



# E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA : PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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**Abstract:** E-governance refers to the rendering of services and information to the citizens using electronic means. E-governance is increasingly being used in the process of governance in India. However, there still remain many problems in the effective implementation of e-governance in India. These include the digital divide, cost factor, lack of awareness, language problem, lack of literacy, inadequate coverage and upgradation, lack of trained staff, data privacy and security, lack of integrated services, resistance to change, and lack of user-friendliness of government websites. There is thus an urgent need to fix the problems related to e-governance in India so that citizens can avail of its full benefits.

Solutions would include availability of internet, awareness generation, training of government staff, ease of access of e-governance, integration of e-governance services, content in local languages and data protection.

**Index Terms - e-governance ,digital, technology, challenge, solution**

## Introduction

E-governance refers to the rendering of services and information to the citizens using electronic means. E-governance is increasingly being used in the process of governance in India. It has brought about a revolution in the citizen-administration interface. It has facilitated an improvement in the efficiency of government. It has made the administration more transparent and accountable and has resulted in a faster delivery of services to the citizens. It has resulted in the simplification of procedures and reduced corruption. E-governance facilitates the process of Good Governance.

The National e-governance Plan (NeGP) formulated in 2006 aims at improving delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses with the following vision: —”Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man.”

However, there still remain many problems in the effective implementation of e-governance in India. These are examined below:-

## 1. Digital Divide

Digital divide refers to the separation that exists between individuals, communities, and businesses that have access to information technology and those that do not have such access. The digital divide is a major challenge in the effective implementation of e-governance in India. Poverty is closely related to limited information technology resources. An individual living below poverty line cannot afford a computer for himself to harness the benefits of e-government and other online services.

A major issue is that many people, particularly in the rural areas do not have access to internet connection through which they can avail of the benefits of e-governance. The broadband connectivity has still not become ubiquitous. Besides, many people don't have access to a smartphone or computer through which they can access the online services of the government. Another issue is that even amongst people who do have an internet connection and a device to access the internet, there is a hesitancy to use online services. It is partly a result of lack of familiarity with using the online portals. Also, there are performance related issues either related to application or Internet connectivity leading to non-usage of e-Governance services. Power cut problem in many villages and cities creates problem in service deliveries.

As per the Network Readiness Index Report, 2021, which measures the capacity of a country to deliver on e-services, India's e-readiness rank was at 67 out of 130 countries which means the use of Information and Communication Technologies is very low in India. This needs to be addressed.

## 2. Cost Factor

In a developing country like India cost is a major obstacle in implementing e-Governance where there are limited resources and a large chunk of the population is living below poverty line. Accessing Internet is a costly affair for the poor who have to struggle to make both ends meet. A huge investment is required to set up the digital infrastructure for e-governance. Installation and maintenance cost of hardware & network is very high. This includes laying down the fibre-optic cables throughout the length and breadth of the country and availability of computers and smartphones. It entails crores of expenditure. It requires necessary political and administrative will to allocate resources for setting up, operationalizing and running the e-governance system successfully. Often, resources are diverted to more populist schemes which yield electoral benefits rather than long-term capital-intensive projects like digital infrastructure. Lack of adequate funds for implementing e-governance is a major constraint in its effectiveness.

## 3. Lack of Awareness

There is a lack of awareness about the various e-governance initiatives of the government. Many people still don't know that they can avail most of the government services today online, whether it is payment of property tax, water tax, applying for passport, birth and death certificate, etc. They are still in the habit of queuing up in government offices for these documents. The initiatives taken by the government to create awareness about the e-governance activities are far from adequate.

#### **4. Language Problem**

Another issue is that of 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. The e-governance applications are mostly written in the English language which many people cannot follow. The dominance of English on the internet constrains the access of non-English speaking population.

#### **5. Lack of Literacy**

Much of the Indian people are not literate and those who are literate, they do not have much knowledge about Information Technology (IT). There is thus the dual problem of general illiteracy and IT illiteracy. Most of the people in India are not aware about the usage of Information Technology. They continue to visit government offices in person to get their task completed, whereas the same thing could be done at home with greater ease and convenience the help of e-governance. 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.

#### **6. Inadequate coverage and upgradation**

Many government agencies still do not provide all the citizen services online. The website of many government agencies is not updated on a regular basis. The information available is outdated. To be successful, the coverage of e-governance should be comprehensive so as to cover each and every government department and agency. Also, regularly updating the content is essential to make it relevant to the citizens.

#### **7. Lack of trained staff**

The government staff lack adequate training and upgradation of skills in the domain of e-governance. In e-governance projects, there is a huge lack of technical or trained persons. Expertise is not easily available in different departments of government for immediate repair of hardware/networking, therefore an obvious delay exists in the system.

#### **8. Data Privacy and Security**

Then there is the issue of data security and privacy. Many citizens feel that sharing their personal information online with public agencies is not safe. They fear it may be misused. There is also the concern of fraudulent transactions where transfer of money is involved. A lack of clear security standards and protocols can limit the development of e-governance projects that contain sensitive information such as income, medical history, etc. For successful e-Governance usage by the citizens, the element of confidence, comfort, and trust on ICT application are inevitable.

In 2017, the Supreme Court of India pronounced a landmark judgment declaring the right to privacy as a fundamental right under the framework of the right to life (Article 21) as per our Constitution. However, a standalone and comprehensive privacy law does not exist in India.

## 9. 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.

## 10. Resistance to Change

A certain resistance to change occurs on the part of many people as well as government staff in moving from traditional paper based manually maintained system to automated web based solutions. This prevents the full usage of e-governance.

## 11. Lack of User friendliness of government 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.

### Solutions

There is thus an urgent need to fix the problems related to e-governance in India so that citizens can avail of its full benefits. The following measures will help in the successful implementation of e-governance in India:-

#### 1. Availability of Internet

The government needs to make a policy choice in favor of computerization and the implement it assiduously. The government should ensure that internet connectivity is available to all citizens. No doubt this will require massive investment in laying down the fibre optic cables in all the cities and villages of the country, but the benefits will be phenomenal. Also, smartphones and computers should be available at affordable rates for people to buy them in order to enable them to access the online services provided by the government. One way to deal with the situation could be that government enters into arrangements for leasing of computers.

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision, a shared cause. Around this idea, a massive countrywide infrastructure reaching down to the remotest of villages is evolving, and large-scale digitization of records is taking place to enable easy, reliable access over the internet. The ultimate objective is to bring public services closer home to citizens, as articulated in the Vision Statement of NeGP.

In this regard, the BharatNet programme which focuses on bringing high-speed broadband connectivity to rural India is a step in the right direction. Under the BharatNet, 2.5 lac Gram Panchayats will be connected via Internet for various e-Government services like tele-medicine, tele-education, e-Health, and e-Entertainment, etc. The government has also set up 1.66 lakh Common Services Centres (Digital Seva) under the Digital India programme. These Centres serve as access points for delivery of public utility

services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education and agriculture services, apart from host of B2C services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country. Also, to provide internet access to every citizen, BSNL has planned to install 40,000 hotspots throughout the country.

The successful execution of the above schemes will go a long way in bridging the digital divide in India.

## **2. Awareness Generation**

The government should create awareness amongst the citizens about the various e-governance initiatives of the administration. This can be done by arranging several awareness camps or workshops at the local grassroots levels. The government should involve the media and the citizens' organizations in this regard.

## **3. Training of Government Staff**

The government should design and implement a proper programme for training the government personnel in the use of e-governance. There is a need to change the mindset of the government employees who are used to working only in the manual mode. This is a big task and needs patience and careful planning. Workshops, seminars, and training programmes are required to be organized to spread awareness among the employees at all levels.

There is also a need for due recognition of government staff who are at the forefront of implementing e-governance. A system of incentives and rewards should be instituted for motivating the staff to implement the various e-governance initiatives.

In fact, the National E-Governance Division (NeGD) of the Government of India has taken up the task of setting up of a Learning Management System (LMS) for e-Governance. The LMS would enable continuous learning, driven by role-based knowledge and skills as envisaged in the e-Governance Competency Framework. A competency-based training approach will also help e-Governance practitioners to understand the skills and knowledge required for their job and decide their training track. The LMS would also usher in efficient administration of training by bringing together learners and content in an environment which allows flexible learning, regular content updating at a lesser cost. The LMS approach can be blended with face to face instructor led trainings.

## **4. Ease of Access of E-Governance**

The websites of various government agencies should be designed to be user-friendly. They should have a user-interface which is simple and easy to understand for the common man. Complicated procedures tend to deter people from using online services.

## **5. Integration of E-governance Services**

The e-governance services provided by the various government agencies should be integrated with each other. There is a need to make databases of various departments compatible with one another. Service delivery sites should be designed as to capture data in a Web-based form and transfer it to an agency's systems for processing and sharing that information in a common format with other agencies. Interoperability of e-governance projects is of vital importance if the citizens are to feel the benefit of IT in

day to day life. A seamless integration of e-services across administrative and departmental boundaries is required.

## 6. Content in Local Languages

The e-governance applications should be written in the local language of the people so that they can understand them and use them conveniently. Technology is available by which transliteration from English into other languages can be made.

## 7. Data Protection

A robust mechanism for data protection and privacy should be developed so that people feel comfortable in sharing their personal information on government websites for various transactions. There should be a law on privacy as well as data protection.

In this regard, the Data Protection Bill should be passed at the earliest by Parliament. The Bill seeks to regulate the collection, storage, transfer and use of personal data. The bill's main tenets include: Individual consent, data breach notification, transparency (prior notice and privacy policy describing data processing practices), purpose-based processing, technical security, and rights of individuals who part away with personal data such as name and email ID. Individuals would have more control over the processing of their data with these rights, as they would be able to remove, correct and access their data easily.

## E-Governance and the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan

With regard to e-governance, few targets have been outlined by the 12th Five Year Plan, they are :-

1. A national institute for e-governance would be established as an autonomous state of the art national institute.
2. At least one person per family in 50% of the families will be targeted to provide basic IT training in the twelve plan period.
3. Electronic deliveries of services bill will be implemented.
4. An e-governance innovation fund and R&D fund will be created to give more impetus to innovation in e-governance and mobile governance.
5. Training on basic IT skills will be introduced systematically for the existing and all new entries into government service.
6. Cyber security will be a major focus area during the twelve five year plan.

The government should implement the above measures at the earliest to enhance the effectiveness of e-governance in the country.

## Conclusion

E-Governance involves new way of using services, doing business transactions, and organizing & delivering information. E-Governance offers an opportunity for government organizations to re-invent themselves, get closer to the citizenry and forge closer alliances with varied communities of interest within the context of national development agendas. As an emerging practice, e-governance seeks to realize processes and structures for harnessing the capabilities of ICTs at various levels of government and the public sector and beyond, for the purpose of establishing good governance.

Government Process Re-engineering using IT to simplify and make the governance process more efficient is critical to make the delivery of government services more efficacious across various government domains and therefore needs to be implemented by all Ministries/ Departments.

The government needs to work on capacity-building of e-governance in India by ensuring that there is a proper structural and institutional framework in place. In this regard, the National E-Governance Plan formulated by the government is a step in the right direction. The government needs to allocate the required resources – financial, human and technological in the domain of e-governance to make it successful. The government can also learn from the e-governance projects which are running successfully in other countries and adopt the best practices in this regard. A vision is required to implement e-governance in India. Then, the environment needs to be developed for the effective implementation of e-governance in India. And the participation of people can play a vital role in implementation of e-governance in India.

The above steps will ensure that e-governance is successful in transforming the administration and empowering the citizens. A sustained effort in this direction has the ability to transform the governance of the country and make it more citizen-friendly and efficient.

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