared to 2021. Notably, the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) for the province in 2022 was 39.93 points, and the Satisfaction Index with Administrative Services (SIPAS) was 76.05%, both falling into the "low" category (ranking 56th out of 63 provinces and cities).

During the period from 2021 to 2022, there was a decrease in 4 indicators related to "Electronic Governance" in the PAPI index: (i) The percentage of people who find the provincial electronic information portal easy to use for information retrieval (-14.79%); (ii) The percentage of people who report that local authorities publish draft policies and laws on the electronic information portal for public opinion (-7.84%); (iii) The percentage of people who state that they have obtained sufficient guidance and forms needed from the local electronic information portal when certifying or confirming documents (-2.69%); and (iv) The percentage of people who report that they have obtained sufficient guidance and forms needed from the local electronic information portal when applying for land use rights certificates (-0.70%). The PAPI survey in 2022 also showed significant differences in the electronic governance axis between the Kinh ethnic group and other ethnic minority groups. Additionally, the proportion of residents in Binh Phuoc who own smartphones is low (representing only 1.11% of the national population), and less than 50% of the province's residents find the provincial electronic information portals easy to use.

## ***1.2. Purpose and Scope of the Report***

### **1.2.1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the current state, identify influencing factors affecting the provision of OPS in part and in their entirety, which fall under the jurisdiction of local authorities at the commune level. Additionally, it aims to assess the ability of the population, especially ethnic minority people, within the province of Binh Phuoc to access and utilize these OPS. This evaluation is conducted through an in-depth study of two typical Administrative Procedures (APs): (i) Issuance of marriage status certificates; (ii) Integration of procedures for birth registration, permanent residence

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<sup>3</sup> PV (2023), "Binh Phuoc: Promoting the Strength of the Great Unity of All Ethnic Groups in the Province" Provincial Party's official website, access link: <https://tinhuynhphuoc.vn/Van-hoa-Xa-hoi/binh-phuoc-phat-huy-suc-manh-khoi-dai-doan-ket-toan-dan-toc-tren-dia-ban-tinh>.

<sup>4</sup> Provincial Party Committee of Binh Phuoc Province (2020), Documents of the 11th Provincial Party Congress, term 2020 - 2025, Binh Phuoc Printing House, Dong Xoai City, page 63.

registration, and health insurance card issuance for children under 6 years old (the "3-in-1" procedure). Subsequently, the report intends to propose solutions and recommendations to relevant authorities, ranging from the commune level to the central level.

### **1.2.2. Scope**

#### Research Areas:

The research was conducted in collaboration with the Standing Committee of the Provincial People's Committee of Binh Phuoc and representatives of leadership from related provincial departments and agencies (Department of Information and Communications, Department of Internal Affairs, Department of Justice, Social Insurance, Police, Viettel Binh Phuoc, and Provincial Post Office).

At the local level, the research team worked in collaboration with the leaders of Bu Gia Map district People's Committee and representatives of relevant specialized agencies in the district and conducted field surveys in two communes of the district: Da Kia and Phuoc Minh. Also, in collaboration with Dong Phu district People's Committee and representatives of relevant specialized agencies in the district, the research team carried out field surveys in two communes of the district: Thuan Loi and Tan Hoa.

The selected areas feature typical socio-economic characteristics that align with the research objectives, including economic conditions (poverty rate), population and population density, ethnic minority population composition, geographical proximity to the provincial border, terrain characteristics, transportation accessibility in residential clusters with commune People's Committee headquarters, geographical distance of these localities from Dong Xoai city, administrative service provision capacity, and more.

Among the four selected commune-level administrative units surveyed, Da Kia commune (Bù Gia Mập district), Thuận Lợi and Tân Hoà communes (Đồng Phú district) are categorized as Area I communes, while Phuoc Minh commune (Bù Gia Mập district) is categorized as an Area II commune<sup>5</sup>.

#### Research Content:

This study analyses the current provision and accessibility of OPS at the commune level for the population through summarizing survey results. It also conducts an in-depth assessment of two typical APs: (1) issuance of marriage status certificates, and (2) integration of the "3-in-1" procedure, both in direct and online formats.

These procedures are essential and widely used by the population, significantly impacting their daily lives. Additionally, these procedures are influenced by the process of collecting and constructing the national database (related to original information about the population's residence, citizenship, health insurance, social insurance, etc.)<sup>6, 7</sup>. The study also ensures that priority criteria are

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<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister's Decision No. 33/2020/QĐ-TTg, Date: November 12, 2020; Title: *Decision of the Prime Minister on Criteria for Distinguishing EM and Mountainous Areas According to the Development Level for the Period 2021 - 2025*

<sup>6</sup> Prime Minister's Decision No. 714/QĐ-TTg; Date: May 22, 2015; Title: *Decision of the Prime Minister on the issuance of a list of national databases that need priority implementation as a foundation for the development of e-Government.*

<sup>7</sup> Government Office (2023), Official Letter No. 2084/VPCP-KSTT; Date: March 30, 2023; Subject: *Implementation of the electronic interconnection process for two essential administrative procedure groups in Project 06.*

implemented in the digital environment.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.3. Research Methods**

#### **1.3.1. Collection and Analysis of Secondary Data**

The research team utilized secondary data, including documents and legal regulations at the central and provincial levels in Binh Phuoc. These sources include documents such as the Provincial Party Congress of the 11th term, 2020-2025, the Binh Phuoc Geographic Atlas (Volumes I and II), official reports from local authorities provided to the research team, information on the Provincial Party's website, the Binh Phuoc Provincial Electronic Portal, and more. Additionally, this report referenced data and recent research results from institutions like the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, the Institute of Policy and Communications Research, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and assessments of PAPI, PAR-INDEX, SIPAS, and DTI for Binh Phuoc Province.

#### **1.3.2. Exchange and Interview Methods**

The research team conducted in-depth exchanges and interviews with 17 cadres and civil servants (CCS) (09 at the commune level and 08 at the district level)<sup>9</sup>, including those from the People's Committees, police agencies, and social insurance agencies at the district level, as well as representatives of specialized agencies under the districts. They also interviewed those working in the "one-stop" reception and results delivery department (referred to as the "one-stop department") such as legal and residence registration officials, commune police officers responsible for guiding and providing public administrative services. The purpose was to understand their needs, desires, and difficulties when providing these procedures to the people, both in-person and online.

- **In-depth interviews with 10 citizens** who came to resolve public APs in general and the two selected procedures for research purposes, at the headquarters of the People's Committees in 2 districts and 4 communes. Among these, 07 citizens were of the Kinh ethnic majority, while the others were ethnic minority. The age of the interviewees ranged from 32 to 64 years old. The goal was to understand whether they had used OPS, particularly the two selected procedures for research, or not. If they had not used them, the reasons included not knowing about them or knowing but not being interested in using them. The difficulties encountered were related to the procedure process, the capacity of cadres and civil servants, the psychological aspects, the habits of citizens, technology infrastructure, and more. Additionally, identifying the points that were not suitable, unnecessary, and the bottlenecks in the OPS process through the PSP (PSP), both national and the provincial portal.

- **Direct observation of the process of providing public services** (including issuing marriage status certificates and the "3-in-1" procedure); interconnections and internal connections within the "one-stop department" with the commune police and social insurance agencies. The research team members also acted as citizens trying to access the provincial online PSP at

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<sup>8</sup> Government (2020), Decree No. 45/2020/NĐ-CP of the Government; Date: Year 2020; Title: *Decree of the Government on the implementation of AP in the electronic environment (Article 21)*.

<sup>9</sup> Note: 17 cases were interviewed in-depth directly in the field (09 CCS at the commune level, 08 CCS at the district level), excluding opinions exchanged directly at conferences, discussions, and working sessions between the working delegation and localities in Binh Phuoc province.

<https://dichvucong.binhphuoc.gov.vn> and the National PSP to understand how these two procedures were carried out online. They assessed the shortcomings in the process and procedures, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the design and utility of the provincial portal from a user perspective.

- **Consultations with interdisciplinary experts** to provide assessments, insights, and policy recommendations tailored to improving the quality of OPS and accessibility to the two APs selected for research. The research team had preliminary discussions with the leadership of the Department of Information and Communications and the heads of related departments to share the initial research results and engage in a preliminary exchange before preparing the official advisory report for the province. Additionally, the research team collaborated with the provincial People's Committee to organize a scientific workshop on the topic: *"Solutions to Improve the Effectiveness of OPS in Binh Phuoc Province in the Digital Transformation Process."* Through this event, the research team received many opinions, shared experiences, and consulted with experts, scientists, and managers on this topic.

### **1.3.3. Limitations of the Study**

This study aims to comprehensively assess the actual situation and overall accessibility and usage of essential commune-level OPS by the people, especially those in the ethnic minority areas of Binh Phuoc Province. However, due to limited time and resources, this report only conducts field research and in-depth analysis of two types of APs: the issuance of marriage status certificates and the interconnection of the "3-in-1" procedure on the electronic platform. Therefore, some interpretations and general conclusions regarding the provision, access, and usage of commune-level OPS in Binh Phuoc Province may be generalized.

The report would be more regular and profound if the research team had a longer time and could collaborate more extensively with additional communes and districts beyond the 04 communes and 02 districts surveyed, especially in areas belonging to Group III, administrative units representing urban areas (wards, towns). Furthermore, despite the desire, the research team had limited opportunities to engage in discussions with more citizens, especially ethnic minority groups, who need to resolve the two selected APs. All voices and perceptions of officials, civil servants at all levels, and citizens, including minority groups, are crucial for the analysis, recommendations, and suggestions presented in this report. However, this gap also presents an opportunity for the research team to address these limitations through future studies on the same topic in the coming time.



## II. KEY FINDINGS

### 2.1. Status of OPS Delivery in Binh Phuoc Province

#### 2.1.1. General Overview

According to the report from the People's Committee of Binh Phuoc Province, in 2022, the entire province successfully processed 1,251,357 records related to online and offline APs (with an average delay rate of 3.21% of the total number of records). In the first six months of 2023, this number amounted to 541,792, with the provincial level processing 33,816 records, district level processing 19,613 records, and commune level processing 477,363 records (with an average delay rate of 1.10% of the total number of records). As of the reporting date for the working group (August 11, 2023), the entire province had processed 1,894 records (refer to Table 2.1).

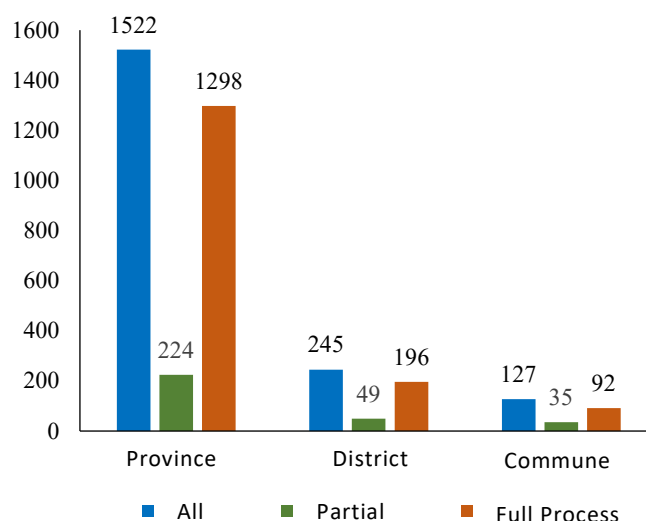
Table 2.1: Overview of the Status of OPS Delivery in Binh Phuoc Province (unit: records)

| Level \ Time of data collection | Provincial | Commune | District  |
|---------------------------------|------------|---------|-----------|
| 2022                            | 6.9661     | 52.812  | 1.128.884 |
| The first six months of 2023.   | 44.816     | 19.613  | 477.363   |
| The report date (11/8/2023)     | 1.522      | 245     | 127       |

Source: Provincial People's Committee<sup>10</sup>.

From the beginning of 2023 to the date when the data was collected for the research team (August 11, 2023), Binh Phuoc Province has processed 1,894 records partially and in full online. Among them, 1,586 records were processed in full (83.74%), and 308 records were processed partially (16.26%). Despite being the level of government closest to and in direct contact with the citizens, the total number of records generated, received, and processed online (partially and in full) is the lowest at the commune level compared to the district and provincial levels (see Chart 2.1). This is a matter of research interest, especially for the two types of procedures: (i) issuing marriage status certificates and (ii) interconnecting "3 in 1" which fall under the

Chart 2.1: Status of resolving OPS in Binh Phuoc Province from the beginning of 2023 until August 11, 2023



Source: People's Committee of the Province

<sup>10</sup> People's Committee of the Province (2023), Report No. 272/BC-UBND dated August 11, 2023, assessing the current status of online public services in Binh Phuoc Province.

primary jurisdiction of the commune-level government.

### **2.1.2. Basic Infrastructure for OPS and Digital Transformation<sup>11</sup>**

#### **a) Technical Infrastructure:**

100% of the agencies and units in Binh Phuoc Province have an internal network (LAN), Internet connectivity, and specialized data transmission network lines. 100% of CCS have been equipped with computers for their professional work.

- The province uses a single PSP platform with 03 levels, synchronously connected to the national PSP. 100% of the Administrative Service Centers at the provincial and district levels, as well as the One-Stop Department of 111 communes, wards, and townships, are fully equipped with facilities and infrastructure for CCS to receive and process records and APs.

- The public telecommunications infrastructure has high-speed internal network connectivity, 3G and 4G mobile networks, fixed broadband Internet, and terrestrial digital television covering all 843 hamlets and villages. In addition, 5G networks have been successfully tested and installed by two network providers, VNPT and Viettel, at the provincial square (though they have not yet received official licensing). Mobile network coverage across the entire province reaches 96%, with Viettel covering approximately 98.5%. Telecommunications infrastructure in border areas is increasingly receiving investment, with 38 mobile information transmission BTS (Base Transceiver Station) towers (covering 260 km of border patrol routes) and plans to achieve 200 BTS towers in areas with weak signal coverage soon. By 2025, 100% of hamlets and villages (with low and dispersed populations) are expected to have mobile network coverage.

#### **b) Data Infrastructure:**

- The province has constructed and put into operation a Data Integration Center under the Department of Information and Communication. The Provincial People's Committee has issued a list of shared databases for Binh Phuoc Province and is in the process of finalizing a plan to provide open data for Binh Phuoc Province until 2025. The data management agencies listed in the shared database are implementing connections, integration of data related to the management system, and sharing of shared databases in the province.

- Currently, the provincial PSP has connected, integrated, and shared data, as well as the results of resolving APs, from the Online Resolution System for APs with the electronic data management repository of organizations and individuals on the national PSP (including synchronized result files and profile information on the national PSP). As of July 12, 2023, the total number of synchronized profiles on the national PSP is 205,862 (76.62%), while the unsynchronized ones are 62,814 (23.38%).

#### **c) Application Infrastructure:**

- The provincial PSP has integrated 2,025 public services, including 156 partial OAS and 1,850 complete OAS (91.3%). As of August 8, 2023, Binh Phuoc Province has completed the integration and

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<sup>11</sup> According to the Digital Transformation Index (DTI) report for the year 2022, Binh Phuoc Province ranks 12th out of 63 provinces and cities with a score of 0.6385 points. Within this ranking, Binh Phuoc ranks 12th for e-government, 22nd for digital economy, and 14th for digital society.

provision of OPS on the national PSP with the provincial PSP, including 1,466 out of 1,783 OAS (82.22%), of which 1,047 out of 1,466 (71.42%) are complete services, and 419 out of 1,466 (28.58%) are partial services (ranking 5th out of 63 provinces and cities). The rate of receiving OPS profiles on the electronic environment has been raised, and electronic authentication services have been implemented in all 11 districts/cities and all 111 communes/wards/towns. Electronic payment applications have been integrated into the provincial Public Service Portal, making it convenient for citizens and businesses to use fully online e-services.

- The Single-Window Electronic Information System has been synchronously deployed at 100% of district-level and commune-level People's Committees, contributing to the modernization, transparency, and publicness of AP resolution activities. It has improved the investment and business environment, enhanced the province's competitiveness index, and built trust with citizens and businesses.

- Applications for receiving, processing citizen feedback and suggestions: the "Binh Phuoc Today" application, the 1022 system, and the EOC switchboard system (113, 114, and 115) and the Social Listening system are integrated at the provincial-level Intelligent Operations Center (IOC) and 3 district-level IOC centers.

### **2.1.3. Digitalization of Records and AP Resolution Results**

Currently, civil servants handling APs in the province have not attached the resolution results to the result update section on the provincial PSP. As a result, the data synchronization of resolution results on the portal is low, specifically:

- The issuance of electronic results on the PSP only reaches 7.48%, ranking 52nd out of 63 provinces and cities.

- The level of digitalization of records and AP resolution results is only 34%, ranking 49th out of 63 provinces and cities.

- Transparency of APs: 86.2%, ranking 7th out of 63, but not yet meeting the target of 100%.

- Provision of OPS results: 80.3%, ranking 3rd out of 63, meeting the 80% target.

- Implementation of online digital payments: 29.95%, ranking 11th out of 63, not yet meeting the 30% target.

- Handling of records and AP results on the portal: 90.94%, meeting the 90% target, ranking 30th out of 63 provinces and cities.

### **2.1.4. Quality of the Provincial Public Service Portal**

- The total number of accounts on the provincial PSP is 3,000 accounts. This may have made Binh Phuoc one of the provinces with the 7th highest number of users on the national PSP, according to the PAPI Index report in 2022.

- According to the assessment results of the PSP for the first 6 months of 2023, Binh Phuoc Province is in Group B (scoring from 80 to 89 points)<sup>12</sup>, specifically with 83 out of 100 points:

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<sup>12</sup> The Ministry of Information and Communications (2023) has released "Assessment Results of Public Service Portals in the First 6 Months of 2023." This information is available on the National Digital Transformation Portal website at the following link: <https://dx.gov.vn/ket-qua-danh-gia-cac-cong-dich-vu-cong-6-thang-dau-nam-2023-1690282871911.htm>.



- Evaluation criteria for functionality: 45 out of 50 points.
- Performance criteria: 32 out of 40 points.
- Criteria for convenient access to information: 6 out of 10 points.

## **2.2. Issuance of Marriage Status Confirmation Certificates**

According to the report from Binh Phuoc Province, all 111 communes, wards, and towns in the province have resolved the issuance of marriage status confirmation certificates to citizens through both direct and online methods at the full process level. In 2022, the entire province had 27,937 registration files, of which 27,387 files were processed online, and 550 files were processed in-person on paper. The on-time filing rate reached 99.43%. In the first 6 months of 2023, the province had 13,619 files (including 13,604 files processed online and 15 files processed in-person) with a 99.57% on-time processing rate. However, as revealed by this research, the total number of late or pending files for this AP during both 2022 and the first 6 months of 2023 was 217. Late or pending files were processed online at the full process level, accounting for 159 files (66.82%), while in-person processing accounted for only 58 files (26.73%).

Through discussions with judicial officers and civil servants at the One-Stop Section of the selected communes, the research team learned that this AP was only partially implemented online at level 2 or 3. To achieve the target of providing online services at the full process level, civil servants must regularly assist citizens.

### **2.2.1. Process and Procedures for Handling APs Online**

To gain a more accurate and objective assessment of this matter, the research team directly accessed and navigated the registration process for these procedures on the Provincial PSP in Binh Phuoc Province, available at <https://dichvucong.binhphuoc.gov.vn/thu-tuc-hanh-chinh>, as well as the National PSP at <https://dichvucong.gov.vn>. The team made the following observations:

- On the provincial Public Service Portal, under the [DETAILS] section for viewing detailed instructions on how to complete these APs, the research team noted that the local government has provided comprehensive and detailed information, including the step-by-step process, the required documents and their quantities, processing times, relevant authorities, fees as regulated by the Provincial People's Council, and notes, requirements, along with forms (attached files). However, there is an issue with the design of this section: In addition to the "*execution sequence*" there is an additional section labelled "*execution method*" and these two sections seem to overlap in terms of instructional content. If the "*execution method*" section is retained, the information provided in this section is too minimal and insufficient for guiding citizens effectively.

- Furthermore, the description and guidance on the process and procedures for handling these APs on the provincial PSP may lead citizens to mistakenly believe that there are only two submission and resolution methods: either directly at the commune-level People's Committees or through the postal system. The importance of online submission is not adequately emphasized. In comparison to the design and presentation of information on submission methods and execution guidance on the National PSP, this section of the provincial portal has limitations in terms of interface design and the amount of necessary information provided to citizens.

- Some information fields, especially the level of OPS provision (partial or full process) for these APs on the provincial Public Service Portal, are not consistent with the information presented by the local authorities on the National Public Service Portal. For example, for the Administrative Procedure "issuance of marriage status confirmation certificates" the provincial portal displays the level as "partial" while the National PSP indicates "OPS full process" for communes, wards, and towns of the province.

Despite the simplification of the process and procedures, there are still several shortcomings and challenges for both parties involved (service providers - the government, and beneficiaries - citizens) when it comes to handling APs online. When submitting applications online, citizens seeking Marriage Status Confirmation Certificates must access the provincial PSP or the National Public Service Portal, create an account (if not already registered), authenticate their user identity following the provided instructions, log in to the system, correctly identify the commune-level People's Committee with jurisdiction for resolution<sup>13</sup>, provide the required information using the interactive electronic form for Marriage Status Confirmation Certificate issuance (attached file, provided on the provincial PSP), attach photocopies or electronic copies of the required documents and materials as prescribed, pay fees and charges through online payment functionality or other methods as stipulated by law, and complete the submission process. In practice, civil servants may not always perform these steps accurately or may encounter difficulties. For citizens, especially those who are not tech-savvy, infrequent users of OPS, have limited access to smartphones, these procedures can be quite challenging. Furthermore, Binh Phuoc is an area with a high population of ethnic minority. Many of the selected communes in this study have a high percentage of ethnic minority people, such as Thuan Loi commune (30%), Da Kia commune <sup>14</sup>(30.5%), and Tan Hoa commune (50%). Additionally, residents with low levels of education, poverty, elderly individuals, and people with disabilities face even more challenges in accessing and using OPS, especially for APs. As a result, legal and civil registration officers must invest a considerable amount of time in both public education and assistance, including helping citizens complete forms. This places significant pressure on public officials when providing OPS, particularly during the initial phase of implementing these electronic procedures.

### **2.2.2. Human Factors (Including Officials, Civil Servants, and Citizens) in Providing, Accessing, and Using the Marriage Status Confirmation Certificate Issuance Service Online**

This section primarily investigates and evaluates the capabilities of commune-level cadres and civil servants (CCS), members of the Community Digital Technology Team, and Project 06 at the grassroots level in providing OPS, especially for Marriage Status Confirmation Certificate issuance. Additionally, it analyses the psychological factors, habits, and behaviours of citizens when accessing and using these services, both online and in-person.

According to the report, CCS in four communes have been adequately trained and equipped by the province and district to have the necessary knowledge, procedures, and skills to provide Marriage

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<sup>13</sup> Through our observations, even Thuan Loi commune in Dong Phu district, Binh Phuoc province, has not been updated on the National PSP when citizens access it to handle administrative procedures.

<sup>14</sup> In Da Kia commune, Bu Gia Map district, only around 40% of the ethnic minority population uses mobile phones, and the rate of smartphone usage is even lower.

Status Confirmation Certificates to citizens through both online and in-person methods. They have demonstrated a keen sense of responsibility, dedication, and resilience, as they strive to meet the OPS provision targets while also providing guidance and "handholding" assistance to citizens during the initial stages of transitioning to online procedures. Notably, the significant finding of the research team is the hesitation and the lack of effectiveness of CCS at various levels in finding efficient ways for citizens, especially ethnic minority people, to access, actively use, and independently perform these procedures online. For ethnic minority people, additional difficulties in encouraging their participation in OPS include limited access to information through radio broadcasts, village meetings, and community gatherings. A deputy district chairman shared: *"There are no specific initiatives or policies to mobilize and promote awareness among ethnic minority people. The image of officials assisting and guiding citizens in online procedures when they come to process their documents is also part of the awareness-raising effort to gradually change citizens' habits"* (Male, 52 years old).

For citizens, their digital literacy, mindset, and habits affect their ability to access and actively use OPS (OAS) in general and the Marriage Status Confirmation Certificate issuance service online in particular. From the perspective of commune-level CCS, one district official shared: *"...Elderly individuals access slowly and do not use smartphones but rather basic mobile phones. Therefore, officials have to assist them, but this causes delays, impatience, and complaints about complex procedures. Most online procedures in this field are still handled by officials"* (Male, 37 years old). Another commune official expressed: *"...Citizens rarely use OPS (OAS) because they do it infrequently. Even if there are instructions, they may forget their password or the steps to submit their files. Indeed, promoting OPS in general or issuing Marriage Status Certificates continues to be a challenging task for the local government."* (Male, 45 years old).

The results of in-depth interviews with several citizens who came to the One-Stop Division of the Communal People's Committee in Da Kia and Phuoc Minh communes (Bu Gia Map district), Thuan Loi and Tan Hoa communes (Dong Phu district) show that the majority of citizens are aware of and have heard about OPS (OAS) in general and the issuance of Marriage Status Confirmation Certificates specifically on the online platform. However, these citizens still prefer conducting their transactions in person to receive guidance, even if they reside in remote, border areas, and the distance to the commune People's Committee headquarters is considerable<sup>15</sup>. During interviews, a male respondent from the X-Tieng ethnic group (64 years old) mentioned, *"My wife and I live with our youngest son. Everyone in the family has smartphones, but we only use them for calling. We have heard about OAS, but I have never attempted to use it myself because coming here [to the commune People's Committee headquarters] is faster, and we are accustomed to it."* Some respondents expressed that they are not interested in OAS/OPS. Another person shared their reasons for not being enthusiastic about OAS/OPS, including the online issuance of Marriage Status Confirmation Certificates: *"I have heard about OPS through commune and village officials, and I even registered for a digital identity, but I don't know how to use it. If someone could help guide me, that would be great"* (Male, 46 years old, Kinh ethnicity).

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<sup>15</sup> The farthest distance from a resident's home to the headquarters of the People's Committee (UBND) in Tan Hoa commune is approximately 25 kilometers. In Thuan Loi commune, it ranges from 8 to 10 kilometers, and in Da Kia commune (Bu Gia Map district), it is around 10 kilometers.

However, citizens will be more willing to embrace and easily access OPS/OAS in general, including the Marriage Status Confirmation Certificate issuance service, if the difficulties and barriers they face are gradually eliminated. A couple (an Australian husband and a Vietnamese wife) shared: *"We have been living in Viet Nam for three years. We became aware of OPS when registering for our marriage. We like using online services and when we encounter difficulties, we search on Google for solutions. Today, we came here to process our daughter's name change. It required three trips: inquiries, document submission, and result collection. Now, we are at the one-stop service unit to process it online, but the officials here requested us to do it online."* Another person explained: *"I have heard about OPS through commune and village officials and even registered for a digital identity, but I don't know how to use it. If someone could guide me, I would be willing to try using OPS. Personally, I support OPS because I think they are convenient and save time, as our house is around 15 kilometres away from the commune People's Committee."* Even citizens who are already proficient in using OAS often require hands-on guidance and support from officials: *"...To perform these tasks, I go to a Vinaphone store where employees provide free assistance. I have heard of this online public service, but I have never tried it on my own. If someone could guide me, I would be willing to try using OPS. Personally, I support OPS because they are fast and convenient"* (Male, 46 years old, Kinh ethnicity).

Therefore, to address the human factors affecting the provision of these services, a series of obstacles need to be gradually removed. This includes improving the effectiveness of the Community Digital Technology Team and Project 06 at all levels, systematically resolving difficulties and barriers, enhancing digital literacy, and gradually changing citizens' mindset, habits, and increasing their self-reliance. This will help boost citizens' awareness of OAS as an essential part of the province's digital transformation journey.

### **2.2.3. Technical Infrastructure for Providing Access to and Use of Marriage Status Confirmation APs Online**

Technical infrastructure is a prerequisite for implementing public administrative services in the digital environment. However, from the experiences of the research team and the opinions of local officials, it is evident that there are several shortcomings in the design of the Provincial PSP, the national PSP, Internet connectivity, and the quality of equipment.

For the Provincial PSP in Binh Phuoc Province, accessing and executing the APs for marriage status confirmation encounters technical design difficulties. Users, when accessing the "PUBLIC SERVICES" > "ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE" section and entering keywords such as "marriage" or "marriage status confirmation" as well as other search filters with the "All" option left blank, expect to find detailed information and the process for submitting this AP (while also being connected to the national portal) (see Figure 2.1). However, even when providing additional detailed information in various data filters (e.g., selecting "Citizen" in the filter for "Type of Applicant"), users are unable to retrieve the desired administrative procedure (see Figure 2.2). In contrast, the interface and user interaction for finding this administrative procedure on the National PSP are much simpler and convenient. On the National Public Service Portal, users only need to enter keywords "marriage" or "marriage status confirmation" in the "Search Keywords" box or access the "OPS" section and enter one of these keywords to immediately find the administrative procedure for "Marriage Registration Status Certificate" without needing to provide additional details (see Figure 2.3).



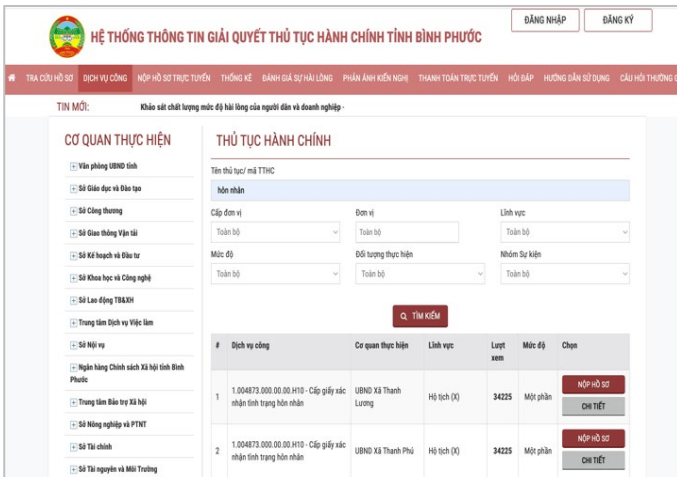


Fig. 2.1: Searching for OPS on the Provincial PSP

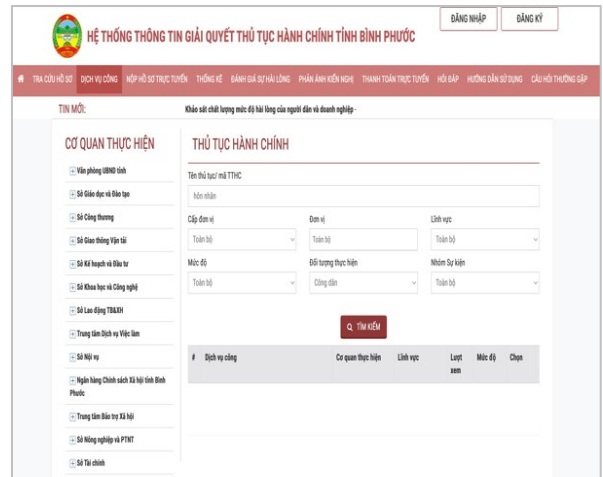


Fig. 2.2: The result shown on Provincial PSP

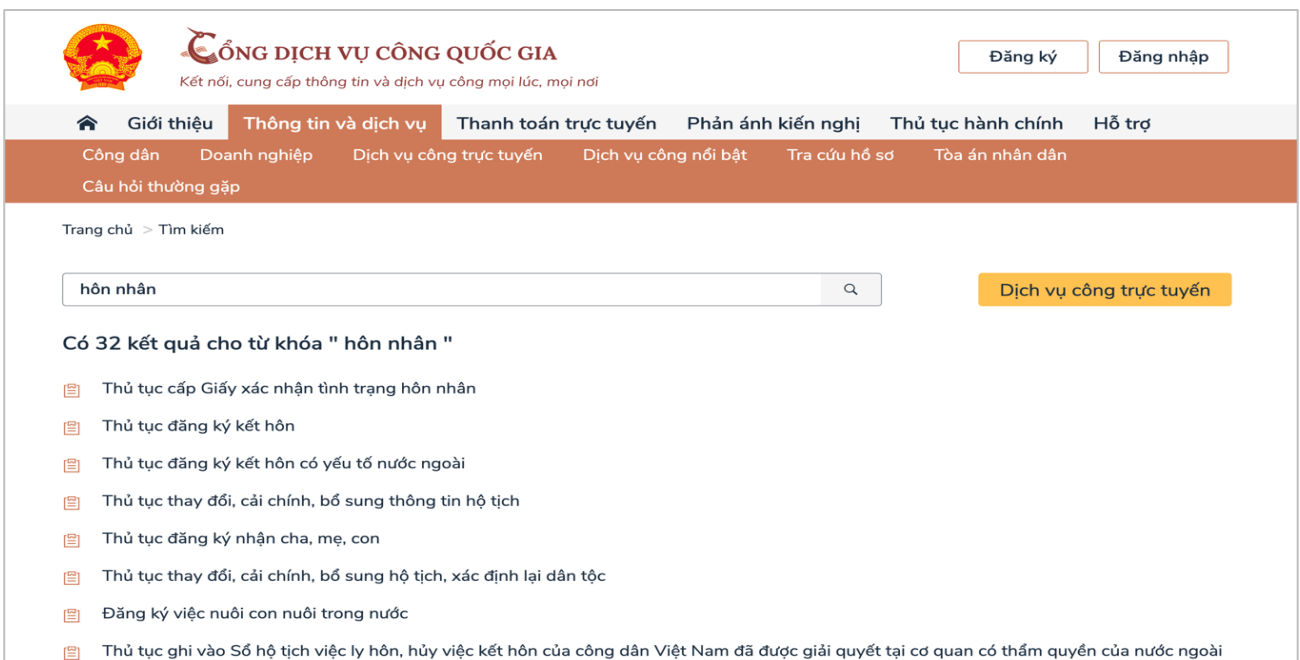


Fig. 2.3: Searching for marriage-related AP on National PSP

For the National PSP, if citizens do not enter keywords for searching but choose one of the 11 groups of administrative procedures dedicated to citizens, specifically the group [Marriage and Family], only 3 APs related to "Marriage" are displayed (see Figure 2.4). The AP for "Marriage Registration Status Certificate" is neither located within the [Marriage and Family] group nor the [Marriage] group. This is an illogical arrangement that can cause confusion and difficulties for citizens when they need to perform this type of APs on the portal.

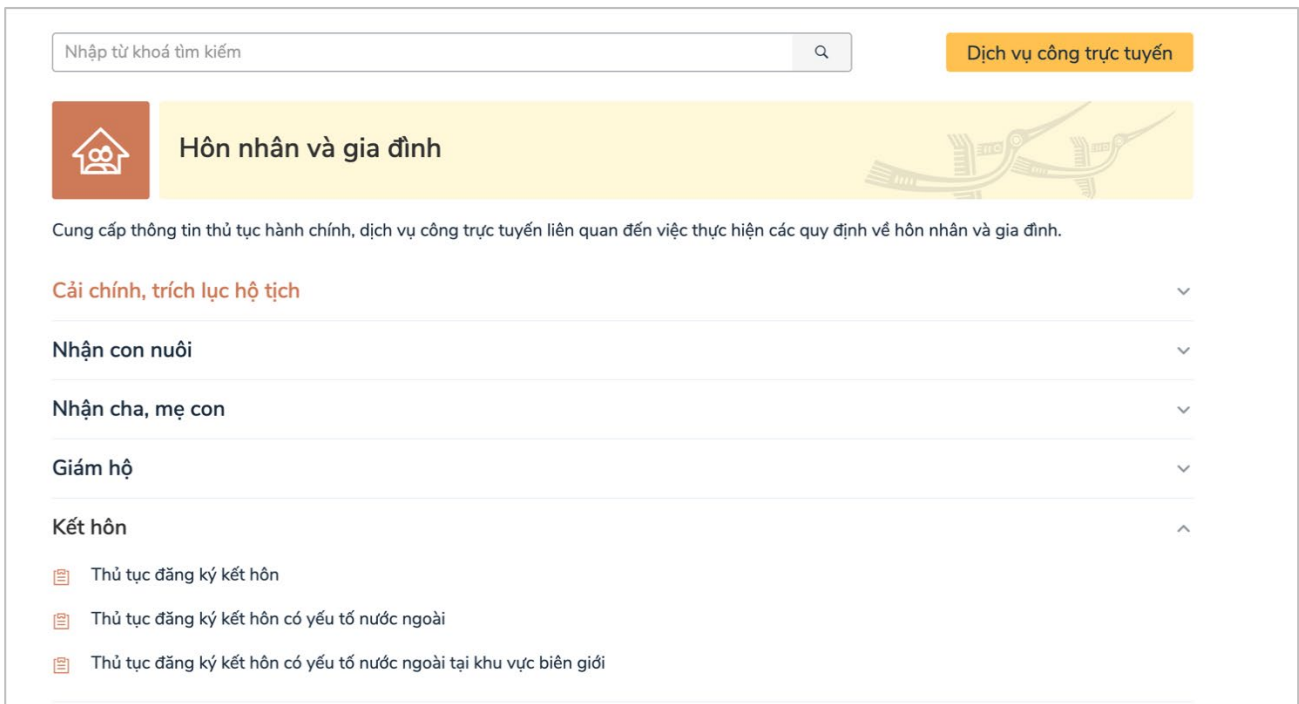


Fig. 2.4: The result shown after searching for marriage-related AP on National PSP

Furthermore, on the National PSP, some administrative units at the district level in Binh Phuoc province have not been fully updated on the system. Taking Dong Phu district as an example during the research field visit, when performing this AP on the National PSP, the portal only displays 10 out of the 11 communes and towns in Dong Phu district ("Thuan Loi commune" is not shown). This is also a drawback and difficulty when residents in that administrative unit attempt to use the OPS.

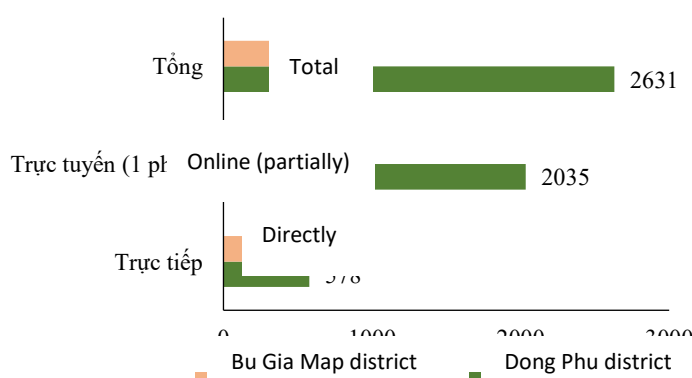
In addition to the research team's experiences, a district official shared, "*The current machinery and equipment are not yet modern and not synchronized, and there are often network issues*" (Male, 53 years old). Another commune official candidly expressed, "*The IT infrastructure and Internet connectivity at the commune headquarters are stable, but in some hamlets, it's not so stable. Furthermore, the timely repair of equipment when it breaks down, such as computers, printers, photocopiers, scanners, etc., is sometimes not feasible, leading to interruptions in the workflow*" (Male, 45 years old). It is not just the digital infrastructure serving the work of government officials and authorities, but also the current state of information technology infrastructure for residents in the province that does not meet the requirements for using OPS and digital transformation, especially in remote and ethnically diverse areas. Some other opinions from commune-level government officials pointed out, "*The percentage of residents using smartphones is low, especially in the special district areas with over 37% ethnic minority people.*"

### 2.3. Interconnection of Birth Registration, Permanent Residence Registration, and Health Insurance Card Issuance for Children Under 6 Years Old

According to the report from the People's Committee of Binh Phuoc province, the interconnection of "3 in 1" procedures at the local level occurred in two phases. Before July 1, 2023, only "2 in 1" interconnection was implemented for the procedures of issuing birth certificates and health insurance cards for children under 6 years old, either directly or to a limited extent online (partial OPS). Starting from July 1, 2023<sup>16</sup>, in compliance with the requirements of the Government Office and the Social Insurance of Viet Nam, Binh Phuoc province organized training sessions for officials at all levels and proceeded to handle these APs through the "3 in 1" interconnection process, either directly or to a high extent online (complete OPS) via the National PSP. As of August 11, 2023, the entire province has only managed to resolve 18 "3 in 1" procedures online.

For the two selected districts, including the entire year of 2022 and the first six months of 2023, the number of "2 in 1" procedures resolved in Bù Gia Mập district was 317, and in Đông Phú district, it was 2631. Among them, the number of "2 in 1" applications resolved partially online in both districts was significantly higher than those resolved in-person. In Bù Gia Mập district, the proportion of "2 in 1" applications resolved online partially accounted for 57.41% of the total, while in Đông Phú district, this percentage was 77.35% (see Chart 2.2).

Chart no. 2.2: The number of '2-in-1' application files processed by Bù Gia Mập and Đông Phú districts (in 2022 and the first 6 months of 2023)."



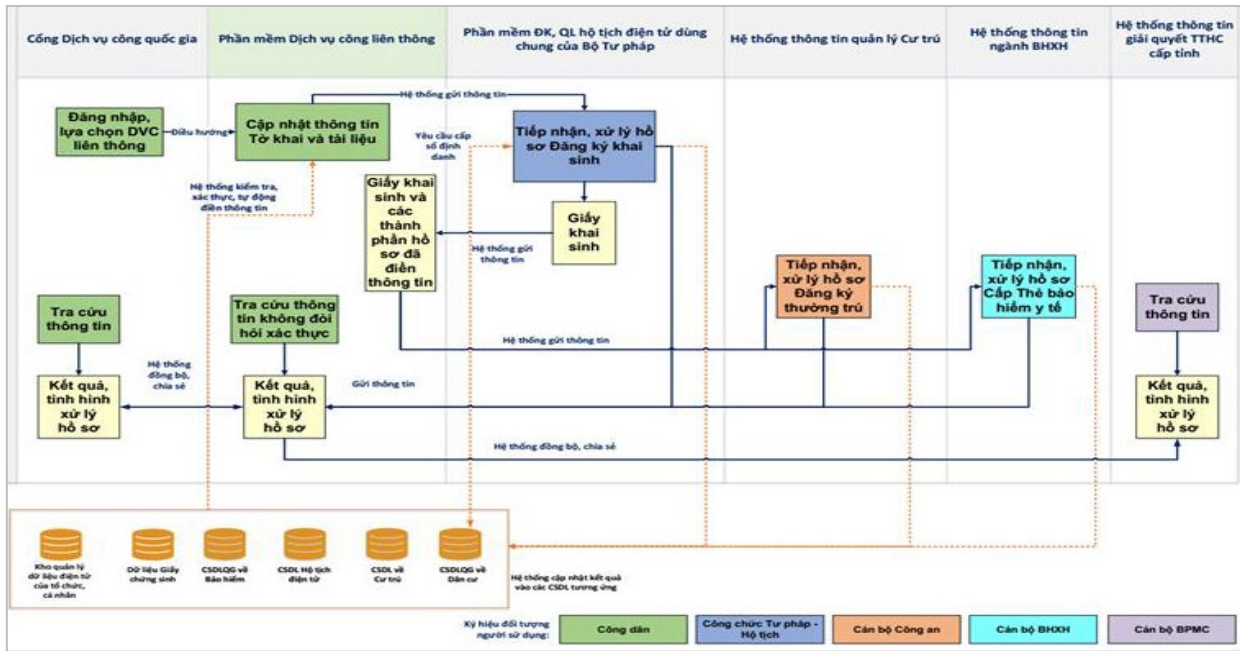
Source: Binh Phuoc Provincial People's Committee

#### 2.3.1. Procedures and Processes for Handling "3 in 1" Interconnected Procedures in the Online Environment

On March 30, 2023, Government Office Circular No. 2084/VPCP-KSTT instructed the implementation of the electronic interconnection process for two essential groups of APs under Project 06. Accordingly, the general interconnection process for the "3 in 1" procedures is described in Diagram 2.1.

<sup>16</sup> In accordance with Government Office Document No. 2084/VPCP-KSTT dated March 30, 2023, regarding the implementation of the electronic interconnection process for 02 essential administrative procedures within Project 06 and Decision No. 976/QĐ-BHXH dated June 12, 2023, by the Vietnam Social Security regarding the process for receiving and handling administrative procedure documents electronically: Birth registration, permanent residence registration, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old will be conducted through the National Public Service Portal.

**Diagram 2.1: Overview of the "3-in-1" Interconnected Procedure Process**



Source: Government Office Document No. 2084/VPCP-KSTT dated March 30, 2023

Through "playing the role" of citizens who need to resolve the "2 in 1" and currently "3 in 1" interconnected procedures online at the People's Committee of the four selected communes under study, the research team has identified numerous difficulties, obstacles, and aspects of the procedure that are not well-designed, hindering the progress and effectiveness of providing these OPS:

Firstly, to implement the "3 in 1" online interconnection process on the National PSP, the Government Office issued Circular No. 2084/VPCP-KSTT on March 30, 2023, and the Viet Nam Social Insurance also issued Decision No. 976/QĐ-BHXH on June 12, 2023, regarding the process of receiving and handling electronic interconnected administrative procedure dossiers: Birth registration, permanent residence registration, and issuance of health insurance cards for children under 6 years old on the National PSP. However, as of now, the procedure sequence, implementation method, attached forms, etc., on the National PSP have not been updated in a timely manner. Furthermore, the continued enforcement of the time limit for handling these procedures (not exceeding 20 days) as posted on the PSP, per Joint Circular No. 05/2015/TTLT-BTP-BCA-BYT of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Public Security, and the Ministry of Health dated May 15, 2015, is not in line with the actual situation and the application of new documents for the "3 in 1" interconnection process at the full online level.

Secondly, the same information in the Electronic Declaration Form (Form No. 01) must be entered multiple times by officials at the "one-stop" department for cases where citizens wish to submit online but cannot operate or declare on the National PSP<sup>17</sup>. Due to a lack of technological

<sup>17</sup> This holds true even in cases where citizens require direct resolution. However, to meet the above-mentioned target for providing end-to-end online public services, legal and civil registration officers still need to rely on the citizen's declaration (or write/register the household) to continue entering this information into the national database and related information systems on the national public service portal.

proficiency, after citizens manually write down the necessary information on the Electronic Declaration Form or when legal officers and civil registrars assist citizens, they must re-enter this information into the national database or related information systems. If citizens can self-declare and perform online procedures, officials do not need to duplicate the data entry. After entering data into the software and obtaining results for citizens, legal officers and civil registrars still must record the information in household registration books in paper form for storage according to the prevailing laws. This is one of the reasons that significantly increases the workload for handling a procedure dossier by administrative officers in the "one-stop" department, not including other tasks that they must undertake, leading to the wastage of office supplies (paper, ink, and wear and tear on computers, etc.).

Thirdly, the process of interconnecting the "3 in 1" procedures to issue the Birth Registration Certificate (BRC) for children under 6 years old encounters issues right from the stage of obtaining the Personal Identification Number (PIN) for the child. After receiving citizens' applications, legal officers and civil registrars proceed to obtain the PIN from the electronic civil registration database (Ministry of Justice) or the national population database (Ministry of Public Security). However, due to the lack of synchronized and stable technical infrastructure, accessing and obtaining the PIN from these two sources sometimes encounters glitches, system hang-ups, and slow processing speeds or no access at all, causing citizens to wait. When officials cannot obtain the PIN from these two databases due to technical errors and access permissions, legal officers and civil registrars must spend time bringing the entire dossier and physically meeting with the local police at the commune level to request the PIN for the child, only then can they complete the remaining procedures. This issue not only creates difficulties and pressure on the officials but also incurs transportation costs, for which the officials are not reimbursed.

Furthermore, according to current regulations, the birth information of children must be recorded in the Birth Registration Book, with the signatures of both the executing officer and the person registering the birth for the child (Article 16, Law on Civil Registration 2014). In cases where there is no electronic birth certificate, after attaching a photocopy, citizens must also submit the original for verification and record-keeping when receiving the results. For children born outside of healthcare facilities, documents certifying the birth are considered valid if they are not in electronic form with digital signatures, so citizens must submit the originals for verification and record-keeping when receiving the results (point b, Section II, Content A, Appendix I, Circular No. 2084/VPCP-KSTT dated March 30, 2023). These regulations complicate the "3 in 1" interconnection process. Therefore, whether citizens use the direct or full online mode of this procedure, they must visit the commune-level People's Committee at least twice: once to submit the application directly if they are required to provide documents confirming the birth, abandonment, surrogacy, or authorization for birth registration, etc., since these documents must be in the original form, and once for citizens to visit directly to sign/thumbprint in the Birth Registration Book (or in cases where they must supplement the original copy of the birth certificate or documents certifying the birth when the child is born outside of healthcare facilities). In this regard, the direct interconnection "3 in 1" is still more convenient and straightforward for both officials and citizens compared to the online mode.

In listening to the opinions and sharing of the relevant officials at all levels in Binh Phuoc province regarding this public service procedure, it was learned that after implementing the Circular No. 2721/BTP-HTQTCT dated June 30, 2023, of the Ministry of Justice on issuing electronic Birth Certificates, Extracts of Death Registration for implementing interconnected APs, on July 21, 2023, the Department of Justice of Binh Phuoc province organized online training sessions to guide localities in implementing tasks related to civil registration when deploying the "3 in 1" interconnection procedures. Starting from July 1, 2023, 100% of communes, wards, and townships in Binh Phuoc province have implemented the "3 in 1" procedures. In practice, dossiers have been generated since July 20, 2023, and have been processed according to regulations. However, the number of dossiers generated is still limited, with only 14 online interconnected "3 in 1" dossiers processed via the national public service portal. The main reason is that the "3 in 1" procedure is a newly implemented group of procedures, so most citizens are not yet familiar with it, and the habit of going to the commune-level People's Committee headquarters for direct processing is still prevalent among citizens. Furthermore, before this, 15,815 children were successfully issued health insurance cards and their DCNs were updated in the national social insurance database, awaiting verification with the national population database.

Through in-depth interviews with some of the officials at the district and commune levels who were selected for the survey, the research team gained a deeper understanding of the various difficulties and obstacles they are facing in the procedures for providing OPS through the "2 in 1" and now "3 in 1" interconnections. A legal officer shared: *"We have been implementing the '2 in 1' interconnection in my commune for about 2 years now, while the '3 in 1' is just starting to be rolled out."* When asked about the process if citizens come to register the birth for their child, this officer continued to explain: *"We give citizens the electronic declaration form for birth registration and the form for applying for health insurance cards. Then, I transfer the information from these forms onto the computer and submit it."* Particularly when we asked, *"In the near future, in communes implementing the full online '3 in 1' interconnection, will citizens have to fill out the forms you just mentioned?"* - the officer replied: "Yes" (male, commune-level legal officer, 45 years old).

Thus, it is not only the perception of the research team, but even the officials directly providing OPS for the "3 in 1" interconnected procedures are also facing difficulties and challenges at several stages within the entire process. There is a need to integrate and simplify the direct operations (handwriting, filling out forms) with data re-entry into the national PSP when receiving and processing the dossiers.

### **2.3.2. The Human Factor (Including Officials, Civil Servants, and Citizens) in Providing, Accessing, and Using the "3-in-1" Interconnected Procedures in the Electronic Environment**

The province of Binh Phuoc has prepared pretty well in terms of human resources early on to handle the "2-in-1" and now the "3-in-1" interconnected procedures in the electronic environment. The team of officials at all levels, especially at the commune level, has been trained and adequately equipped with knowledge, skills, and necessary equipment for handling these procedures, especially since July 1, 2023.

On the citizens' side, digital literacy, awareness, and habits remain barriers to their access and active use of online public services, including the "3-in-1" online interconnected procedures. One citizen shared, *"I came here to apply for health insurance for my grandchild. The child was born two years ago, and we have the birth certificate, but not the health insurance card. The child is currently hospitalized in Binh Duong, so the mother asked me to come and help. I have heard about digital services and online health insurance registration, but I decided to come here, fill out the form, hand it to the official, and wait for the day of collection. It is faster, and I am used to it!"* (Female, 51 years old, of the Kinh ethnicity). Similarly, another case mentioned, *"I used to be the Deputy Chairman of the commune, now retired. I frequently handled APs for my children, mainly related to land procedures. I had previously registered the birth certificate for my grandchild, but it was quite challenging, especially for older people like me"* (Female, 64 years old, of the Kinh ethnicity).

Another citizen who came to the commune People's Committee headquarters to complete the "3-in-1" interconnected procedures shared, *"My family also has smartphones and internet access. I have heard about OPS and how to register on the online public service portal. I even have a digital identification number, but I am still hesitant about registering online. If there were officials to guide and instruct me on how to use digital services, I think it would be very convenient. I would not have to come in person, and it would save me a lot of time for other tasks. If there were training sessions, I would participate actively and educate all family members. For more complex tasks, I would seek assistance from community digital conversion officers"* (Female, 32 years old, of the Kinh ethnicity). Observing one citizen from an EM group who came to the commune People's Committee headquarters to register a birth certificate for a new-born, it becomes evident that simply submitting documents in person is still challenging for some. He belongs to the X-Tieng ethnic group, is a poor neighbour, and has limited proficiency in the Kinh language. When completing the procedure, the civil servant had to write on his behalf entirely. He shared, *"I came here [to the commune People's Committee headquarters] to complete the procedure and submit it right away"* (Male, 27 years old).

From the citizens' sharing, while the team of officials appears ready to provide the "3-in-1" interconnected digital services, citizens have not shown significant interest or willingness to change their habits to access these services in the digital environment. The main reasons behind citizens' limited use and interest in digital services are their lack of internet usage habits, limited proficiency in the national language, older age, a preference for direct guidance from officials, or a perception that in-person procedures are less time-consuming and troublesome compared to online ones.

### **2.3.3. Digital Infrastructure for Providing, Accessing, and Using the "3-in-1" Interconnected Procedures in the Electronic Environment**

The current capacity of digital infrastructure (quality, quantity, consistency, modernity, intelligence, etc.) to support OPS, including the "3-in-1" interconnected procedures, remains a challenge for both the government and citizens. Through interviews with the team of officials, this issue becomes even more apparent. *"Network congestion does occur from time to time. It sometimes happens in the late afternoon when many places simultaneously use and upload documents to the district system"*, said a male legal official at the commune level, 41 years old. Another legal official candidly expressed, *"I've had to work late into the night to complete files when there was network*

*congestion! Last year, during the 90-day campaign, there were many days when I worked late into the night to meet the deadlines"* mentioned a male legal official, 50 years old.

The head of the police department in one commune added, "The pressure of digital transformation all at once causes congestion in the system, and the police force works day and night. Meanwhile, citizens transitioning from paper-based APs to technology still encounter difficulties and hesitation. Moreover, the information fields require repetitive data entry, and the design of the information filter on the provincial digital services portal lacks smart selection features" shared a 47-year-old male. Discussing the challenges related to technology design, another legal official expressed, "Officials have to fill in information and guide citizens multiple times for this procedure. When registering a birth, the provincial digital services portal only has 29 pre-filled information fields, but there are 59 information fields that need to be filled in manually (1/3 of which need to be filled in repeatedly). This makes the process too lengthy and cumbersome, causing difficulties for both officials and citizens!" (Male, 34 years old).

## **2.4. Important Issues Arising from the Study of Two Groups of APs**

### **2.4.1. Regulations on the Sequence and Procedures for Resolving Two Groups of APs**

The research indicates that there are still many obstacles in applying the current legal regulations and practices to construct procedures for resolving the issuance of marriage status confirmation and the "3-in-1" online interconnected procedures in various localities. The analysis in sections 2.2.1 and 2.3.1 above shows overlapping regulations, a lack of timely updates, inconsistency between previous legal documents and specialized guidance documents, as well as discrepancies in the National PSP (Public Service Portal) and more. Moreover, there still seems to be a strong inclination towards traditional offline processes and a lack of emphasis on user convenience (including both officials at the grassroots level and citizens) when designing and institutionalizing procedures and processes in general and the two selected administrative procedures for the digital environment.

### **2.4.2. Personnel and Capacity, Management Skills, and Operation of Online Public Services**

Currently, in Binh Phuoc, the workforce in information technology is limited both in terms of quantity and quality, while the digital workforce is an essential part of the digital infrastructure. At the district level, there is only one official with information technology expertise responsible for this area at the People's Council and People's Committee offices. In other specialized agencies at the district and commune levels, there is no dedicated information technology personnel (excluding computer science expertise). In some communes, elderly officials have difficulty accessing and using information and digital technology (for example, in Thuận Lợi commune). In exceptional cases, there are communes that lack personnel and have not been able to appoint anyone, so the vice chairman of the commune People's Committee must also perform the duties of a legal official (in Tân Hoà commune), and so on.

The allocation of officials and civil servants to work in the One-Stop Department and directly serve the digital transformation process, and provide OPS, must adhere to the 2008 Law on Officials and Civil Servants and other relevant legal documents and the Party's guidelines on reforming and



streamlining organizational structures, making them leaner, more efficient, and effective. While it is essential to allocate personnel with deep expertise and specialization in information technology, computer science, and data science at the commune level during the digital transformation process, this has not been possible due to the issues mentioned above. Additionally, during the transition phase, combining the delivery of public services in both traditional and online ways, coupled with a context of streamlining organizational structures and the fact that many civil servants are retiring or changing positions and are difficult to replace, has increased the workload of the remaining civil servants two to three times. Low salaries, lack of benefits, and other motivational mechanisms, as well as deficiencies in equipment, machinery, and poor working conditions, contribute to the demotivation of civil servants in serving citizens through online public services.

#### **2.4.3. Training and Development of Officials and Civil Servants at All Levels, Especially Communes**

According to the report, Binh Phuoc Province has been attentive to organizing various training and development programs on information technology and digital transformation for officials, civil servants, and workers through both direct and online methods (OneTouch online platform) as well as through conferences, seminars, and more. For instance, the province has organized three courses on digital transformation and digital skills for IT officials at the provincial and district levels (56 participants); provincial and district-level officials (1,871 participants); and commune-level officials and community digital technology teams (7,429 participants) through OneTouch online open courses. However, some issues have been raised: (i) the level of interest and application of knowledge and skills acquired through these courses by officials and civil servants, especially older members; (ii) the design of course content and the methods for managing and monitoring learning on the OneTouch platform that may not be suitable for the specific requirements of each locality; and (iii) attracting and maintaining the habit of online learning on this platform among citizens, communities, and society.

#### **2.4.4. Digital Infrastructure for Providing Online Public Services with a Focus on Building Electronic Government, Digital Government, and Electronic Governance**

In recent years, Binh Phuoc Province has made efforts with various solutions to invest heavily in developing a synchronized digital infrastructure. The province's 2022 Digital Transformation Index (DTI) ranks 12th out of 63 provinces and cities in Viet Nam. However, the province's infrastructure still faces many difficulties and challenges, not only for providing full-process online public services but also for digital transformation in various fields.

The new 5G network has only been deployed on a trial basis in the city centre (without operational permits). Other urban centres in the province have not yet been covered by the 5G network. Additionally, there are still 77 areas with poor network coverage<sup>18</sup>, mostly in remote and border areas with a sparse population, inhabited by ethnic minority groups.

Although information technology infrastructure in many localities has received investment and

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<sup>18</sup> The total of 77 weak signal points in the district is as follows: Đồng Phú (25), Phước Long (7), Bù Đăng (3), Bù Đốp (7), Bù Gia Mập (1), Lộc Ninh (10), Hớn Quảng (5), Bình Long (3), Chơn Thành (8), Phú Riềng (5) and Đồng Xoài (4).

attention, it still lacks synchronization, is aging (7-10 years old), and is now deteriorating, making it difficult to install and use with modern, powerful software configurations. For example, in Phước Minh commune, computer systems have been in use since 2015, with around 50% of the computers being 8-10 years old. In Tân Hoà commune's police office, there are only five computers (two new and three old ones that are no longer in use), and so on. Moreover, the level of investment in internet connectivity varies from one commune to another, not meeting the requirements for providing online public services. For instance, Thuận Lợi commune uses a package costing 1.2 million VND per month, while Tân Hoà commune only uses a 320,000 VND per month package.

Although Binh Phuoc's County-Level Digital Transformation Assessment in the first half of 2023 placed it at level B (83/100 points), criteria such as complete functionality, user-friendly interface, convenient citizen support, and fast loading and operation speeds still need improvement. Based on the experience of using the provincial digital transformation platform, the process is still challenging when performed on mobile devices, often experiencing network delays and slow response times. The information filtering and search functions are not yet intelligent. Additionally, the data connection system for citizen identification is frequently error-prone, with data transmission often lost or overloaded during office hours or at the end of the workday when many agencies simultaneously upload files and documents to the district's central system. The national population database is not yet complete and fully updated, containing many discrepancies and inconsistencies (e.g., differences in names of parents, birth years, birthplaces, hometowns, etc.) compared to the citizen identification database, making it difficult for citizens to access and use OPS.

Furthermore, these digital portals require users to create accounts and log in, which is unfamiliar and cumbersome for citizens who do not frequently use online public services. Many citizens only use these services once every few years, so when they try to use them online, they often have to create new accounts or reactivate old ones before they can log in to the online public services portal. Some of the information required when creating an account is not clear to citizens. For example, under the "address" section, some citizens may not know what information to provide if their permanent address is different from their current residence. Especially, many ethnic minority citizens in the province do not use smartphones with internet/Wi-Fi connectivity, do not have registered/ promotional SIM cards, or do not have email addresses, which also affects the registration, establishment, account confirmation, and communication processes during the resolution of online public services.

#### **2.4.5. Financial Conditions and Local Priorities**

Binh Phuoc Province, like many other regions, faces economic challenges and budget constraints when it comes to modernizing equipment and building essential infrastructure to improve the quality of online public services. The province has five particularly difficult communes, many border communes, and a topography that divides districts. The poverty rate in the province is higher than the national average, with ethnic minority households accounting for 57.9% of the total number of poor households in the province. For example, in Tân Hoà commune (Đồng Phú district), only about 15 million VND per year is allocated for information technology equipment, including approximately 4 million VND per year for internet connectivity. Many surveyed localities do not generate sufficient

annual revenue to cover their expenditures. Therefore, there is a need to balance and prioritize economic and social development tasks to ensure the well-being of the population and ethnic minority communities, rather than investing excessive funds in improving and enhancing the quality of online public services or supporting the activities of Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the commune, hamlet, village, and neighbourhood levels.

#### **2.4.6. Promotion and Dissemination of Online public services**

Since 2019, Binh Phuoc and other localities have made efforts to promote and disseminate online public services linked to digital transformation through various diverse forms of communication, although the effectiveness has not met expectations. Eight out of ten citizens interviewed are aware of, have heard of, and have been informed about digital transformation and the usefulness of online public services through newspapers, radio, television, Community Digital Technology Teams, and Project 06. However, few citizens proactively and independently access, operate, and use online public services. Instead, the majority rely on the assistance of local commune-level civil servants or choose to complete the process directly.

Some support models for promoting and implementing online public services for citizens, such as Youth Volunteer Teams in some localities, have temporarily ceased operations for various reasons. Meanwhile, Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the commune, hamlet, village, and neighbourhood levels face various challenges, including financial constraints, lack of equipment, manpower, technology, and the specific characteristics of remote, far-flung, border areas with a dispersed population, ethnic minority communities, and limited awareness and digital skills. These challenges continue to affect the effectiveness of communication within these groups. These real-world experiences raise new requirements for the promotion and dissemination of online public services. For the general population, Binh Phuoc needs to enhance accessibility and encourage independent utilization of basic and essential APs online. For ethnic minority communities and other vulnerable groups, continuous focus on awareness-raising to improve understanding and provide basic digital skills is necessary.

#### **2.4.7. Coordination Mechanisms Among Relevant Parties**

In practice, based on experiences in various localities, civil servants have found that the connection and utilization of national databases related to population, residency, household registration, marriage, and social insurance, particularly the integration of "3 in 1" are not well executed, encountering issues and lacking synchronization. This is partly due to internet network congestion, and partly because the databases are not cleaned, synchronized, or seamlessly connected between agencies such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Security, social insurance agencies, etc. This leads to difficulties in personal electronic identification, the creation of electronic data repositories, shared data repositories as required, and the use of population data to provide full-process online public services, aiming to build digital government.

Following this, local authorities and telecommunications companies like the Military Industry - Telecom Group (Viettel) and the Viet Nam Post and Telecommunication Group (VNPT) have coordinated efforts to gradually solve challenges and provide online public services to the citizens of Binh Phuoc. However, to address the 77 areas with poor network coverage and achieve the province's

goal of 100% mobile network coverage in hamlets and villages by 2025, continued collaboration and support from these companies are crucial, with a unified approach and more convenience for citizens in terms of payment mechanisms for online public services (e-wallets like MOMO).

Furthermore, coordination in communication, content creation, form, language, and dissemination of information regarding APs, OPS, and digital transformation for ethnic minority groups and other vulnerable communities between government authorities and ethnic and religious affairs agencies, especially self-managed institutions like churches and temples, seems to be lacking and has not been given enough attention in Binh Phuoc Province.

#### **2.4.8. Citizens' Awareness, Attitudes, and Habits When Dealing with APs**

The preference for resolving APs through direct means rather than online has deeply ingrained itself in the daily lives of the citizens. Some are hesitant to learn or lack the necessary means and equipment (smartphones, internet access, etc.). Through interactions and research, it has been observed that provincial, district, and commune-level leaders have shown a high level of determination and relatively good understanding of digital transformation and OPS. Telecommunications companies like Viettel, VNPT, as well as social insurance agencies and various political and social organizations, have relatively coordinated efforts to support citizens. However, the awareness and level of response from citizens do not seem to align with the local government's efforts.

Citizens are accustomed to and feel more comfortable, secure, and at ease when dealing with APs in person because they can ask questions and interact directly with civil servants. Some people believe that when they go for direct assistance, they can provide detailed opinions and additional information to the civil servants. In addition, those who have plenty of time or flexible schedules do not pay much attention to the time and effort spent on traveling and waiting in line when handling procedures in person. They do not feel the pressure to change their habits to save time and transportation costs. One citizen, when registering for marriage at the commune, stated: *"I use a smartphone every day, but my home doesn't have the internet. Actually, I haven't wanted to experience OPS because I think that going to deal with procedures in person is better. If I have any questions or difficulties, I can get help from the officials. Filing online seems to be more complicated, and I find it difficult. I see online filing, but you still have to submit documents in person, which is more inconvenient."* (Male, 46 years old, Kinh ethnicity).

Furthermore, the practical implementation of APs for issuing marriage status certificates and the "3-in-1" integration process is currently more complex and cumbersome than doing it in person. This presents a significant challenge for minority groups. Consequently, they are at risk of being "excluded" from the digital transformation process, creating additional "digital burdens" and "digital inequality" for these disadvantaged groups. This partly explains why citizens are hesitant and cautious about online public services and poses a challenge for raising awareness and changing the behaviour of government authorities at all levels.

#### **2.4.9. The Practical Implementation of Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the Commune, Hamlet, Village, and Neighbourhood Levels**

After more than a year of implementation, due to various subjective and objective reasons, 111 Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the commune level, as well as 843 teams at the hamlet, village, and neighbourhood levels in the province, are facing many challenges in operation. Many of these teams exist only in form and are not effectively functioning. The coordination, support, and connection between these teams and other forces such as commune-level civil servants, local police, telecommunications companies, etc., are still loose.

In practice, this model has only been quite effective in disseminating information about digital transformation and general online public services to citizens and communities. One citizen shared: *"I have someone at home who can help with the registration and, if needed, I can ask for help from the village officials or the community digital technology team of the village."* (Female, 52 years old, Kinh ethnicity). The support and guidance of the teams and commune-level civil servants for citizens to complete the process of confirming their marital status online throughout the entire process have been almost non-existent. Some commune-level civil servants assert that *"the village leaders, though active, are limited in number due to the lack of young leaders. Most are around 50-60 years old, so they mainly play a role in disseminating information and mobilizing the people, but providing direct assistance to citizens is still challenging!"* (Deputy Chairman of the commune, male, 51 years old). Another opinion is that *"the community digital technology teams are not operating effectively due to the lack of operational funds, insufficient attention in allocating necessary equipment, and disparities in IT application skills."* (Deputy Head of the Culture and Information Office of the district, male, 47 years old). This indirectly reflects the lack of efficiency and difficulties in the activities of these teams, which need to be improved soon.

### **III. CONCLUSIONS, SOLUTIONS, AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **3.1. Conclusions**

The construction of an e-government and digital government with the philosophy of placing citizens at the centre is one of the key focuses of the National Digital Transformation Program by 2025, with a vision toward 2030, and the Comprehensive State Administrative Reform Program for the period 2021-2030. However, ensuring that online public services are suitable for the needs, desires, and conditions of citizens, making them easily accessible and maximizing the benefits they offer, requires significant efforts, determination, investment, and a change in the mindset of government agencies as service providers and citizens as "customers" and beneficiaries.

The empirical research conducted in Binh Phuoc Province reveals that provincial, district, and specialized agencies at the local level have made efforts, shown determination, and allocated considerable resources to gradually improve the effectiveness of serving citizens and businesses through enhancing the quality of online public services in various areas. Nevertheless, the implementation of AP for issuing marriage status certificates and the "3-in-1" integration process at the level of Partial OPS and, in the majority of cases, the documents generated in the online environment (entire process) are handled by government officials on behalf of citizens. The

awareness of citizens about these two procedures is relatively good, but their proactive access, interaction, and usage in the digital environment remain very low.

Through on-the-ground research, the challenges of providing and enhancing citizens' access to OPS in Binh Phuoc Province are evident. The most significant challenge is the complexity and intricacy of implementing these procedures in both online and in-person modes. Other challenges include the shortage of IT human resources, insufficient funding for modernizing equipment and digital infrastructure, and the lack of synchronized digital infrastructure to meet the requirements of digital transformation and the provision of online public services throughout the entire process. This is especially critical for remote and underdeveloped areas, where residents face economic hardships, have limited education, lack access to digital devices (internet, smartphones, etc.). They are not accustomed to interacting and conducting administrative procedures in the electronic environment, expressing worries about safety and security on the digital platform.

However, this journey still has untapped potential and favourable factors that promise breakthrough development. These include the advantages of being a "latecomer" in digital transformation, political determination from provincial and district leadership, the successful experience gained from the "92 days and nights high-intensity campaign" effective and useful models for improving OPS currently in operation, and the continuous progress in the economic and social development of Binh Phuoc in recent years. All of these can become significant factors in overcoming the challenges in the province's digital transformation process.

In the following sections, the research team proposes some short-term and medium-term solutions for various levels of government in Binh Phuoc Province. Additionally, recommendations are provided for central policy-making agencies to effectively implement programs and plans related to the development of e-government, digital government, and digital transformation in the public sector by 2025, with a vision to 2030, as outlined in the Prime Minister's Decision No. 749/QĐ-TTg dated June 3, 2020.

## **3.2. Key Solutions**

### **3.2.1. Enhancing Awareness, Attitude, and Competencies, Management Skills, and Operation of the OPS Delivery System**

(1) Regularly assess and evaluate the leadership and management capabilities of the party committees and authorities at all levels in digital transformation and the provision of OPS to citizens. It is crucial to seriously rectify the situation in which some public servants, including those in leadership positions, exhibit a passive attitude, lack determination, and fail to proactively address challenges in delivering OPS. There should be a shift from blaming external factors to a more proactive approach towards problem-solving. This will gradually address the issue of "enthusiasm at higher levels but declining commitment and effectiveness at the grassroots level" in implementation and improve the quality of OPS.

Conversely, provincial and district levels should consider the working conditions of commune-level public servants as well as the geographical conditions, population characteristics, and socio-economic development of each commune to allocate targets and investment funds for infrastructure

development for OPS rationally and timely. This approach will help avoid creating competitive pressure, performance-oriented targets that lead to "achievement syndrome" and inaccurate reporting.

(2) To address the shortage of specialized information technology personnel, competent authorities at the provincial, district, and commune levels can consider the following solutions:

- The People's Council and People's Committee of Binh Phuoc province should study and reorganize the organizational structure, staffing, and job positions with a focus on enhancing human resources with expertise in digital transformation and information technology to support the modernization of local administrative agencies at the commune level and improve accessibility and utilization of OPS by citizens. It is also necessary to explore means of material support (such as increased allowances) for public servants directly responsible for providing OPS and supporting digital transformation at the commune level within the province. While waiting for these policies to be formulated, commune-level People's Committees should have flexible mechanisms, such as hiring or signing consulting contracts with businesses and external experts.

- Research mechanisms to attract and utilize high-quality human resources in information technology to work in the province with reasonable remuneration.

(3) To innovate the content, model, and organization of training and development on digital transformation, OPS, and information security skills for officials and civil servants at all levels:

- Pay attention to the appropriate training format for the target audience, including officials, civil servants, and members of the Community Digital Transformation Support Team, as well as students, teachers, elderly individuals, and young people, with a focus on providing practical skills to ensure immediate applicability. Implement the "1+1+1" principle, meaning one person attends training with the goal of acquiring one application that is practical and relevant to their current work in their organization, and they are responsible for introducing and retraining another person.

Training should be integrated with practical experience, rigorous learning assessments, close alignment with job realities, and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of applying knowledge and skills into the work of officials and units of those who undergo regular training.

- The province should continue to leverage and maximize the features of the OneTouch open online learning platform for training and development of civil servants, from basic to advanced levels. Localities should also proactively research, develop, and design deep and context-specific training and development programs tailored to the local situation, sectors, agencies, etc. Therefore, it is proposed that the Ministry of Information and Communications be granted the authority to integrate and exploit this platform on the OneTouch website (<https://onetouch.mic.gov.vn/>).

- In the future, for a successful and sustainable digital transformation, Binh Phuoc should aim to recruit civil servants with capabilities in data analysis and data science, in addition to current information technology capabilities. Initially, priority should be given to civil servants in the information and communication sector and those specialized in digital transformation in various sectors and at various levels.

### 3.2.2. Step-by-Step Solutions for Improving the Dissemination and Promotion of OPS, especially Among EM Communities

(1) Comprehensive assessment of the organization and effectiveness of the 111 Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the commune level, as well as these 843 models in hamlets, villages, and neighbourhoods in Binh Phuoc province. Accordingly, it is necessary to adjust the organizational structure, personnel composition, and especially consider allocating partial funding and providing operational equipment to the core members of the Teams from balanced budget allocations, earmarked for digital transformation or mobilizing social resources. Regarding the personnel structure, there should be additional armed forces at the commune level (police, military, etc.) to both enhance digital skills and coordinate the activities of the Teams (propaganda, mobilization, guidance on using OPS) with the primary functions of these forces when they operate at the grassroots level, closely connected to local communities.

(2) The Department of Information and Communications will research and pilot a model for providing and resolving online public administrative services (OPS) through mobile units with the participation of four key forces at the grassroots level. Firstly, a survey is needed, with a plan to utilize the facilities of cultural centres, schools, religious structures, etc., interspersed within residential areas, especially in sparsely populated areas, remote areas, and border regions far from the commune People's Committee headquarters. This aims to organize mobile sessions for delivering e-government services to the local residents, particularly those belonging to ethnic minority communities. Through these mobile sessions, the local police at the commune level can guide citizens in installing electronic identification codes (VNeID); telecommunications businesses can establish and provide genuine SIM cards/electronic signatures; commune-level officials can instruct people on creating accounts on the E-Government Portal, resolving online administrative procedures; and Community Digital Technology Team (CDTT) can receive training on implementing e-government services, subsequently guiding community members in using them. In this way, the commune-level government not only meets the demand for resolving administrative procedures but also conducts outreach and guidance, creating a step-by-step approach to increasing public interest and enhancing the accessibility and usage of e-government services, especially in communities facing difficulties in remote and rural areas.

(3) Research, pilot, and advance the *"Binh Phuoc's Students, Pupils, and Teachers Marching with the Digital Transformation Campaign"* communication model towards the goal, as directed by the Prime Minister, that "each family must have at least one person capable of using OPS."<sup>19</sup> Instead of focusing on mass communication, functional agencies and authorities at all levels can establish clubs and teams in collaboration with the "Community Digital Technology Teams" to gather, hold activities, organize roundtable discussions, competitions, etc., to communicate about digital transformation, digital governance, and the convenience, processes, procedures, and methods for

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<sup>19</sup> The statement of Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính at the specialized conference on promoting administrative procedure reform and modernizing methods of guidance and governance for the service of the people and businesses, which took place on September 15, 2022, in Hanoi.



accessing and using OPS to the target group of young people, those with education and strong information technology skills (students, pupils, teachers, lecturers at colleges, high schools, and primary schools in the province). From this, these target groups will serve as propagators and trainers within their families, lineages, and the local residents where they reside. This is also a remote and early preparation for a digital society, digital citizens, and a digital lifestyle for the province in the future.

(4) Diversify publications, communication formats, and communication channels and means.

- In terms of design, communication materials should be attractive, concise, easy to read, easy to follow, and easy to understand, such as flyers, announcements with QR-Codes, lively video clips featuring EM communities in the province, infographics, pocket guides on OPS (including e-books, audiobooks), and information pouches outlining streamlined procedures for the most commonly performed administrative tasks, listing these streamlined procedures in both online and direct forms.

- In terms of format, combine both personal communication, group communication, public communication (through radio, television, the province's intelligent communication models, etc.) and internet communication, social media communication (through popular social media channels today, particularly through the Zalo groups "Binh Phuoc Today" the "Binh Phuoc Portal" Fanpage, etc.). Additionally, it's possible to establish, implement, and connect social media communication channels by neighbourhoods, residential communities, hamlets, villages, and precincts.

Publications and communication formats (radio broadcasts, television, flyers, audiobooks) should take into account societal characteristics such as age, education level, rural/urban residence. Especially in regions with a significant population of EM, publications should include the languages of these minority groups, both in written form and in the spoken language of the ethnic communities (ethnic languages specific to each commune alongside Vietnamese).

Furthermore, collaboration with the Provincial Ethnic Affairs Committee, the Provincial Religious Affairs Committee, ethnic management agencies, and religious management agencies at the district level should be explored, with a focus on researching, developing content, formats, and communication products that are culturally and psychologically suitable for ethnic communities and religious groups.

### **3.2.3. Solutions to Improve the Infrastructure for Providing OPS to Gradually Advance E-Government and Build a Digital Government**

(1) The Department of Information and Communications shall research, consult with the Provincial People's Committee, and provide expertise and technical guidance to district and commune-level People's Committees to clearly identify the necessary components when planning investments, improving, and upgrading the province's infrastructure in a comprehensive, systematic, and interconnected manner with the national infrastructure. This infrastructure is meant to serve the digitalization and digitization of public administrative services, with a focus on four important infrastructure groups: (i) database infrastructure; (ii) application infrastructure; (iii) connectivity infrastructure; and (iv) equipment infrastructure.

(2) Government authorities from the provincial level to the commune level need to establish mechanisms for maintenance, upkeep, upgrades, and new procurements, as well as pay attention to regular inspections and assessments of information technology systems, internet connectivity, telecommunications networks, etc., to support administrative management and the provision of OPS throughout the province, especially at the commune and remote local levels.

(3) Annually conduct a comprehensive review of computer equipment across the entire province (random selection may be employed if there is a lack of manpower). The content and criteria to be considered include the age of the computer equipment, memory, data security (how often caches are cleared), data processing speed (input - transmission - data processing speed), internet/Wi-Fi connectivity, software and hardware synchronization, etc.

(4) The Department of Information and Communications should research and establish minimum standards for internet bandwidth and minimum cost levels for monthly internet packages to serve the activities of commune-level People's Committees (including the activities of the Reception and Result Return Section and the provision of OPS, commune-level digital transformation, etc.).

(5) Mobilize state-owned telecommunications companies (VNPT, Viettel) to explore feasible options for providing additional BTS stations to 77 signal-deprived areas in Binh Phuoc province based on the principle of public service or mobilize them under the corporate social responsibility direction.

Additionally, taking inspiration from the "*Signals and Computer for Me*" program, government authorities at all levels should promote socialization and mobilize social resources to establish mechanisms for distributing smartphones, tablets, etc., prioritizing key members of the Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the commune, hamlet, and neighbourhood levels as a form of encouragement and provision of minimal equipment to support their activities.

(6) The Department of Information and Communications should research and design communication materials on digital transformation, OneTouch online general courses, OPS, and regularly post them on the "Binh Phuoc Portal" Fanpage and "Binh Phuoc Portal" YouTube channel. These social media communication materials should be designed to be more user-friendly, taking into account the demographic characteristics of vulnerable social groups in the province (the elderly, low educational attainment, EM communities, etc.) and should integrate information links/hotlines for guidance and resolution of public services for residents and businesses related to the National PSP or the province's electronic information portal. Communication materials can take the form of video clips, infographic illustrations, concise, easy-to-understand diagrams, and be multilingual (Vietnamese and the languages of EM communities) while avoiding excessive use of English, which may not be widely understood in local languages.

#### **3.2.4. Other Specific Solutions**

(1) Regarding short-term financial difficulties in modernizing local administrative systems and improving the quality of OPS provision, it is necessary to mobilize social resources from businesses and investors within the province to support information technology equipment for poor communes and those with significant challenges, particularly for EM communities. Specifically, encourage the

business community to contribute computer equipment, scanners, smartphones, tablets (which may be used), as well as upgrade and repair services for information technology equipment in communes that still lack sufficient information technology equipment for the Reception and Result Return Section or for core members of the Community Digital Technology Teams and Project 06 at the commune, hamlet, and neighbourhood levels. In the context of Vietnam discontinuing 2G mobile networks nationwide by September 2024, this solution is even more helpful and supportive for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups who have the opportunity to access smartphones with 3G, 4G, and 5G network subscriptions.

(2) Clear pathways, goals, and specific steps for digital transformation and improving the provision of OPS to the public need to be defined. During the implementation process, specific research should be conducted on the current access and usage realities of the population and vulnerable groups in society. This will help identify flexible, proactive, and innovative deployment methods for the digitalization and digitization of public administrative services. It is essential to combine direct and OPS to ensure that all residents, especially those who are not proficient in Vietnamese, the elderly, and people with disabilities, can easily access these services. In particular, avoid rushed, overly pressured approaches and performance targets. Focus on delivering substantial and meaningful changes, addressing issues step by step, and not imposing an excessive "double burden" or "digital divide" on government employees and citizens.

### ***3.3. Policy Recommendations to Central Authorities***

In the process of formulating policies, programs, and projects related to digital transformation, OPS, administrative reform, and local governance, it is important to adhere to the philosophy of "putting people at the centre of the digital transformation process." This approach should prioritize a bottom-up perspective, involve the participation of all relevant stakeholders, and be evidence-based. This means that the implementation of OPS should start with input and participation from all stakeholders, especially considering the actual access and usage experiences of the population, vulnerable social groups, and businesses at the grassroots and community levels. Avoid subjective decisions, unwavering determination, or a lack of scientific and practical foundations when proposing policies in this regard.

#### **a. For the National Assembly and Its Committees:**

- Research and amend relevant provisions in the Citizenship Law and related legal documents such as Decree No. 87/2020/NĐ-CP dated July 28, 2020, on the electronic citizenship database, and online citizenship registration with the provision "Applicants must be present directly at the citizenship registration office when performing and receiving procedure results" with a focus on narrowing the scope of citizenship procedures that require direct presence and enhancing the use of personal identification numbers to avoid inconvenience and multiple trips for citizens and to facilitate OPS for this procedure.

- The Culture and Education Committee of the National Assembly and the Ethnic Affairs Committee of the Government, along with the Central Steering Committee for National Target Programs at both central and local levels, should continue to coordinate with relevant ministries,

sectors, agencies, and localities to review, research, and select specific investment and support activities related to the digital transformation process, improving access to and use of OPS, especially for people in EM areas and mountainous regions, as part of the programs for the periods 2021-2025 and beyond 2025-2030.

**b. For the Government and central ministries and sectors**

- The Government and the Prime Minister need to consistently adhere to the viewpoint: "The organization and implementation of national digital transformation, at each ministry, sector, field, and agency, must go into substance, bringing practical value to the government, people, and businesses." Digital transformation in general, including Project 06, is a central task that must be carried out regularly, continuously at all levels, sectors, and localities, based on mobilizing active participation from the entire population and the entire political system. Comprehensive digital transformation must have a focus, a focal point; step by step, better slow and sure; easier to do first, harder to do later, from low to high, from small to large, implemented thoroughly, substantively, effectively, do it where it's certain; avoid the situation of many flowers blooming, avoid formalities, overlapping; avoid scattered investments, waste, do it and finish it; avoid light on heavy, push down; data must be "correct, sufficient, clean, lively," "vertically transparent," safe and secure.

- The Government, ministries, sectors, and localities must strongly transform their perception from considering the provision of online public services as a pure management method to viewing it as a specialized type of service that requires a focus on quality and ensuring the satisfaction of "customers" - the users. In particular, it is necessary to emphasize the need to fully and deeply identify emerging social issues when deepening and strengthening this Revolution, such as "digital inequality," "digital burden," and "digital disconnect," especially for minority and vulnerable groups.

- The Government and central agencies need to review and firmly ensure implementation according to the schedule of the integrated online public service catalog provided on the national public service portal under Decision No. 406/QĐ-TTg in 2021, Decision No. 422/QĐ-TTg in 2022, and especially Decision No. 06/QĐ-TTg in 2022 of the Prime Minister approving the Project on developing applications for population data, identification, and electronic authentication to serve the national digital transformation from 2022 to 2025, with a vision to 2030. In this Project, the guiding viewpoint affirms that the national population database, identification, and electronic authentication are the foundation for digital transformation in lifestyles, work methods, and production methods based on digital technologies.

- The Government directs and requires the Government Office, the Ministry of Information and Communications, and the State Bank to consider researching, developing, and applying the "National e-Government Service Portal Framework Standards" as the comprehensive upgrade basis for the National e-Government Service Portal to be ready to provide end-to-end online public services; thereby guiding the industry on minimum design standards to improve the e-Government Service Portals of the 63 provinces and cities. Accordingly, this national criterion needs to be based on three main pillars: (1) Reliability; (2) Professionalism; and (3) Intelligence, resolutely taking the voice and experience of users (including civil servants providing online public services and the people, especially vulnerable groups - those with access and usage difficulties) as the most important criteria

when designing and operating.

- The Government and the Prime Minister have issued continuous directives to agencies and organizations from central to local levels regarding the acceptance of electronic authentication copies in transactions instead of uniform paper copies nationwide.

- The Government and the Prime Minister have issued directives urging central ministries and sectors to update, publicly disclose, and timely announce information on administrative procedures that have been published on the national database in accordance with the regulations of Decree No. 63/2010/ND-CP dated June 8, 2010, by the Government for local authorities to grasp and implement.

**c. For the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Public Security in the "3-in-1" procedure interoperability:**

- Promptly improve the mechanism for sharing the national population database between the Ministry of Public Security and relevant ministries and sectors, including the Ministry of Justice, with the electronic citizenship database, following Decision No. 06/QĐ-TTg of the Prime Minister regarding the project for developing applications related to population data, electronic identification, and authentication to support the national digital transformation from 2022 to 2025, with a vision towards 2030.

- In addition, both ministries should upgrade and improve interoperability by granting access rights and reasonable information processing in the national population database to facilitate the fastest and most convenient resolution of "3-in-1" procedures for children, especially in the near future, particularly in the process of applying for identification numbers.

- Promptly address the delay in issuing personal identification numbers for new-borns in the interoperable birth registration process; the slow and unidirectional interaction of citizenship software due to the absence of support staff at the support hotline. Interoperability with the Ministry of Public Security for granting identification numbers to new-borns faces issues such as slow software and frequent errors.

**d. For the Ministry of Justice:**

According to current regulations<sup>20</sup>, household registration books and citizenship registration records are to be preserved, archived, and stored permanently and are being digitized<sup>21</sup>. The direct and permanent storage and digitization of these records at the commune level are currently creating significant pressure and challenges for the team of officials and civil servants. Therefore, the Ministry of Justice needs to issue detailed and specific specialized guidelines so that local authorities,

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<sup>20</sup> Reference: Article 12, Decree No. 123/2015/ND-CP; Clause 2, Article 25, Decree No. 87/2020/ND-CP; Article 37, Circular No. 04/2020/TT-BTP.

<sup>21</sup> Circular No. 04/2020/TT-BTP dated May 28, 2020, by the Ministry of Justice provides detailed regulations on certain provisions of the Law on Citizenship and Decree No. 123/2015/ND-CP dated November 15, 2015, of the Government on detailed provisions and implementation measures of the Law on Citizenship (Article 37).

Circular No. 01/2022/TT-BTP dated January 4, 2022, by the Ministry of Justice on detailed regulations and implementation measures of Decree No. 87/2020/ND-CP dated July 28, 2020, of the Government on electronic citizenship databases and online citizenship registration (Article 10)."

especially commune-level authorities, can proactively digitize and store household registration books and citizenship registration records in a manner that is both standardized and suitable for the context of direct processing and the electronic environment of this procedure.

**e. For the Ministry of Public Security:**

- Pay attention to and direct agencies and localities to review, allocate, and provide computers, printers, scanners, and necessary support equipment to the local police at the commune level to effectively provide OPS to citizens, especially during the peak period of cleaning the national population database and issuing electronic identification (VNeID).

- Enhance coordination and share the national population database with related parties at the central and local levels to facilitate better connectivity and interoperability when handling essential OPS.

- Review and support information security on the network so that provinces and cities can integrate their population databases with the national population database and the electronic identification and authentication system of the Ministry of Public Security to expedite the use of population data for the purpose of providing end-to-end OPS to support the development of e-government toward building a digital government.

**g. For the Ministry of Information and Communications:**

- Based on Decree No. 42/2022/NĐ-CP dated June 24, 2022, the Ministry of Information and Communications urgently needs to develop and issue detailed guidelines on minimum interface design standards for provincial-level public service portals. These guidelines should ensure that user-centred standards are friendly, accessible, and easy to use, taking into account specific user groups (e.g., EM communities in provinces with a large ethnic population, elderly people, and people with disabilities). Additionally, the ministry should regularly review the compliance of local authorities at all levels.

- Provide advice to the National Steering Committee for National Digital Transformation to conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of the organization and effectiveness of the Community Digital Technology Team at the commune level, in hamlets, wards, neighbourhoods, and communities after nearly 2 to 3 years of implementation. This review should lead to adjustments in the organizational structure, operating principles, personnel structure, especially considering allocating part of the budget, equipment, and operational support for core members of the team through budget balancing, target programs at the national or socialization level.

- Develop specific policies and guidelines on the timeline for discontinuing the use of 2G technology in Vietnam by September 2024 to ensure that it does not violate the rights and consumption capacity of the population. This policy should also consider the impact assessment. Solutions should pay particular attention to disadvantaged groups, remote and mountainous areas, as well as EM communities that are most affected and vulnerable to this decision.

- Conduct research and pilot the development of the Digital Transformation Adaptation

Index for citizens and businesses. Currently, the Digital Transformation Index (DTI) issued by the Ministry of Information and Communications in 2022 mainly targets ministries, sectors, and central and local authorities. However, the adaptability of citizens, businesses, and different social groups to this process, as well as the necessary OPS, is still underdeveloped. Therefore, with the spirit of *"people as the centre of the digital transformation process"* in the near future, the Ministry of Information and Communications should conduct research and move towards issuing and testing the Digital Transformation Adaptation Index for citizens, disadvantaged groups, and business communities regarding the digital transformation process on an annual basis. The objective assessment of citizens' and businesses' adaptability will serve as the basis for building and adjusting policies and programs to promote substantial digital transformation, mitigate negative aspects (such as digital inequality, digital burdens, etc.) for citizens and disadvantaged groups, and work towards inclusive and sustainable development.

- Pay attention to guiding and supporting telecommunications businesses, coordinate the deployment of mobile BTS (Base Transceiver Station) in the low-lying and border areas of the province.

- Review and expedite the issuance of licenses for 5G telecommunications networks in the province of Binh Phuoc.

- Allow the establishment, design of lectures, training content, and capacity building for personnel in digital transformation and information technology suitable for the local characteristics, industry, and sectors of the province on the OneTouch platform.

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