
E-Governance in India: Problems and Potential

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Abstract

Good governance includes various qualitative aspects of governance like participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness and equity. Governance is basically the application of Information and Communications Technology to the processes of Government functioning in order to bring about 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) governance. This paper highlights the role and potential of information and communication technologies programs in developing countries. ICTs can make a significant contribution to the achievement of good governance goals. This 'e-governance' makes the governance more efficient and more effective, and also brings benefits to the citizens of the country. This paper discusses the prospects which are responsible for good governance, e-government initiatives in different states of India, and also includes some current challenges for managing E-Government projects in India. This paper also includes the current status of E-Governance in India and future prospects of E-Governance in India i.e. the vision and objectives of the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17), its major recommendations and its targets.

E-Governance in India

E-Governance is basically the application of Information and Communications Technology to the processes of Government functioning in order to bring about 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) governance. This would generally involve the use of ICTs by government agencies for any or all of the following reasons: (a) Exchange of information with citizens, businesses or other government departments (b) Speedier and more efficient delivery of public services (c) Improving internal efficiency (d)

Reducing costs / increasing revenue (e) Re-structuring of administrative processes and (f)
Improving quality of services. According to the World Bank,

“E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions.”

Models of E-governance

G2G

- e-administration
- e-police
- e-courts

G2C

- e-citizenship
- e-registration
- e-transportation
- e-education
- e-health
- e-democracy
- e-filing
- G2B
- e-taxation
- e-licensing

- e-tendering

G2E

- e-payroll
- e-training
- e-human resource development

G2G (Government to Government) – In this case, Information and Communications Technology is used not only to restructure the governmental processes involved in the functioning of government entities but also to increase the flow of information and services within and between different entities. This kind of interaction is only within the sphere of government and can be both horizontal i.e. between different government agencies as well as between different functional areas within an organisation, or vertical i.e. between national, provincial and local government agencies as well as between different levels within an organisation. The primary objective is to increase efficiency, performance and output.

G2C (Government to Citizens) – In this case, an interface is created between the government and citizens which enables the citizens to benefit from efficient delivery of a large range of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. It gives citizens the choice of when to interact with the government (e.g. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), from where to interact with the government (e.g. service centre, unattended kiosk or from one's home/workplace) and how to interact with the government (e.g. through internet, fax, telephone, email, face-to-face, etc). The primary purpose is to make government, citizen-friendly.

G2B (Government to Business) – Here, e-Governance tools are used to aid the business community – providers of goods and services – to seamlessly interact with the government. The objective is to cut red tape, save time, reduce operational costs and to create a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government. The G2B initiatives can be transactional, such as in licensing, permits, procurement and revenue collection. They can also be promotional and facilitative, such as in trade, tourism and investment. These

measures help to provide a congenial environment to businesses to enable them to perform more efficiently.

G2E (Government to Employees) – Government is by far the biggest employer and like any organisation, it has to interact with its employees on a regular basis. This interaction is a two-way process between the organisation and the employee. Use of ICT tools helps in making these interactions fast and efficient on the one hand and increase satisfaction levels of employees on the other.

Prospects of E-Governance

E-Governance is about reform in governance, facilitated by the creative use of Information and Communications Technology. It is expected that this would lead to:

Better access to information and quality services for citizens

ICT would make available timely and reliable information on various aspects of governance. In the initial phase, information would be made available with respect to simple aspects of governance such as forms, laws, rules, procedures etc later extending to detailed information including reports (including performance reports), public database, decision making processes etc. As regards services, there would be an immediate impact in terms of savings in time, effort and money, resulting from online and one-point accessibility of public services backed up by automation of back end processes. The ultimate objective of e-Governance is to reach out to citizens by adopting

Simplicity, efficiency and accountability in the government

Application of ICT to governance combined with detailed business process reengineering would lead to simplification of complicated processes, weeding out of redundant processes, simplification in structures and changes in statutes and regulations. The end result would be simplification of the functioning of government, enhanced decision making abilities and increased efficiency across government – all contributing to an overall environment of a more accountable government machinery. This, in turn, would result in enhanced productivity and efficiency in all sectors.

National e-Governance plan

Expanded reach of governance: Rapid growth of communications technology and its adoption in governance would help in bringing government machinery to the doorsteps of the citizens. Expansion of telephone network, rapid strides in mobile telephony, spread of internet and strengthening of other communications infrastructure would facilitate delivery of a large number of services provided by the government. This enhancement of the reach of government – both spatial and demographic – would also enable better participation of citizens in the process of governance.

Common service delivery outlets

One computer and internet enabled common service centre is envisaged to offer online integrated service delivery on anytime,anywhere basis

E-governance initiatives in India

| Name of state | e-governance initiatives |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| Andhra Pradesh | e-seva,card,voice,e-crops |
| Goa | Dharani project |
| Haryana | Nai disha |
| Himachal Pradesh | Lok mitra |
| Karnataka | Bhoomi,khajane,kaveri |
| Kerala | e-srinkhala,RDnet |
| Rajasthan | Jan mitra,rajSWIFT |

Projects and schemes of government

- **Project bhoomi**

This project was launched in the state of karnatka under which entire land resord in the state was digitalised or computerised,specially of the farmers.

- **Project card**

Computer aided registration department-this was launched in Andhra Pradesh exactly on the lines of project bhoomi under which not only land records were computerised but registration of any purchased property were also computerised.

Project computerisation of road transportation of Gujarat

CCTV cameras at the checkpoints which can be video-graf and immediately recorded and sent to head centre.

- Project e-seva
- Project e-samparak

Ease of doing business-minimum government and maximum governance

- Simplification of tax procedures
- Central excise/service tax assesses to be allowed to use digitally signed invoices and maintain record electronically
- Wealth tax replaced with additional surcharge of 2% on super rich with a taxable income of over rs 1 crore annually.
- Online central excise and service tax registration to be done in the working days

Problems and challenges

Poor people and poor infrastructure are major challenges in countries like India. It poses a major challenge in reaping the full benefits of service provision under e-governance. The various barriers can be enumerated as follows:

Costly

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

Illiteracy

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

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 Indian villages.

Unawareness

There is 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.

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.

Infrastructure

Lack of necessary infrastructure like electricity, internet, technology and ways of communications will affect the speed which delays

Inaccessibility

An e-government provide web access and support that does not offer the potential to reach many users including those who live in remote areas.

Hyper-surveillance

Increased contact between government and its citizens goes both ways. once e-government begins to develop and become more sophisticated ,citizens will be forced to interact electronically with the government on a large scale.

False sense of transparency and accountability-opponents of e-government argue that online governmental transparency is dubious because it is maintained by the governments themselves.

Targets of the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) with respect to E-Governance

a) A National Institute for E-Governance (NIG) would be setup as an autonomous State of the Art National Institute. NIG will also train at least 50 employees from Central Government per year on Project Management Certification.

- b) An E-Governance Innovation and R&D Fund will be created to give adequate impetus to innovation in E-Governance and M-Governance
- c) Electronic Delivery of Services (EDS) Bill will be implemented. Assistance will be given to every Central Government Department in delivering at least one Service in electronic mode and every State Government in delivering at least three Services in electronic mode apart from the services which are already identified in the MMPs under NeGP.
- d) Shared Services Platforms for e-Payment, GIS, call centre, etc. will be created.
- e) An apps store will be created to promote development of large scale E-Governance and M-Governance applications
- f) M-Governance platforms and frameworks

Conclusion

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India, has visualized e-Governance in the Indian context to mean:

"A transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen." e-Governance is generally understood as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at all levels of the Government in order to provide services to the citizens, interaction with business enterprises and communication and exchange of information between different agencies of the Government in a speedy, convenient efficient and transparent manner

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