Implementation of E-Governance:
A challenge in India

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ABSTRACT

From the past era, governments all over the world have taken huge steps in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). ICT has provided means for faster and better communication, retrieval of data and utilization of information to its users. Basically, e-Governance is the application of ICT to provide government services to the citizens via internet. In developing countries such as India, where literacy rate is very low and even most of the people are living below poverty line, people have not even awareness about the benefits of e-Governance activities and people do not use Information and Communication technologies to a much extent, there exist a number of problems to implement e-Governance activities. This paper highlights the main challenges related to the implementation of e-Governance in India.

Keywords: ICT, e-Governance, NIC, e-readiness rank, literacy rate, per capita income, cost, Challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1990s , government websites came into existence, with the advent of which the term e-governance came. e-Governance (electronic Governance) refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to provide citizens and organisations with more convenient and fast access to the services and information of the government . In other words, e-Governance involves ICTs, especially the internet, to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, businesses and government agencies. E- Governance is not limited to provide services to the public sector only but also includes the management and administration of policies and procedures in private sector as well. The use of internet not only delivers the services faster but also brings more transparency between the government and the citizens. But in developing countries like India, where literacy rate is very low and most of the people are living below poverty line, it is very much difficult for the government to provide its services to such citizens via internet. Even the e-Readiness Rank of India is very low. e-readiness is defined as the ability to use information and communication technologies to develop one‟s economy and welfare. According to the Global Information Technology Report, the e-Readiness rank of India is very low that means the use of ICTs in India is very low. Many other factors like privacy and security related to personal information of user , digital divide etc. are also huge challenges for the implementation of e-Governance in India.

II. CHALLENGES FOR E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

There are a large number of obstacles in the implementation of e-Governance in India. These can be categorized under the following titles: Economical Challenges ,Environmental and Social Challenges and Technical Challenges. These challenges are explained below:

A. Economical Challenges

i) Cost: In most of the developing countries like India, cost is one of the most important obstacles in the of implementation of e-Governance where major part of the population is living below poverty line. Even the politicians do not have interest in implementation of 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: As the different application need to transfer from one platform to another, therefore , 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 of electronic devices: As there is a rapid change in the Information Technology day by day 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 stands for 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 of India is low as compare to the other countries. Therefore, people cannot afford on-line services provided by the government which is a challenge for implementation of e-governance.

v) Limited financial resources: The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is one of the measures of the national income and economy of the country . 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 means the measure of its financial strength. India has limited financial resources so as to implement and maintain the e-Government projects properly.
B. Environmental and Social Challenges

i) Low Literacy in India: 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; therefore the projects do not get much success.

ii) Low IT Literacy Level: Most of the Indian 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.

i i i) Recognition of applications: Recognition of the e-Governance facilities by the citizens is another huge 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.

i v) Government websites must be User friendliness : 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.

v)Government Services are not accessible easily: 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 of Indian 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.

vi) Confidence on 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. He 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.

vii) 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. In India 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 narrower this separation to effectively implement the e-Governance projects.

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

x) Population: Population of India is probably the biggest challenge in implementing e-Governance projects. As population is considered to be an asset to the country but it also offers some other challenges e.g. establishing person identities. There is no unique identity of individuals in India although Indian 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 in people: Most of the Indian people are not aware of the benefits of e-Governance services. Even the government do not pay much attention to make the people aware about e-Governance activities. Unawareness is a major challenge in the implementation of e-Governance projects.

i) Different Language: India is a country where people with different cultures and different religions live. People belonging to different states speak different languages. The diversity of people in context of language is a huge challenge for implementing e-Governance projects as e-Governance 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 for the whole nation in more than one language so that these may be acceptable to the users of a particular language.

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

iii) Interaction of Multimodal: 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 projects 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.

CONCLUSION

In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all the other reasons India has number of award wining e-governance projects. Effective promotion schemes by the Indian government will also a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizens , which means there is huge potential for the development of e-governance in various sectors. As the use of Information Technology (IT) is rapidly growing day by day , Indian government is making many efforts to provide services to citizens of India through e-Governance. Although Indian government is spending a lot of money on e-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in all parts of India. Unawareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of e-Governance in India. NIC is providing the network backbone and a wide range of ICT (Information and Communication. Government should take some actions to make the people aware about the e-Governance services and activities so that people may take full advantage of these services and e-Governance projects can be implemented successfully in all over the country . The participation of people can play a vital role in implementation of e-Governance in India.

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