

E-GOVERNANCE AS A DEVELOPMENT TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

E-Governance is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for delivering Government Services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration various stand-alone systems and services between Government and Citizens (G2C), Government and Business (G2B) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire Government frame work. Through the e-Governance, the Government services will be made available to the citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. This paper looks at the need to co-ordinate and link existing Information Systems (IS) regarding management issues in India as a first step to arriving at a framework for e-governance. Throughout the paper, we stress the fact that it is not hardware and software that makes e-governance possible- but management and organization.

Keywords: *ICT, Information Systems, Security, e-Commerce, VSAT service.*

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INTRODUCTION

Many e-government applications are crisis-driven. While analyzing the computerization made a crucial observation that IT based process change is not a good idea when it comes to large government set-ups. In the corporate sector, a larger degree of control is experienced and hence use of I.T can lead process changes. In the case of the Institutions responsible for conservation in the country, it is necessary to reengineer the present set-up on the lines suggested in the latest task force report before attempting to implement a system. The Government being the service provider, it is important to motivate the employees for delivering the services through ICT. To achieve this, the Government employees are being trained on technology and started realizing the advantage of ICT. The aim is to make them thorough with e-Governance applications and responsive to the technology driven administration.

Electronic Governance has emerged as one of the flagship applications with aspiration to employ multimedia and network technologies to re-invent the way the government works. This IT enabled government will ensure better transparency and services to the public. India has since the last decade made rapid strides in the area of Information and Communication Technology. The objective of achieving Electronic Governance (EG) goes far beyond mere computerization of stand alone back office operations. It means to fundamentally change as to how the Government operates and this implies a new set of responsibilities for the executive, legislature and the citizenry. The effort should aim to bring about a social catharsis, which needs to be orchestrated in a comprehensive, concerted and planned fashion. Electronic Governance thus, is the application of Information Technology to the processes of Government functioning to bring about

- Simple
- Moral
- Accountable
- Responsive and
- Transparent Governance

E-governance is an evolutionary phenomenon, and requires a change in the mindset of one and all – citizen, executives or the government. With the support of the Internet, the government processes defined by specializations can be made efficient, effective, and citizen friendly. E-governance is the effective use of Information & Communication Technology to improve the system of governance that is in place, and thus provide better services to the

Citizens. Developments in e-Governance provide opportunities to harness the power of Information and Communication Technology to make the business of governance inexpensive, qualitatively responsive, and truly encompassing. The very concept of e-governance electronic means support and stimulate good governance, and therefore, the objectives of e-governance are similar to the objectives of good governance.

E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA – KEY CHALLENGES

All implementers and drivers of e-governance initiatives agree that the biggest challenge of deploying e-governance is not technology but change management. Change management is important not only in terms of cultural change but also in terms of changing operations and processes workflow that the automated environment will introduce. "It's important to educate people at all levels about the benefits of technology. The various benefits and advantages of e-enabling the system should be communicated clearly right at the beginning to ensure popular support which will lead to greater chances of success.

The challenges of connectivity have also reduced over the years with the falling prices of bandwidth and increased reach of connectivity service providers. Major VSAT service providers already have established large footprints in India, and telecom service providers have stepped up their leased line offerings even in previously unrepresented territories. Many state governments have developed state wide area networks (SWANs), customized applications, and data banks. But the interconnectivity of the servers is an issue which calls for the establishment of state data centers. The NIC, which is promoting e-governance in the country, has established VSAT connectivity in all the districts of the country. There remains however issues such as standardization, inter-operability, security, and propriety vs. open source.

The Government of India has embraced e-governance as a trigger and means to redefine and streamline outdated, inefficient processes and procedures while simultaneously exploiting the full power of modern ICT. The aim is to provide citizens with easier and faster access to government services. India has recognized the benefits of e-governance and through it, ushered in a paradigm of citizen-centric service delivery. E-governance is reforming the way government manages and shares information with external and internal clients. Specifically, it harnesses information and communications technologies to transform relations with citizens, businesses and amongst various arms of government. There are however, numerous challenges.

The government in India has been continuously endeavoring to provide citizen services in a better manner. There have been several successful initiatives and many noteworthy projects have been undertaken in various states of India. The present work tries to study the various e-government projects across India with a view to explore the natures of implementations of these projects, benefits imparted from them to citizens. Some of the successful initiatives are: Gyandoot, e-seva, SETU and SUDA. The present scope of the project is limited to land records and the immediate needs of the citizens that can be fulfilled at local government level. The success of an e-government project is due to: Single window facility for the citizens to avail the information, Empowerment of citizens, a model for public – private partnership in providing the e-governance service to the citizens and for facilitating entrepreneurship among the rural mass through ownership of the information.

E-GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT

The concept of e-governance is now moving towards reality for Indian citizens. The country is graduating from pilot e-governance projects to bigger Mission Mode projects. The core strategy for India is to move ahead in a systematic manner, and the approach is to achieve success step by step. The financial sector is revolutionized through ICT, but the democracy and e-voting concept is still a dream. The National e-Governance Plan (2003-2007) of Indian Government seeks to lay the foundation and provide the impetus for long-term growth of e-Governance within the country. The plan seeks to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms, set up the core infrastructure and policies and implements a number of Mission Mode projects at the center, state and integrated service levels to create a citizen-centric and business-centric environment for governance.

For governments, the more overt motivation to shift from manual processes to IT-enabled processes may be increased efficiency in administration and service delivery, but this shift can be conceived as a worthwhile investment with potential for returns. The Indian government is using IT to facilitate governance. The IT industry is doing its bit to help as public-private partnerships become the order of the day. The last couple of years have seen e-governance drop roots in India. IT enables the delivery of government services as it caters to a large base of people across different segments and geographical locations.

The effective use of IT services in government administration can greatly enhance existing efficiencies, drive down communication costs, and increase transparency in the functioning of various departments. Almost every state has an IT policy in place with the aim of evolving itself from being an IT-aware to an IT-enabled government. State governments are fast

recognizing the benefits of an IT-enabled working environment. As far as e-governance projects are concerned, the government is gradually changing its role from an 'implementer' to a 'facilitator and regulator.' It will encourage private sector participation in e-governance projects, so more projects in e-governance based upon the public private participation model should come about in the near future.

E-GOVERNANCE AS A TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development. Therefore, governance is an exercise of power for steering social systems, as well as a process by which organizations are directed, controlled, and held to account to their society. It is a set of the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organization. E-Governance involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services.

Good governance can be seen as an exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to better manage affairs of a country at all levels. It is easy for people in developed countries to imagine a situation in which all interaction with government can be done through one counter 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without waiting in lines. However, to achieve this same level of efficiency and flexibility for developing countries is much more difficult for various reasons. Situation may be even more challenging with other aspects of good governance, such as transparency and accountability, as they have their roots in local political-administrative culture and may be difficult to change with the help of ICTs.

The advent of Information and Communication Technology in the recent years has presented an opportunity for the IT managers and the senior officials in the government to change the way organizations leverage and value their information assets. With the ability to easy access of information mission delivery, resource management and data dissemination can be raised to levels which were previously not at all possible. In contrasts to the private industrial and business/government organizations are measured not by profits and losses, but by their ability to deliver upon their mission. Regardless of this mission, the ability to understand the citizen and the ability to use the resources are the key factors in matching services to citizen needs.

CONCLUSIONS

E-governance is an evolutionary phenomenon, and requires a change in the mindset of one and all citizen, executives or the government. With the support of the Internet, the

government processes defined by specializations can be made efficient, effective, and citizen friendly. There are many challenging issues lying ahead. Security is the main concern for the citizen, and redefining rules and procedures, information transparency, legal issues, access to right information are the main concerns for the government to address. The aim of introducing e-governance is not to reduce manpower but to achieve efficiency and transparency. The Government- Society-Technology unit which forms the backbone of the e-management system is expected to throw up alternate livelihood options for the rural unemployed among forest dwellers and fringe dwellers, which are in the form of entrepreneurship opportunities.

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