

E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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Abstract: Online working of a Government or providing its services online to its citizens at their door step is known as E-Governance. E-Governance is E-Commerce technology means online availability of government services. In today's time the development of any country depends on the uses of E-Governance and also their penetration. Development of any country can be judge by the scope of E-Governance in that country. Due to widespread demand of E-Governance, Indian Government also took some steps towards E-Governance. Indian Government implemented a number of E-governance projects in different states of India. It is a major challenge before the Government to successfully deploy them successfully due to existing problems such as lack of awarness, low literacy poverty, low network bond width issues and political scenario.

Keywords: E-Governance, India, Government.

1. INTRODUCTION

E-Governance is nothing but use of internet technology as a platform for exchanging information, providing services and transacting with citizens, business and other arms of Government. E-Governance provides a sound strategy to strengthen overall Governance. It cannot only improve accountability, transparency and efficiency of Government processes, but also facilitate sustainable and inclusive growth. E-Governance also provides a mechanism of direct delivery of public services to the marginal segments of the society in the remotest corners, without having to deal with intermediaries.

2. BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE

- 1. Fast, Convenient and Cost Effective Service Delivery-** With the advent of E-Service delivery the Government can provide information and services at lesser costs, in reduced time and with greater convenience.
- 2. Transparency, Accountability & Reduced Corruption-** Dissemination of information through ICT increases transparency, ensures accountability and prevents corruption. An increased use of computers and web based services improves the awareness levels of citizens about their rights and powers.
- 3. Increased Participation by People-** With easy access to the Government services, the faith of the citizens in the Government increases and they come forward to share their views and feedback. Increased accessibility to information has empowered the citizens and has enhanced their participation (1).

3. E-GOVERNANCE PROJECTS IN INDIA

Recognising the increasing importance of electronics, the Government of India established the Department of Electronics in 1970. The subsequent establishment of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1977, was the first step towards E-Governance in India as it brought information and its communication in focus (2)

In 2006, Government of India formally launched its National E-Governance Plan (NeGP), some Department of Government of India as well as State Governments had initiated steps to adopt E-Governance. In this context it would be useful to highlight some of the important E-Governance initiatives implemented by the Union and State Government in the last 10 to 15 years. These initiatives are discussed under the following categories:

1. Government to Citizen (G2C) Initiatives

2. Government to Business (G2B) Initiatives
3. Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives

1. Government to Citizen (G2C) Initiatives

A large number of initiatives have been taken in this category by the Union and the State Governments. Some of these are described in the following paragraphs.

i. Computerisation of Land Records (Department of Land Resources Government of India)

A conference of the Revenue Ministers of States/UTs had advocated such computerization as early as in 1985. (3) Based on the recommendation, the Union Ministry of Rural Development selected 8 districts in 8 states for a pilot project on computerization of land records, which was 100% centrally-sponsored. From 1994-95 onwards, it was implemented in collaboration with the NIC. The main objectives of the scheme were.

- a. Ensuring that landowners get computerized copies of ownership, crop and tenancy and updated copies of records of Rights on demand (RORS).
- b. Ensuring accuracy, transparency and speedy dispute resolution.
- c. Facilitating fast and efficient retrieval of information for decision making.
- d. Focusing on citizen- Centric services related to land and revenue administration (4)

The status of implementation of this scheme is as follows:

States which have completed ROR data entry: Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

States which have placed ROR data on websites : Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa and Uttarakhand (5).

ii. Bhoomi Project in Karnataka: Online Delivery of Land Records

Bhoomi is a self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers through 177 Government- owned kiosks in the state of Karnataka. The need for a project such as Bhoomi was felt for the following reasons:

- a. In the traditional system, land records were not open for public scrutiny resulting in manipulation and favouritism.
- b. The process for applying for transfer of title was cumbersome time consuming and prone to harassment.
- c. There were instances of Government land being illegally transferred in the name of influential persons.
- d. It was not possible for the administrators to procure, collate and analyse data from the manually maintained records (6).

iii. Gyandoot (Madhya Pradesh)

Gyandoot is an intranet based Government to citizen (G2C) service delivery initiative. It was initiated in the Dhar District of Madhya Pradesh in January 2000 with the twin objective of providing relevant information to the rural population and acting as an interface between the district administration and the people. The basic idea behind this project was to establish and foster a technologically innovative initiative which is owned and operated by the community itself. Initially computers were installed in twenty village Panchayat Centres and connected to the District Rural Development Authority in Dhar town. They were called Sookhunalayas which were operated by local rural youth selected for this purpose (called soochaks). No fixed salary was paid to them the soochanalayas are connected to the intranet through dial up lines. (7).

iv. Lokvani Project in Uttar Pradesh

Lokvani is a public private partnership project at Sitapur District in Uttar Pradesh which was initiated in November, 2004. Its objective is to provide a single window, self sustainable e-Governance solution with regard to handling of grievances land record maintenance and providing a mixture of essential services. (8) The services offered by lokvani are:

- a. Availability of land records on the internet.

- b. Online registration, disposal and monitoring of public grievances.
- c. Information of various Government schemes.
- d. Online availability of prescribed Government forms (9).

v. Project Frineds in Kerala

FRINEDS (Fast, Reliable, Instant, efficient Network for the disbursement of services) is a single window facility providing citizens the means to pay taxes and other financial dues to the State Government. It was launched in the Thiruvananthapuram in June 2000 and replicated in other district headquarters during 2001-02. The services are provided through FRIENDS Janasevana Kendrams located in the district headquarters.

This project is a classic case of achieving front end computerized service delivery to citizens. This project thus tries to avoid the complex process re-engineering in the participating departments (10).

2. Government to Business (G2B) Initiatives

G2B initiatives encompass all activities of government which impinge upon business organizations. These include registrations under different statutes, licences under different laws and exchange of information between government and business. The objective of bringing these activities under e-Governance is to provide a congenial legal environment to business, expedite various processes and provide relevant information to business.

E-Procurement project in Andhra Pradesh:

The government of Andhra Pradesh introduced the e-procurement project in 2003 with the following objections:

1. To reduce the time and cost of doing business for both vendors and government.
2. To increase buying power through demand aggregation.
3. To provide a single - stop for all procurements.
4. To allow equal opportunity to all vendors.
5. To realize better value for money spent through increased competition and the prevention of cartel formation (11)

E-Procurement in Gujarat:

The system of e-procurement was introduced in the state of Gujarat from October 2004 onwards. The project was funded by the State Government with the objective of deriving the benefits of increased efficiency from e-enablement of business processes.

It aims to establish transparency in procurement process, shortening of competitive price, availing of competitive price, enhancing confidence of suppliers and establishing flexible and economical bidding process for suppliers. It has been introduced to cover the following transactions.

1. Purchases and procurment of goods, plants, equipments, machinery, medicines, medical and surgical supplies and stores items, food and civil supplies stores items and purchaes printing and stationery items and purchase all types of vehicle purchase, furniture and fixtures etc.
2. All types of civil construction and related work
3. Outsourcing of required services
4. All other purchases and work orders. (12)

3. Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives

Within the government system there is a large scale processing of information and decision making. G2G initiative help in making the internal government process more efficient.

1. Khajana Project in Karnataka:-

It is a comprehensive online treasury computerization project of the government of Karnataka. The project was implimented to eliminate systemic deficiencies in the manual treasury system. The aspects of the project which require highlighting are-

- i. To eliminate redundant processes, systematizing re-engineering was done. Processes were adopted to suit computer application. A procedure manual was brought out.
- ii. Software development was supervised by treasury teams. Software was tested in representative treasury environments.
- iii. Training was provided before software roll-out.

The system includes features such as budget control, online funds transfer etc. This project manages to minimize efforts. Devoted earlier to reconcile the entries in the accounts and provides accurate information on a timely basis. This it has contributed in bringing efficiency in the government and aids the decision making process. This project has turned out to be the success story. (13)

2. Smart Gov (Andhra Pradesh)

Smart Gov. has been developed to streamline operations, enhance efficiency through workflow automation and knowledge management for implementation in the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat. The solution automates the functioning of all levels of government entities and provides a well-defined mechanism for transforming the "hard copy environment". It enhances productivity through use of IT as a tool. Smart Gov. replaces the paper file with an e-file. Smart Gov. provides the features of creation, movement, tracking and closure of e-files, decision support system through knowledge management easy access to files through an efficient document management system. This project is being extended to more departments. (14)

4. CHALLENGES FOR E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

Poor people and poor infrastructure are major challenges in countries like India. The various barriers can be enumerated as follows:

1. Poverty:

Accessing internet is a costly affair for the poor who struggle for their livelihood in developing countries like India. Requires infrastructure in the form of installing the necessary telephone lines needed for internet or email access is equally unaffordable in most poor countries.

2. Technical Illiteracy:

There is a general lack of technical literacy as well as literacy in countries like India.

3. Language Dominance:

The dominance of English on the internet constrains the access of non-English speaking population in the case of India, 95 percent of the population does not speak English. Due to such overwhelming dominance of English over these communication channels, computers and the internet are quite useless in India villages.

4. Unawareness:

There is a general lack of awareness regarding benefits of E-Governance as well as the process involved in implementing successful G-C, G-G and G-B projects.

5. Inequality:

Inequality in gaining access to public sector services between various sections of citizens, especially between urban and rural communities, between the educated and illiterate and between the rich and poor.

6. Infrastructure:

Lack of necessary infrastructure like electricity, internet, technology and ways of communication will affect the speed which delays the implementation. (15)

7. Cost:

Cost is one of the most important prohibiting factor that comes in the path of e-governance implementation particularly in the developing countries like India where most of the people living below the poverty line. Elected officers and politicians don't seem to be interested in implementing e-governance. In 2004, the United Kingdom and Singapore respectively spent

1 percent and 0.8 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on e-government. India is spending 3 percent of GDP (16).

5. SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE E-GOVERNANCE

1. Officials related to administration and e-governance must be trained and they must be well-versed with the concept of e-governance.
2. More publicity and awareness about e-governance, especially among the illiterates and village community, is essential in making the concept of e-governance workable and more meaningful.
3. More than any measures the people should come forward and use this concept and they should realize the importance and advantages of e-governance.
4. Sense of commitment by officials is well required in promoting the concept of E-governance (17).
5. Transactional security must be given priority to ensure the internet use is safe, seamless and crisis free.
6. Sufficient resources must be allocated to build a reliable ICT infrastructure to avoid breakdown of services cementing public-private partnerships to supplement government efforts must be considered. (18)

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have given a framework and application of E-governance along with a list E-governance projects run by state and central governments. Indian government is spending a lot of money on e-governance projects but still these projects are not successfully in all parts of India. Unawareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of e-governance in India. But in spite of all challenges. India has number of award winning e-governance projects. Therefore we can say that E-governance is the key to the "Good Governance" for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens.

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