

E-Gov Challenges – Issues in the State

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Abstract : The emergence of Information Super Highway has provided means for communication at the speed of light, retrieval of data and utilization of information to its users. E-Governance is basically the application of ICT to provide government services to the citizens through internet. In developing countries like India, where literacy level is very low and even most of the people are living below poverty line, people are not even aware about the benefits of E-Gov. activities and people do not use Computer and Communication technologies to a much extent, there exist a number of issues to implement e-Gov activities. This paper highlights the challenges related to the implementation of E-Gov. Projects in the State of Madhya Pradesh in India. E-Gov. is basically an application of ICTs (Information & Communication Technologies) that uses ICTs in Government Organizations, (NGOs) for delivery of services to citizens. MP Government had implemented a number of projects at district, tehsil and sub-tehsil levels to serve its citizens. But due to some reasons or another, rural citizens are not aware about these projects and their services. That is the reason why, these projects are suffering from their poor implementation.

Keywords: DIT (Department of Information Technology), E-Government, RTI (Right to Information), Cost, different languages, E-readiness rank, E-Governance, ICT, literacy level, per capita income, separation.

II.

I. Introduction

Definition: E-Governance is defined for the purposes of this paper as the application of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens and government and businesses, as well as in internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of governance.

The term E-Governance coined with the advent of government websites in 1990s. E-Governance or electronic Governance refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide citizens and organizations with more convenient access to the government's services. In other words, E-Gov. involves ICTs, especially the internet, to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, business and government agencies. The use of internet not only delivers the services faster but also brings.

In the state of Madhya Pradesh literacy level is low and majority of people are below poverty line, it is difficult for the government to provide its services to such citizens via means of internet. Many other factors like privacy and security related to user's personal information, digital divide etc. are also huge challenges for the implementation of E-Gov. Projects in the State. A number of projects are implemented under E-Gov in MP to provide services to the citizens. These projects are implemented mainly at district, tehsil and sub-tehsil level which are far away from the access of rural citizens. To get services, lot of time and money is wasted by these citizens. Even, most of the times these people are misguided by the agents as they do not aware how to get the also rural citizens are not aware about running projects that is why; they are not able to access the services. This paper is aimed on the factors for the implementation of E-Governance. These factors mainly include lack of awareness in citizens. It also highlights the E-Governance initiatives taken in the state and the participation of urban as well as rural people to access the services provided through these initiatives. The paper also describes the obstacles faced by rural citizens to get an access of E-Gov services and thus the need or implementation of E-Gov.

Challenges for e-Governance

There obstacles in implementation of E-Governance Project. These can be bifurcated under the titles:

Environmental and Social Challenges, Economical Challenges and Technical Challenges, these challenges are as under:

A. Environmental and Social Challenges

i) **Language barrier:** People belonging to different regions speak different languages. The diversity of people in context of language is a challenge for implementing E-Gov. projects as E-Gov. applications are written in English language. And also, English may not be understandable by most of the people. Therefore, it becomes a challenge for the government to write e-Governance applications which are to be implemented in more than one language so that these may be acceptable to the users of a particular language i.e. Hindi.

ii) **Low Literacy:** Literacy can be defined as the ability to read and write with understanding in any language.

A person who can merely read but cannot write cannot be considered as literate.

Any formal education or minimum educational standard is not necessary to be considered literate. Literacy level of India is very low, which is a huge obstacle in implementation of E-Governance projects. Illiterate people are not able to access the E-Governance applications, hence the projects do not get much success.

iii) Low IT Awareness: Much of the people are not literate and those who are literate, they do not have much knowledge about Information Technology (IT). Most of the people in India are not aware about the usage of Information technology. So, in India, having such low level of IT literacy, how can E-Governance projects be implemented successfully? We can say that IT illiteracy is a major obstacle in implementation of E-Governance in India. So, first of all Indian people must be made aware about the usage of Information Technology.

iv) Acceptance of applications: Recognition of the E-Governance facilities by the citizens is another challenge. It is a challenge to have all the citizens well aware of the facilities offered by the E-government and have them to trust in it, so that citizens should be ready to accept these facilities.

v) User friendly of websites: Users of E-Governance applications are often non-expert users who may not be able to use the applications in a right manner. Such users need guidance to find the right way to perform their transactions. Therefore government websites must be user friendly so that more and more people can use them easily. Hence, these websites can be more effective. If government websites will be designed in an easier format only then these will be more usable for the users who are not expert users of IT.

vi) Easy Access to services: The concept of E-Governance is claiming for increased efficiency and effectiveness of the government but these goals will be achieved only if the service will be available to the 100% of the citizens. So, every service should be accessible by anybody from anywhere and anytime. Even if the users of Internet are growing but still there is a major part population which is not able to access E-Governance activities for variety of reasons, e.g. some people may have limited access to Information and Communication Technologies and devices. Therefore, government has to provide internet access through public terminals as a part of their universal access efforts.

vii) Standard technologies provided by government: The implementation of public administration functions via E-Government requires that the user must be confident and comfortable while using the technology; User must also trust that technology that he/she is interacting with. Even the government should provide the measures so that the users can trust the technology provided to them. The government has to make a balance between ensuring that a system prevents

fraudulent transactions and the burden that extensive checks can take place on people who are honest.

viii) Separation: The separation that exists between the individuals, communities and businesses that have access to Information Technology and those that do not have such access. Economic poverty is closely related to the limited information technology resources. People who are living below poverty line cannot afford a computer and internet connection for themselves to take the benefits of the E-Government and other on-line services.

Economic poverty is not the only cause of this separation, it may also be caused by the lack of awareness among the people. Even some of the economically stable people do not know about the scope and services of E-Governance.

Indian government has to take some actions to narrow this separation to actively implement the E-Governance projects.

Change management: The struggle to change phenomenon can explain much the hesitation that occurs on the part of the constituents in moving from a paper-used to a web-based system to interact with respect to have their biases with respect to how transactions should be discussed. Government entities and public policy administrators cannot ignore the changes that occur as a result of the implementation of the ICT. Education about value of new system is one step towards reducing some of this struggle.

Population and Geography: Population is probably the biggest challenge in implementing E-governance projects. As population is considered to be an asset to country but it also offers some other challenges e.g. establishing person utilities. There is no unique identity of individuals in India although government is making efforts for providing unique identity to its citizens. Apart from this, measuring the population, keeping the database of all Indian nationals and keeping this database updated and then providing the E-governance services to the whole population are major challenges.

xi) Lack of integrated services: Most of the E-governance services which are offered by the state or central government are not integrated. Lack of communication between different departments of government may be its major cause. Therefore, the information that resides within one department has no or very little meaning to some other department of the government.

xii) Lack of awareness: Most of the people are not aware of the benefits of E-Governance services. Even the government does not pay much attention to make the people aware about E-Governance activities. Creating awareness is a major challenge in the implementation of E-Governance projects.

B. Economical Challenges

i) **Cost:** Cost is one of the most important obstacles in the path of implementation of E-Governance where major part of the population is living below poverty line. Even the politicians do not have interest in implementing E-Governance. A huge amount of money is involved in implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance tasks. These costs must be low enough so that to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio.

ii) **Applications must be transferrable from one platform to another:** E-governance applications must be independent from hardware or software platforms. Therefore, these applications can be used at any platform irrespective of the hardware or software and from one platform to the other platform. These applications may also help on possible reuse by other administrators.

iii) **Maintenance Issue of devices:** As the Information Technology changes very fast and it is very difficult for us to update our existing systems very fast. Regulations of different devices and their different characteristics may vary and the system in use must be capable to handle all the emerging needs. Maintenance is a key factor for long living systems in a rapidly changing technical environment.

iv) **Low per Capita income:** Per capita income means how much each individual receives, in the terms of money, of the yearly income generated in a country. This refers to what each individual receives if the yearly national income is divided equally among everyone. Per capita income is low as compare to the others. Therefore, people cannot afford on-line services provided by the government which is a challenge for implementation of E-governance.

v) **Financial resources:** The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is one of the measures of income and economy. GDP is defined as the total market value of all final goods and services produced within the country in a given period of time. GDP of a country is the measure of its financial strength. State has limited financial resources so as to implement and maintain the E-Government projects properly.

C. Technical challenges

i) **Interoperability:** Interoperability is the ability of systems and organizations of different qualities to work together. The E-Governance applications must have this characteristic so that the newly developed and existing applications can be implemented together.

ii) **Scale of applications:** E-Governance projects have to be designed to scale from the day one. E-Governance is supposed to affect every citizen of the country, so E-Governance applications must have the scale to interface with every citizen.

iii) **Multimodal Interaction:** Multimodal interaction provides the user with multiple modes of interfacing with a

system. An e-Government application can be really effective if its users can access it using different devices.

iv) **Privacy and Security:** - A critical obstacle in implementing E-Governance is the privacy and security of an individual's personal data that he/she provides to obtain government services. With the implementation of E-Government projects, some effective measures must be taken to protect the sensitive personal information of the people. Lack of security standards can limit the development of E-Government project that contain personal information such as income, medical history etc.

v) **Scope of applications:** The very first step in creating a good application is to define its scope very well and everything else comes later. The applications which are provided by E-Government, their scope must be known in advance for the accurate implementation of E-Governance projects.

vi) **Tried and tested technologies:** Technology tends to get out of date very fast. Our government may not be in position to buy new servers every year. So, it is better and safer to use technologies and products which are tried and tested for longer periods of times than using the latest ones.

vii) **Geographical problems:** Corporate networks reside on reliable and controlled networks. Government networks have to go into all areas which are even unfriendly to live. It is, however, costly to wire up all the villages in the country. So, E-Governance systems must have to use the wireless networks like existing cellular networks to reach the applications into remote areas irrespective of the geographical issues.

viii) **Local language:** The acceptance of English language in India is very low. The E-governance applications are written in English. That is why E-Governance projects do not get success. Hence, the e-governance applications must be written in local language of the people so that they may be able to use and take advantage of these applications.

III Conclusion

As the usage of Information Technology is growing very fast, government is making many efforts to provide services to its citizens through E-Governance. Although government is spending a lot of money on E-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in all parts of India. Un awareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the unsuccessful implementation of E-Governance in India. Government must take some actions to make the people aware about the E-Governance activities so that people may take full advantage of these activities and E-Governance projects can be implemented successfully. The participation of people can play a vital role in implementation of E-Governance.

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