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## E-governance in India: Impact and challenges

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### Abstract

ICT medium has espoused confidence on the future of governance in India. E-governance facilitates efficient welfarism targeting. It eliminates scope of corruption and makes service delivery effective and accessible, thereby increasing cost savings. E-governance acts as a transparent interface between government and individual, individual and business, and business and government. This paper analyses the positive impacts of the ICT medium has on India and the challenges it entails.

**Keywords:** E-governance, service delivery, government

### Introduction

Modernization and development theories of 1950s and 60s sole goal was faster economic growth keeping state as the primary driver of development. Nehruvian model of development upheld the state driven model. This model ensured social democratic goals of redistribution and commanded support from economists. However, the state was unable to pursue public goals because of pressures causing a 'crisis of governability' (Atul Kohli, 1991) <sup>[1]</sup>. The pressure such as corruption, rent-seeking bureaucracies perpetuated an inefficient system.

It was realized if developing countries lacked infrastructure for development, they need to reform the government apparatus and develop professional bureaucracy, given government cannot be made autonomous of social pressures. (Kuldeep Mathur, 1999) <sup>[3]</sup>. The crisis Indian economy faced in 1990s made it go through IMF's SAP that entailed slimming down of bureaucracies, de-regulation, privatization and removing of subsidies (Leftwich 1993:605) <sup>[2]</sup>. The link between governance and development was made in publications of World Bank. In one of the publication Governance and Development (1992) four areas of governance were delineated, out of which 'Information and Technology' became buzzwords. E-governance rode on the wave of these buzzword.

Reinventing the process of governance has been a dominant theme since 1990s, wherein governments all over the world are attempting to improve the public service delivery through systems through e-governance (Osborne and Gaebler 1992) <sup>[5]</sup>.

**E-governance has three features as delineated by Benkler**



[1]

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### Onset of E-governance in India

Its origin is in 1970s when GOI had setup department of electronics. In 1980s then Rajeev Gandhi government established NIC to connect all district HQs by LAN & SWAN.

<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.cis-india.org](http://www.cis-india.org), Janaagraha.  
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After this in 1987, NICNET was launched a satellite computer network. Vajpayee government created Ministry of Information Technology in 1999 and IT act was passed in 2000 which today provided basis for e-governance in the country. The UPA government in 2006 came out with a National E-governance plan that took ICT to grassroots by opening common service centers that are hinge of accessing all welfare schemes digitally. The government took on board NGOs and private sector to construct CSCs to develop rural India.

### Significance of E-Governance in India

It brings responsiveness and accountability in delivery system thereby reducing democratic deficit. Enhances civic participation through grievance redressal portals thus aids in fulfilling functions of participatory democracy. It streamlines information sharing between G2C, C2G, G2B, B2G, G2G and G2N.

### Impact of E-governance

**Eased out Tax filling and Tax administration work:** ICT gauges leakages in system and enables faster processing of returns

**Digitization of Land Records:** Part of G2C initiatives. G2C crucial tool to improve quality of delivering government services to citizenry. This was advocated by state revenue ministers in 1985 <sup>[2]</sup>. Undertaken officially under National Digital India Land Records Modernization programme. The scheme has helped in speedy dispute resolution, preservation old records, farmers can avail loan from institutional lenders, fast and efficient information sharing <sup>[3]</sup>.

**Simplifying administration job:** Project undertaken by Rajasthan government called e-Mitra initiative connects departments, forming a mini-data center at the district level <sup>[4]</sup>. This enables swift movement of files, reducing waiting period for business and cost overrun faced by construction works.

**Education:** Many public services examinations have online registration and conduct examination in online mode. Universities admission also take via online medium. Ex-Karnataka's CET. This saves time of students, waiting time for result reduces.

**Climate:** Satellite Technology can be utilized to track weather patterns and imitate to fishermen and farmers in advance to plan activity accordingly via mobile technology. Information systems can be used to change in forest area, pace of deforestation and changing coastal lines to plan sustainably for the future.

**Ease of doing Business:** Government created single window clearance system for new business approval. It enhanced India's ease of doing business rank increased by 12 points from 142 to 130.

**MCA 21:** Make India a business hub, government eased norms for effective compliance of corporate laws, grievance redressal and access to relevant records in no time.

**Procurement Trends:** G2B initiatives such as online tendering or procurement for public departments can be efficiently carried out by ICT medium. The process expedites the exchange of information and upholding contract law. E-governance reduces tender cycle time and corrupt practices.

**Schemes:** Effective targeting schemes is must for faster and effective implementation.

- Smart City – ICT used for detecting traffic flow, smart grids, cloud-based control room that help to gauge health record detect viral outbreak, construction pattern, pollution pattern and crime management. This will make cities safe and improve quality of life.
- Through E-governance medium welfare schemes reach to needy by effective targeting the beneficiaries. Ex-digitizing PDS movement preventing corruption, timely disbursement pension schemes and social security schemes for elderly.
- E-Courts – reduce pendency of cases by making process speedy. This will make judiciary accountable, affordable and accessible.
- Faster Visa tracking students, individuals and business will make India attract investments and destination service hub of tourism sector.
- Digital Cloud for every India envisaged under Digital India Mission will make easier for access of services from government for marriage, birth, identification, passport services etc. Ensure safety of government documents without fear of losing them.

**State Initiatives <sup>[5]</sup>:** Many state governments have done commendable towards the field such as –

- Friends – Rolled out by Kerala for citizens to pay bills emanating from state entities. A one-stop, time saving user friendly platform.
- Gyandoot – Rolled out by Madhya Pradesh. Interface between rural people and district administration to provide information, mostly used for agriculture. Step in development of rural India
- Bhoomi – Rolled out by Karnataka. Digitize land records.
- eSeva – Rolled out by Andhra Pradesh. Single platform for citizens and businesses for accessing certificates and permits.
- Lokvani – Rolled by Uttar Pradesh. Provide information at district level related to land records and grievance redressal. Created trust among citizens and made government transparent.

### Challenges

Despite success stories at state level and central government's mission mode projects, there are grey areas in its implementation and penetration to the ground.

- Low internet connectivity
- Chaotic implementation without thought through vision

<sup>2</sup> Based on 'Computerisation of land records in India'; <http://gisdevelopment.net/application/lis/overview/lisrp0015.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report, Ministry of Rural Development, 2007-08.

<sup>4</sup> Source: 'e-Mitra'; by Aparna Arora, A.M. Deshpandey, R.K./ Sharma; Compendium of e-governance Initiatives in India.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Ch-4, 'e-Governance: Initiatives in India', Promoting e-Governance- The SMART Way Forward, Second ARC Report.

- ICT applications are rolled out without up-skilling extant personnel and outsourcing jobs to private contractors. This creates a backlash to change an organization's work culture.
- Inaccessible in rural areas: Rural tele density is merely 33% (ITU: 2011) vs. 80% for urban.
- As citizens jump on digital bandwagon, they are exposed to cybersecurity and privacy risks.
- Internet sites are not in vernacular lingual.
- Increased digital divide among rural vs urban, Male vs female

### Improvements

India's E-government Development Index shot up by 7 points from 125 in 2012 to 118 in 2014. Positive changes have come about but more needs to be done on skilling, increasing tele density and most importantly investing in digital literacy. The need of the hour is to bridge digital divide. E-governance can be utilized to access tele-medicine services and tele-education, alongside government ICT application to develop an equitable digital society.

### Conclusion

The E-governance space will keep on evolving as the future in digital from industry to energy to education to health to banking, internet will be omnipresent in our lives. Thus, e-governance should be convergent with the view of former President, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, that "it should enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the state and central government in a federal setup".

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