

## E-Governance: A Step Ahead

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### Abstract

India is emerging as a country where a number of experiments of e-Governance are taking place. E-governance is the effective use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the system of governance that is in place, and thus provide better services to the Citizens. E-Governance is considered as a high priority agenda in India, as it is considered to be the only means of taking IT to the “Common Public”. India gives a unique challenge to “e-Governance” professionals because of several reasons ranging from poverty, awareness, literacy, basic infrastructure, bandwidth issues, multilingual and cultural issues. This paper describes the benefits of e-governance in India further it tries to analyze the various e-governance schemes launched by government in India and what is the future of e-governance in India?

**Keywords:** e-governance, ICT, NeGP

### Introduction

The reform of government administration and the provision of improved services to citizens has long been acknowledged as a major criterion for development and today’s drive towards e-governance in many parts of the world can be considered part of this wider developmental goal. Although the term ‘e-Governance’ has gained currency in recent years, there is no standard definition of this term. The actual term governance comes from an ancient Greek word “kebernon” which means to steer. In current usage, to govern means to steer, to control, and to influence from a position of authority. The generally accepted definition is: “e-government” or electronic government refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by government agencies for any or all of the following reasons:

- Exchange of information with citizens, businesses or other government departments
- Speedier and more efficient delivery of public services
- Improving internal efficiency
- Reducing costs or increasing revenue
- Re-structuring of administrative processes

E-governance is viewed as ICT-enabled governance. E-governance in India steadily evolved from computerization of government departments to fragmented initiatives aimed at speeding up e-Governance implementation across the various arms of the government at the national, state, and local levels.

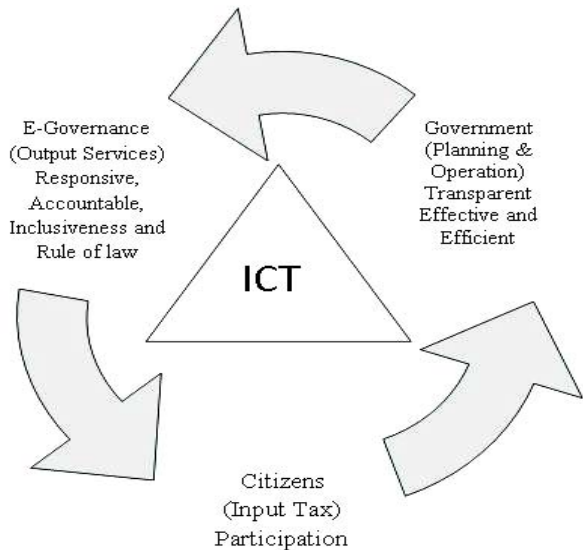


Figure 1: Conceptual model of e-Governance

These fragmented initiatives were unified into a common vision and strategy provided by the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006. The NeGP takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision and a shared cause. Around this idea, a massive countrywide infrastructure reaching down to the remotest of villages is evolving, and large-scale digitization of records is taking place to enable easy, reliable access over the Internet. E-governance is now seen as a key element of the country’s governance and administrative reform agenda. The NeGP has the potential to enable huge savings in costs through the sharing of core and support infrastructure, enabling interoperability through standards, and of presenting a seamless view of government to citizens. The NeGP is a comprehensive program of the Government of India and is designed to leverage capabilities and opportunities presented by ICT to promote good governance across the country. The vision of the NeGP is to “make all

Government services accessible to the common man in his locality."E-governance is seen as a vehicle to initiate and sustain reforms by focusing on three broad areas:

**Governance:** Transparency; people's participation; promotion of a democratic society.

**Public services:** Efficient, cost-effective and responsive governance; convenient services to citizens and businesses; greater citizen access to public information; accountability in delivery of services to citizens.

**Management:** Simplicity, efficiency and accountability; managing voluminous information and data effectively; information services; swift and secure communication.

## Why e-Government?

Citizens increasingly expect the same level of services from government as they do from other organizations. Businesses transforming their operations for the virtual world are unwilling to go for form-filling and standing in line for government. The forces of globalization are gaining momentum with the new technological innovations facilitating the process. With the development of e-Commerce applications around the globe, many countries have transitioned into electronic delivery of services at all levels of government activities. This involves changes to existing systems, procedures and processes; that affect the way in which public and business communities deal with the government. It is expected that e-Governance will result in transparency, speedy information dissemination and improved service in public administration. In the era of informed citizens, e-Governance is also seen as a vehicle for cost-effective and efficient way of public service delivery.

## Stages of e-Governance

It is evident that e-Governance is intrinsically linked with the development of computer technology, networking of computers and communication systems. In developing countries, such technologies and systems became available with a perceptible time lag as compared to developed nations. However, in the case of India, with the liberalization of the economy from the early 1990s onwards, there has been a convergence in the availability of cutting edge technologies and opportunities in the field of e-Governance. India have experienced following phases while introducing e-governance in country.

(a) Computerization: In the first phase, with the availability of personal computers, a large number of Government offices got equipped with computers. The use of computers began with word processing, quickly followed by data processing.

(b) Networking: In this phase, some units of a few government organizations got connected through a hub leading to sharing of information and flow of data between different government entities.

(c) On-line presence: With increasing internet connectivity, a need was felt for maintaining a presence on the web. This resulted in maintenance of websites by government departments and other entities. Generally, these web-pages/web-sites contained information about the organizational structure, contact details, reports and publications, objectives and vision statements of the respective government entities.

(d) On-line interactivity: A natural consequence of on-line presence was opening up of communication channels between government entities and the citizens, civil society organizations etc. The main aim at this stage was to minimize the scope of personal interface with government entities by providing downloadable Forms, Instructions, Acts, rules etc. In some cases, this has already led to on-line submission of Forms. Most citizen-government transactions have the potential of being put on e-Governance mode.

## Types of Interactions in e-Governance

E-Governance facilitates interaction between different stake holders in governance. These interactions may be described as follows:

**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.

**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.

## E-Governance Initiative in India

**Gyandoot:** Intranet in Tribal District of Dhar (State Government of Madhya Pradesh) This project offers e-governance services including online registration of applications, rural e-mail facility, village auction site etc. It also provides services such as Information on Mandi (farm products market) rates, On-line public grievance redressal, caste & income certificates and Rural Market (Gaon ka Bazaar). It was winner of Stockholm challenge IT Award 2000.

**Key Characteristics:** It provides number of information and solutions for the citizens.

\* It will provide information about cost of produced crops, local and other auction centers at a fee of Rs. 5/-only.

\* Provides data regarding the families below poverty line.

**Benefits:** Farmers will be facilitated by the Gyandoot by providing the appropriate price for their crop which minimizes the role of mediators, fast and easy access of various types of forms, land records etc. Villagers can participate in the decision making of various functioning bodies for their welfare by effective grievance redressal.

**CARD** – Registration Project (State Government of Andhra Pradesh) Computer-Aided Administration of Registration Department (CARD) impacting 10 million citizens over a period of 3 years. It has completed registration of 2.8 million titles with title searches made in 1.4 million cases. The system ensures transparency in valuation of property and efficient document management system. The estimated saving of 70 million man-hours of citizen time valued at US\$ 35 mil (investment in CARD - US\$ 6million). Similar initiatives in other states like SARITA (State Government of Maharashtra) STAR (State Government of Tamil Nadu), etc. have further built upon this initiative. CARD was one of the ten finalists in the International Innovation awards program instituted by the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management.

**Key Characteristics:** The CARD project aimed at the complete computerization of the land registration process in Andhra Pradesh.

**Benefits:** Within short span of three years, nearly 90% of registration transactions performed electronically in Andhra Pradesh.

**Bhoomi** – Automation of Land Records (State Government of Karnataka). It provides computerized Record of Rights Tenancy & Crops (RTC) - needed by farmer to obtain bank loans, settle land disputes etc. It has also ensured increased transparency and reliability, significant reduction in corruption, exploitation and oppression of farmers. This

project has benefited 20 million rural land records covering 6.7 million farmers.

**Key Characteristics:** Bhoomi facilitates computerization of entire 20 million records of land ownership of 6.7 million farmers.

\* It is uniquely designed for Karnataka State.

\* Regional language dominance i.e Kannada.

\* Generally target all citizens of the state.

\* 177 taluks and 203 kiosks are developed for supporting the Bhoomi project.

**Benefits:** Kiosks (Bhoomi Center) provide RTC online at a very nominal cost of Rs. 15/- only. Efficiency for getting records of right is very high; it will just take only 5 to 30 min. whereas old system will take around 3 to 30 days. Mutation will takes place within 35 days whereas in old manual system it will take minimum of 200 days. Land record distribution is very high (Nearly 14 million records). Number of mutation per year is 1.6 million which is very high in comparison to old system.

**Vahan & Sarathi:** Vehicle registration, permit driving license project (State Government of Tamil Nadu) The software developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC) for use at Regional Transport Offices is a workflow system to carry out the activities using Computers. Vahan is for processing all transactions related to Vehicles and Sarathi is for processing Driving License and related activities. Vahan can be used to issue Registration Certificate, Fitness certificate and Permits. Sarathi can be used to issue a Learner's License, Permanent Driving License and Conductor License to the applicant. The system was implemented on pilot basis in RTO Chennai (North). The system was then approved for implementation in all RTOs in Tamil Nadu. Vahan & Sarathi Systems have been implemented in 71 offices.

**Key Characteristics:** There are number of services offered by the Vahan Project:-

\* Registration of Vehicle.

\* Issue & Modification and Hypothecation in RC.

\* Transfer/Surrender/Cancellation of RC.

\* Issue, modification or cancellation of Permit.

\* Issue of NOC

Services provided by Sarathi Project are:-

\* Issue and modification of Learner's License.

\* Issue and modification of Driving License.

\* Issue and modification of Conductor's License.

**Benefits:** Online availability of complete vehicle information. Monitors selling and purchasing of vehicle, Transfer of vehicle, address modification etc becomes very fast and easy.

These are few successful e-Governance projects in India and their characteristics which show the development of e-Governance is significant. Table1 shows the readiness of

Indian government which helps improves the acceptability of e-Governance in India.

Govt. programs promoting use of ICT	Rank out of 134
Govt. Success in ICT promotion	23
Availability of Govt. services online	49
ICT use and Govt. Efficiency	33
Presence of ICT in Govt. Offices	67
e-Participation Index(quality, usefulness, relevance)	47

Source: World Economic Forum, Executive Opinion Survey 2007, 2008

## CONCLUSION

India is a huge country which is in developing phase currently launching many major e-governance projects aiming to improve government processes, connect government to citizens and build interactions within civil society, however due to procedural delays, lack of infrastructure these projects get delayed. India is aiming to be among in the category of developed countries thus there is ample need for various e-governance projects which boosts the economy by reducing time-taken for work, bringing transparency and incorporating ICT tools in various government programs.

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