

PURVIEW ON E-GOVERNANCE

Riya Gulati

Designation: Paralegal at Law Offices of Caro Kinsella &
Youth Ambassador for the ONE Campaign, Ireland.

Qualifications: LL.M (Intellectual Property & Information Technology)

From University College Dublin+ BA.LLB from Bharati Vidyapeeth Deemed University, Pune.

ABSTRACT

Globally, the electronic transactions have increased over the past years. In order to reinstitute the democracy to its veracious connotation with the help of improvisation of the participation of the citizen in the governing process by giving feedback and access to information and overall participation of the citizen in the decision making, the e-governance has become the need of the hour. It has enabled the citizens to know and be updated with the government's policies. In a country with the largest population, it is difficult for the government to reach out to every individual, hence, the technology driven government is a momentous. E-governance helps in providing an access to Government information and services to the public and other agencies in an efficient, transparent and cost-effective way. Furthermore, the National E-Governance Plan vision to: "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man" have not only made the government information and services accessible to common man but has also increased transparency and accountability. Due to limited financial resources and lack of legal and technical infrastructure, E-governance has posed challenges. The purpose of this paper is to provide the gist of E-governance by providing an overview of the E-governance along with its objectives, stages, advantages & disadvantages, challenges and strategies for the effective implementation of E-governance. Furthermore, it will analyse the National E-Governance Plan.

INTRODUCTION

E-government has been defined by the World Bank as "the application by the government agencies of information technologies (such as the Internet, Wide Area Networks, and mobile computing) that have the potential to transfigure relations with citizens, other arms of government, and businesses. These technologies can fulfil a variety of divergent ends: citizen empowerment through access to information, better delivery of government services to citizens, more efficient government management, or meliorated interactions with business and industry. The triggering benefits can be increased transparency, less corruption, revenue growth, or cost reductions, and greater convenience." The notion typically implies application of information and communication technology by Government in providing imperative information and services consequently bringing people closer to governance.

The term e-governance infers technology driven government whereby government embraces technology to proffer streamline delivery of information, services and education to its citizens. The pivotal contrivance in e-governance is the application of information and communication technology. The fundamental goal of e-Governance is people's empowerment by bringing governance proximate to them. It is comprehensively accredited that e-governance brings efficiency, transparency and accountability. Basically, e-Governance is a move towards SMART governance denoting: simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance.

The term e-government or e-governance is broadly used interchangeably nonetheless many writers concur that both terms are disparate. E-government refers to the application of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in public administration which, when integrated with organizational change and new

skills, are contemplated to revamp democratic processes, public services and to reinforce support to the public. The internet is used to ameliorate government process and activities, with the object of increasing transparency, efficiency and citizen participation. E.g. electronic service delivery, electronic voting and electronic payment system etc. On the contrary, e-governance implies administering or governing a state/country or organization, with the help of ICTs. The panorama of e-governance is “the application of technologies that both help to govern and have to be governed”. The prime aim of e-governance is to reach the beneficiary and to corroborate that their service needs are met. E.g. electronic consultation, electronic engagement, electronic controllership and networked societal guidance. E-government is a system whilst e-governance is a function. E-government implies the use of ICT in government operations as a tool to increase the outreach of the government services. On the other hand, e-governance implies the application of ICT in transmuting and underpinning structures and functions of the system. Moreover, e-government uses one-way communication protocol whereas e-governance uses two-way communication protocol.

The swift development of digitalization has caused many governments across the world to incorporate and consolidate technology into governmental processes. Electronic governance has been embraced by nations across the globe in order to make government services available to citizens and businesses in an efficient, transparent and convenient mode. Examples of e-governance encompass National Portal of India, Prime Minister of India portal, Digital India Initiative, Aadhar filing, digital land management systems, online payment of taxes and Common Entrance Test. The e-governance can take place in four radical types of interactions:

- **Government to Citizen (G2C):** The nationals have a platform by means of which they can interconnect with the government and get access to the miscellany of public services offered by the Government. G2C model have been designed to lubricate citizen interaction with the government. The principal objective is to make government citizen-friendly. It permits citizens to access government information and services conveniently, promptly from everywhere, by use of numerous channels. Furthermore, to make definite transactions, such as paying governmental fees, certifications and applying for benefits, the potentiality of G2C stratagems to wipe out possible time and geographic obstacles which can connect nationals who may not otherwise come into contact with one other and may in turn increase and facilitate citizen participation in government. Some of the G2C initiatives include computerization of land records, Gyandoot, Project FRIENDS in Kerala, Lokvani Project in Uttar Pradesh, Bhoomi Project, e-Seva (Andhra Pradesh), e-Mitra Project in Rajasthan and Common Entrance Test.
- **Government to Government (G2G):** The information is interchanged within the government i.e. either, between the central government, state government and local governments or between divergent sections of the same government. The fundamental objective is to escalate performance, efficiency and output. G2G is the online communications between government organizations, agencies and departments based on a super-government database. This type of interplay happens horizontally such as between different government agencies as well as between divergent functional sections within an organisation, or vertical such as between national, provincial and local government agencies as well as between divergent levels within an organisation. G2G initiatives encompass SmartGov (Andhra Pradesh) and Khajane Project in Karnataka.
- **Government to Employees (G2E):** This sort of interaction is between the government and its employees. The objective of this alliance is to serve employees and provide some E-services such as applying online for an annual leave, checking the balance of leave and reviewing salary payment records etc. ICT tools help in making these interactions efficient and fast and hence amplifies the satisfaction levels of employees. E-

governance makes it feasible for employees to become paperless and makes it convenient for employees to send essential documents back and forth to colleagues all over the globe in lieu of having to print out these records or fax.

- **Government to Businesses (G2B):** Herein, the businesses are able to interconnect with the government seamlessly with regard to the governmental services offered to businesses. G2B encompass numerous services interchanged between government and the business sectors that incorporate distribution of regulations, policies and memos which brings momentous efficiencies to both governments and businesses. Business services offered encompass procuring current business information, new regulations, lodging taxes, downloading application forms, registering businesses, renewing licences and obtaining permits etc. The aim is to chop red-tapism which will save time and bring down operational costs. This will also generate a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government. G2B initiatives encompass MCA 21 and e-Procurement Project in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

Objectives of E-Governance: The shrewd objective of e-governance is to streamline and support governance for all parties such as government, citizens and businesses via effective application of ICTs. The key objectives of e-governance are as follows:

- To make the administration of government more accountable and transparent whilst addressing the society's expectations and needs through conscientious public services and constructive interaction between the government, citizens and business in order to inspire social, political and economic progress of the nation.
- To warrant speedy administration of information and services. It aims to make every government's information available to all in the public interest.
- To make feasible the transfiguration from passive information access to active citizen participation by stimulating the citizen to vote, representing the citizen, informing the citizen, involving the citizen and consulting the citizen.
- To restore the democracy to its true meaning by invigorating and proliferating citizen's participation in the governance process.
- To concoct a cooperative framework between the government and the citizen and to seek advice and help from the people, to make the government aware of the quandaries of the people.
- To design a better business environment by pruning out redundancies in procedures and accentuating immediate and systematic delivery of services, e-governance create the conditions that allure investors.
- To revamp the nation's information and communication technology and electronic media, with the object of reinforcing the nation's economy by keeping government, citizen and business in tune with the modern world.
- To tweak the quality of life for disadvantaged communities as ICT makes it possible for government to reach marginalized communities/groups.

Stages of E-governance

In order to ameliorate the lives of citizens, the government across the globe are concentrating on e-governance. E-government utilizes technology to attain reform by stimulating transparency, obliterating distance and other divides, and empowering citizen to participate in the political processes that affect their lives. Governments have divergent strategies to build e-government. Some have designed comprehensive long-term plans whilst others have opted to recognize just a few key areas as the focus of early projects.

GARTNER'S FOUR PHASES OF E-GOVERNMENT MODEL

- 1) **PRESENCE:** This stage is categorized by a simple information providing website of a passive nature, sometimes delineated as “brochure ware”, connoting the same level of functions as a paper brochure. Herein, the information is collected and made available to the citizens in the form of websites etc., whereby the information will be regularly collected and updated.

- 2) **INTERACTION:** It provides simple interactions between government and citizen, government to business, or government agency to government agency. It comprehends the email contact and interactive forms that generate informational responses. Herein, the citizens will be able to download forms, contact the officials and make appointments and requests (online) which earlier would have been only possible with long queues near the counters. Internally (G2G), the governmental agencies can use LAN, WAN, intranet and email to interchange information.

- 3) **TRANSACTION:** This stage enables transactions such as paying for license renewals online, paying taxes or fees, or submitting bids for procurement contracts. Herein, the citizens can do transactions with the government (online) without going to the government offices.

- 4) **TRANSFORMATION:** It is most closely aligned with the notion of governance, entails a reinvention of how government functions are conceived and organized. Herein, a total seamless integration of e-functions and services across the administrative and departmental boundaries takes place. That implies, the citizen can interact with the government at a single point and can transact with the government.

The Government of India has come up with a similar model as that of Gartner's for its e-Governance implementation comprising of four stages- Information, interaction, transaction and integration.

ADVANTAGES OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance make government services transparent, cost effective, result oriented and the citizens are able to access governmental services in a convenient barrier free environment. E-government is a new culture of administration which aims for transparency, quality, and availability. The following are the prime benefits of e-governance:

- **Access to vital information at a click:** It permits access to the government services and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a way that it is pivoted on the needs of the citizens. The digitalized information is more widespread and is easy to access which soars citizen's participation in government.

- **Cost Saving:** The origin of the information is from an authentic source i.e. official websites can be availed by citizens without any cost. It brings down burden on bureaucratic machinery thereby reducing operational costs.

- **Transparency:** It is a prime upshot of e-governance as the technology neither discriminates nor divides. It discards chain of hurdles i.e. middlemen or any agency interventions and consequently precludes delay and denial, as citizens can participate directly in governmental schemes.

- **Accountability:** It ameliorate accountability by allowing access and participation at different level. The citizens are in a better position to access information, consequently forcing Governance towards accountability. The well-informed citizens are in a better position to demand timely and effective implementation of various government schemes and policies.
- **Centralization:** It streamlines the administrative set up by bringing divergent departments and organizations under one roof. The Central administration reduces time and cost and reduces bureaucratic hurdles. Further, it improves transparency.
- **Educative Value:** It has idiosyncratic information and educative value to people encompassing academicians, researchers, policy makers, executors and experts from media. IT creates a knowledge base necessary for interchange of notions, remarks and condemnation. It helps in precipitation of civil sense of discipline.

DISADVANTAGES OF E-GOVERNANCE

The model of e-governance is highly successful in the developed nations but due to the absence of public internet access for all the citizens, higher surveillance and monitoring, privacy & security issues, lack of awareness, loss of interpersonal communication and geographical constraints, E-governance has become a big challenge for the government. The primary disadvantages of e-governance are as follows:

- **High setup cost and Technical Difficulties:** The set-up cost for the technology is quite high and the machines are required to be maintained frequently. Oftentimes, internet and computer can also break down and put a dent in governmental work and services.
- **Vulnerability to cyber-attacks:** There is always the peril of purloining of private data of citizens stored in the government servers. Cybercrime is a dour issue; a breach of data can make the public loose confidence in the government's ability to govern the people.
- **Technical illiteracy:** There are large number of people who are not tech-savvy and hence it is difficult for them to access government services which puts a limit to the citizen's participation.
- **Inaccessibility:** Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure is required to establish e-governance, especially in rural, hilly and far-flung areas which dearth this infrastructure. The ICT provisions should be available to all citizens and are indispensable to be developed. Internet connection through satellite, telephone lines should be accessible for all especially to the people in remote and rural areas. Apart from that regular supply of electricity is pre-requisite to carry out any technological activity.
- **Lack of integrated services:** Majority of the services which are being issued by the central or state government are not interlinked which may be construed as a fact that there is a communication gap between the divergent departments of the government. The information which these departments have might be exclusive to their department but for a consumer or citizen, the information from the various departments needs to be interlinked.
- **Lack of transparency:** Online governmental transparency is dubious because it is maintained by the government themselves. The information can be inserted or deleted from the public eyes for which only few

organizations provide accountability for these alterations. Even the government themselves don't always keep a track of the information they add or remove. Additionally, with many technology-based services, it is usually easy to make an excuse "the server has gone down"- the problem with the service provided are because of the technology.

Challenges to E-Government

Despite of number of opportunities for the implementation of e-government initiatives, there lies number of challenges (technical, economics and social) that could preclude the realization of the anticipated benefits. The challenges to e-government are:

- **Breach of Privacy:** Related to vulnerability to cyber-attacks, privacy also poses a challenge to the acceptance and implementation of e-government initiatives. Concerns about the use of "cookies," sharing information between agencies (computer matching), and the disclosure or mishandling of private information are recurrent subjects of debate. The breach of privacy could have a negative impact on citizen's trust in government web-based services and websites. In order to address the privacy issue in the context of e-government, an intervention of both policy and technical responses will be required.
- **Government Information Technology Management and Funding:** A multi-layered obstacle for the development of e-government is the management and funding of the government information technology. This comprises issues pertaining to government information technology worker recruitment, retention, and compensation; and cooperation between local, state and federal government. Whilst e-government provides the opportunity for government officials to burgeon new skills, it also poses the quandary of hiring and retaining proficient information technology workers in a relatively high-demand field. Providing salaries below the market standards and the inability to proffer some types of benefits hinders the government's capability to entice and retain skilled workers, propelling it to either outsource certain projects or delay implementation.
- **Poverty and illiteracy:** For the poor, the access to the internet is quite expensive. Installing the inevitable telephone lines required for internet access is equally unaffordable for them. The economic split has made particular section of the society unable to have information access as they are unable to afford it. Moreover, people who are not English literates or technology savvy marks as a significant encumbrance in stabilizing information access. Hence, for the successful equalization of information access, there is a need of providing knowledge and training on ICT skills.
- **Lack of awareness:** The marginalized section of the society is unaware of the various online services available to them. This can be revamped by sensitizing the people by virtue of arranging several awareness workshops and camps at the local grassroot levels.

Strategic framework for designing a streamlined E-government

- **Building up technical infrastructure/framework across India:** At a substantial scale, we have been using technologies for the purposes of word processing and for simpler piece of work inclined in developed areas. Due to paucity of technical infrastructure, the provisions are not extended to grassroot level in rural areas. Therefore, the government must pivot on extending internet facilities to rural areas by providing enough funds in the budget.

- **Build up legal infrastructure:** The technology is growing and changing rapidly, correspondingly, the dynamic technology has changed many pre-established notions. It is significant that the government make laws which incorporate the current technology and has enough space to encompass the dynamic future technology. The IT laws need to be pliable to adjust with the swiftly changing technology. Hence, for better implementation of e-governance, the Government is required to frame laws which will fully incorporate the established as well as emerging technology.
- **The need for coordination between Government Department and Solution Developers:** Designing of any application necessitates a proximate interaction between the government department and the agency developing the solutions. Currently, the users in government departments do not contribute enough to design the solution architecture. Thus, the solution developed and implemented does not address the requirements of an e-governance project and therefore does not get implemented. Hence, the coordination between the government and solution developers is essential.
- **To popularise E-governance:** There are very few e-literates in India. The government is required to campaign for e-governance and proliferate people's awareness towards e-governance. The government can stimulate people to opt for online government services and make people feel comfortable and secured with the e-governance process. This can be done by educating the people and raising awareness about the advantages of e-governance over physical governance.
- **Making all the information available on an online platform:** The government must publish all the vital information on their websites. This can be facilitated through centralised storage of information, localisation of content and content management. The citizens are entitled to know every piece of information of the government, because the government is of the people, by the people and for the people.
- **Setting up standards:** It is crucial to set various standards to bring e-governance to the quality and performance level of private corporate sector. Currently, the Government is working on standards management and has various drafts prepared for the same. These standards include the following: interoperability standards, quality standards, technical standards, security standards. In India, the government websites have no uniform standard as most of the state government's websites differ in various aspects. There is no standard set up with regards to the quality of information, document, the formats, etc. It is indispensable for the Government to set uniform standards which must be followed by every government and their undertakings.
- **Centre-State Partnership:** The Indian setup is quasi-federal, thence, Centre-State and inter-state cooperation is crucial for tranquil functioning of the democratic process. This liaison is also important for successful implementation of e-governance which shall extend to Centre-state, inter-state and inter-department relationships. For the same the Government can setup a Central Hub like the contemporary Government of India portal, for accessing the information of all the organs of the central government and all the state government. The states can collaborate with the Centre to design a National Citizen Database.

THE NATIONAL E-GOVERNANCE PLAN

The NeGP is the government manoeuvre to make all government services available to citizens of India via electronic mode. This stratagem is managed by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. The chief objective of NeGP is to provide

government services accessible to common man in an efficient, transparent and reliable manner. For an instance, The Income Tax Department of India has adopted initiatives of e-delivery of vital services such as e-filing of TDS statements, e-payment of taxes and e-delivery of Refunds etc. Further, the MCA21 project is the e-governance initiative of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. It offers registry related services including filing of documents, registration of companies, payment, e-stamp and public access to corporate information. Anyone can access to relevant records and documents online at their doorstep. Hence, the NeGP aims at ameliorating delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses in a fruitful manner. The NeGP consists of a series of different Mission Mode Projects which are classified under central, state and integrated projects.

Central Mission Mode Projects: Banking; Central Excise & Customs (CBEC); Income Tax; Insurance; MCA21; Passport; Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT); Pension; e-office; posts and Unique Identification (UID).

State MMPs: Agriculture; Commercial Taxes; e-District; Employment Exchange; National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP); Municipalities; e-Panchayats; Police (CCTNS- Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems); Road Transport; Treasuries Computerization; Public Distribution System (PDS); Education and Health.

Integrated MMPs: Common Services Centres (CSCs); e-Biz; e-Courts; e-Procurement; Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) for Trade (eTrade); National e-Governance Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG) and India Portal.

Recent e-Governance Initiatives: Digital India Program (Create Broadband Highways, E-governance & eKranti- electronic delivery for services); Unified Payments Interface; Unified Mobile Application for New Age Governance (UMANG); Government e-Marketplace (GeM); e-Pramaan; MyGov citizen portal; DigiLocker; DARPAN; Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI); Mobile Seva.

CONCLUSION

The government is constructed of people, elected by the people and marks as a powerful representation for the people, implies that the people are the government's first and foremost priority. The prime objective of the government is public welfare by means of delivering constructive services to the citizens in an efficient, legitimate and transparent way. The achievement of good governance goal relies on the availability of robust administrative capacity in the governmental machinery and the maximum participation of the citizen at all the levels of governance. E-governance removes the geographical barrier which brings the government and citizens closer to each other, by virtue of which, the government becomes more accountable to the public. M-governance is also playing a key role in revamping the government's services and is complementing e-Governance. Indeed, E-governance and M-governance hold a dazzling scope, therefore, there is a need to work on the strategic and legal framework to dwindle the limitations.

“The beauty of e-governance is that a few keystrokes can bring smiles on a million faces”- Narendra Modi

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