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E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

E-Governance in India

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DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES OF E - GOVERNANCE

"Electronic Governance (e - Governance) is the application of information & communication technologies to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of informational & transactional exchanges with in government, between govt. & govt. agencies of National, State, Municipal & Local levels, citizen & businesses, and to empower citizens through access & use of information"1

e - Governance is the application of Information Technology to the Government functioning in order to bring about Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) Governance.

e - Governance is a highly complex process requiring provision of hardware, software, networking and re - engineering of the procedures for:

¾ Improving effectiveness and efficiency of delivery of services by using the information and communication technologies (ICT) like internet, mobile, etc.;

¾ Increasing the accountability and transparency in informational and transactional exchanges

between various sources (e.g. Government agencies, etc.) and users (e.g. Public, etc.) of

information and transactions;

¾ Empowering the public with easy, speedy, cost efficient and real time information access so as to

increase citizen participation in the democratic process

¾ Curbing the misuse / unauthorized use of information and transactions by filling in the gaps of availability, access and communication of information

Thus e - Governance is more than just a Government website on the internet. Political, social, economic and technological aspects determine the scope and success of existence of e - Governance. It may include a broad range of services for many segments of society. The most common areas of e - Governance application are electronic commerce and business regulations, taxation and revenue, law enforcement and courts, education, health and transport.

COMPONENTS OF E - GOVERNANCE AND REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCH COMPONENTS

There is a general consensus between government and private sector officials on the main components of e - Governance:

9 Government to Government communication (G2G);

9 Government to Business communication (G2B) and

9 Government to Citizens communication (G2C)

Key requirements for e - Governance components can be broadly classified into:

9 Highly efficient, User friendly and Cost economical Infrastructure;

9 Extensive human capacity development;

9 Legal, Administrative and Political framework to support ICT environment and

9 Holistic approach and sustained efforts in implementation and maintenance within Government agencies, Business communities and Citizens

EVOLUTION OF E - GOVERNANCE TECHNOLOGIES

The global shift towards increased deployment of IT by governments took place in the nineties, with the advent of the World Wide Web. Amid an increase in Internet and mobile phone connections, global citizens started expecting and accessing more and more information and services online from governments and corporate organizations to further their civic, professional and personal lives. This

development provides us with abundant evidence of a new "e - citizenship".

The concept of e - governance originated in India during the seventies with a focus on development of in - house government applications in the areas of defense, economic monitoring and planning. The deployment of IT was aimed to manage data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. The efforts of the National Informatics Center (NIC) to connect all the district headquarters during the eighties was a very significant development. Early nineties onwards, IT technologies were supplemented by ICT technologies to extend its use for wider sectoral applications with policy emphasis on reaching out to rural areas and taking in greater inputs from NGOs and private sector.

PRESENT SCENARIO OF E - GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

The e - Governance scenario in India has come a long way since its origin. A large number of initiatives have been taken by the Union and the State Governments that initiatives can be broadly classified into the following categories:

Computerisation of Land records and their online delivery e.g. Project Bhoomi implemented in Karnataka and Project CARD implemented in Andhra Pradesh

™ Online registration, disposal and monitoring of public grievances

e.g. Project SETU implemented in Maharashtra and Project Gramsampark implemented in Madhya Pradesh.

™ Online availability of information on administrative procedures and forms

e.g. Project STAMPS implemented in Maharashtra and Project WebCITI implemented in Punjab

™ Providing essential, important and useful information of public interest

e.g. Project Gyandoot implemented in Madhya Pradesh and Project JAN MITRA implemented in Rajasthan

™ Online facility to pay all statutory dues and taxes as well as utility payments

e.g. Project FRIENDS implemented in Kerala and Project MUDRA implemented in Bihar

™ Online facility to make applications and avail various types of services

e.g. Project Vidya Vahini implemented at national level and Project FAST implemented in Andhra Pradesh

™ Facilitating all procurements by online tenders and evaluation of bids e.g. Project Lok Mitra implemented in Himachal Pradeshand Project Mahiti Shakti implemented in Gujarat

™ Providing easy and secure online access to registry/compliance related services e.g. Project MCA21 implemented at national level

Every state government has taken the initiative to form an IT task force to outline IT policy document for the state and the citizen charters have started appearing on government websites.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING E - GOVERNANCE

A vast geographical landscape, India comprises of 36 states with population of over one billion. Out of this population, around 60 percent live in rural areas and rest in semi urban and urban areas. Literacy and language are immense challenges, in a multicultural and multilingual country. Following are the major challenges in implementation of e - Governance, because of which the speed of implementation of e - Governance initiatives in India is very slow. This has negatively affected the use of e - Governance: Lack of sufficient and proper planning.

Leadership failures resulting in slow and patchy progress of e - Governance initiatives

Financial inhibitors limiting the flow of investment to e - Governance projects

Digital divides and choices, where socio - economic and physical inequalities lead to differences in motivations and competences that constrain and fragment e - Governance take - up and fail to address particular user needs.

ƒ Poor coordination across jurisdictional, administrative and geographic boundaries and lack of proper coordination of between government machineries and solutions developers that holds back e - Governance networking benefits.

Workplace and organizational inflexibility impairing adaptability to new networked forms of information sharing and service provision.

Lack of trust heightening fears about inadequate security and privacy safeguards in electronic networks.

Poor technical design leading to incompatibilities between ICT systems or difficult - to - use e - Governance services

Lack of IT literacy and awareness regarding benefits of e - Governance underutilization of existing ICT infrastructure and lack of infrastructure for sustaining e - Governance projects on national level

STRATEGIES/ACTION PLAN FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF E - GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES

Government leaders in India are starting to realize that e - governance is the key to drive today's economy with an increased citizen participation. Providing services online is no longer going to remain optional for local and central government as demand for providing services at internet speed from the citizens has increased in the recent years.

How do government agencies overcome the obstacles and build a strategy to facilitate the transition to successful online or "e" service delivery. If the government waits, it is perceived as being ignorant or unaware of the citizen needs and loses an opportunity to realize the tremendous benefits of online service delivery and larger citizen participation in overall service delivery. However, if the e - governance projects are started and implemented in haste, they are doomed to fail.

CONCLUSION

Following are some of the strategies/action plans for a successful implementation of an e - Governance system for one billion people of India:

⚜ Create literacy/awareness and commitment to e - Governance at high level

⚜ Conduct usability surveys for assessment of existing e - Governance projects and act upon the results of such assessment, wherever required

⚜ Start with the implementation of pilot projects and replicate the successful ones

⚜ Follow the best practices in e - Governance

⚜ Build nationwide Resource database for e - Governance projects

⚜ ◎ Have clearly defined objectives and interoperability policies to achieve such objectives

⚜ Effectively manage and continuously update the content efficiently and regularly