

# E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

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ICT has been a great game changer in providing governance by enabling better access to information, building capacities, providing fair and unbiased service to citizens and simplifying certain aspects of governance. The aim of this citizens-centric approach is to deliver services and disseminate information and provide a friendly, efficient and affordable interface between Government and its. Since the last decade the government has improved its infrastructure and digital India has become an umbrella program covering many departments by using Common and Support ICT Infrastructure established by the Government of India. This would enable citizen's participation in decision making and make governance more transparent by eliminating middlemen.

In Maharashtra, the Right to Public service act, 2015 was passed and a number of services are now being provided by the State Government by accessing Aaple Sarkar Web Portal. This paper tries to review the progress of e-governance initiatives in Maharashtra and do a SWOT analysis. Author concluded that there has been tremendous growth with respect to number of applications received and disposed by 39 departments providing 399 services but still a number of challenges facing implementation of some of the programs.

**Keywords-** governance, public-delivery services.

"E-Governance is the use of ICT by different actors of the society with the aim to improve their access to information and to build their capacities" as defined by UNESCO. E-governance has now taken a paradigm shift from all government departments from just having a portal and automating services to a stage where the whole governance has got transformed, a state where both government and citizens are being empowered by technology and providing a single platform for interaction with its citizens. E-governance being an important agenda of the present government, aims to promote participatory governance and increasing transparency in public service delivery. The "digital India" program of the government will only be successful when it reaches the States and its people to create multitudes of jobs and unleash untapped sectors such as rural-BPOs and a wide variety of government-to-citizen services in form of e-education, mobile finance and e-health amongst others.

E-governance in India is taking massive strides by the number of e-transactions growing from by more than 200% in last 2 years. The number of transactions per day have increased by more than 1200% during 2013-2017 and reached 8.42 crores all over India. It increased by more than 200% alone during 2016 and 2017.

| Year | No. of e-transactions | Avg. Transactions Per Day |
|------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 2013 | 2,41,76,58,057        | 64,68,644                 |
| 2014 | 3,57,70,13,076        | 96,42,812                 |
| 2015 | 7,60,75,36,284        | 2,06,80,918               |
| 2016 | 10,89,80,95,156       | 2,96,12,795               |

|      |                 |             |
|------|-----------------|-------------|
| 2017 | 30,81,34,37,045 | 8,42,45,684 |
|------|-----------------|-------------|

A provision of 0.5% of the total budget has been mandated for implementation of e-governance projects in all the states. E-governance objectives also have to be included in the annual Performance Appraisal Review of the states. Central government services like UID services, agriculture, Jan-DhanYojana, Railway reservation, Public financial management and judiciary have massively benefited the citizens. Among Central Government projects the highest number of e-transactions were in rural development services such as NREGA musters, and weekly payments, followed by commercial tax services such as collection of VAT and online Central Sales Tax returns.

## Methodology:

This paper attempts to discuss and analyse the e-governance initiatives taken in the state of Maharashtra where the Government services are being made available to the citizens using ICT as a tool for empowering them. ICT is a crucial enabler as e-governance helps provide services in local languages and a platform is made available to citizens for participative governance. Secondary data taken from various Central and state government websites like eTaal, MahaDBT, Mahaonline, Department of registration & stamps, ePanchayat Sangram, MahaVAT, Aadhar Maharashtra etc.

## Review of Literature

Kumarwad(2016) in his research paper provides an analysis of existing empirical findings and conceptual perspectives related to e-governance initiatives in Satara District, Maharashtra. It states that Maharashtra is the pioneer state in the adoption of technology and has a vision of transforming Governance and Enriching lives through Information and Communication Technology. After studying various services like land record, public distribution system, Common service centres (CSC), it concludes that although Maharashtra is ahead in public delivery of services in India but with many problems at ground level. There is a lack of involvement of the real implementers of many projects.

Warale, Diwakar (2015) did a Study of Citizen Satisfaction for e-Governance Initiative SETU in Maharashtra which revealed that the citizens were marginally satisfied with service quality. More needs to be done in terms of introducing latest technologies in order to accomplish its objectives of accessibility, efficiency and service levels. There were citizens' complaints about improper guidance of staff, presence of agents, charging of high fees, misdirection, lack of communication between SSCs & citizens and nonintegrated service delivery. CSCs are facing the technical problems especially in the remote area where connectivity is slow.

Agarwal(2015) did a SCA(service centre agencies) Performance Assessment & CSC Survey in Maharashtra which revealed that around 2% of CSCs (Citizen service centres) have high number of transactions, 21% Medium and 77% Low transactions. CSCs provide services to the rural population in the remote corners of the country. This survey made a number of findings and among those the important ones stated that problems in connectivity and requirement of many manual and physical documents still persisted but the business model adopted by SCAs is a viable one, with Village level entrepreneurs (VLEs) willing to continue to operate.

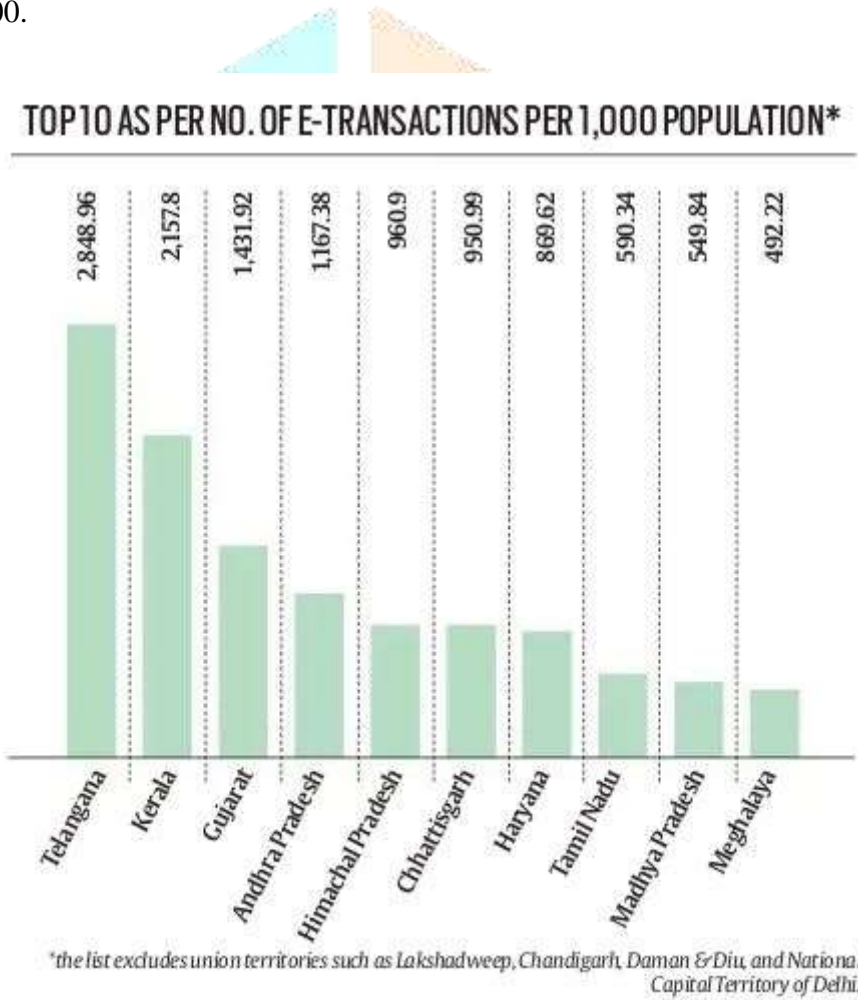
Deloitte & Assocham(2015) study the pillars of Digital India, its infrastructure, technology drivers, e-governance in different countries rising number –of e-transactions in India, Initiatives Taken by the Current Government and

their Progress, like Pradhan mantra Jandhan Yojana, DBT, Smart cities, Digi lockers, Skill India, co-ordination of various government departments etc. The main challenges identified by them are delays in infrastructure setup, data speed, security, private sector participation, lack of skilled manpower but acknowledges the sincere efforts of the government to go ahead.

### ICT in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has been one of the first states to use ICT for governing various government departments and providing efficient public service delivery. Services by Revenue, Labour, Water resource, transport, urban development, energy, land records department out of the total 39 departments are providing 399 services. Data shows that the citizens are quickly adopting new technologies to make life easier. The total e-transactions in Maharashtra increased from 3 crores in 2016 to 13.4 crores in 2017(etaal.gov.in)

Comparing with other states, in 2017, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were leading the pack with approximately 15000 e-transactions per 1000 population while Maharashtra had only 1386 transactions per 1000.



Source: Indian Express: January 2017

According to data sourced from the Electronic Transaction Aggregation & Analysis Layer, or eTaal platform, Telangana led with 2,848.96 transactions per 1,000 people in 2017, which is over five times the national average of 527.82 transactions. This was calculated on the basis of individual data of the 29 states available on the Information and Technology Ministry platform. The highest number of electronic transactions in Telangana were in rural development services such as NREGA musters, and weekly

payments, followed by commercial tax services such as collection of VAT and online Central Sales Tax returns.

For pursuing digital service, the Government of Maharashtra has identified six priority pillars which shall facilitate state departments to use e-governance as a tool to become more proactive and responsive to its citizens' needs.

### **The six Pillars**

**Pillar 1: Establishment of Policy/ Legal Frameworks:** it is essential to have an overarching Policy / Legal Framework that is updated regularly with changing times and technologies.

**Pillar 2: Develop Strong Capacity Building Framework:**

**Pillar 3: Facilitate abundant Funding Government of Maharashtra** through its pioneering initiatives have ensured mechanisms for provision of adequate and timely funds

**Pillar 4** Government of Maharashtra has developed robust and focused administrative structures that are capable of envisioning and steering the e-Governance programs in the state.

**Pillar 5: Build Core e-Governance Common Infrastructure** so that the State Departments can leverage this common infrastructure to successfully implement their project

**Pillar 6: Develop Common State wide Projects:** rather than each department / agency developing their own software. Such applications include e-Tendering, e-Office, SMS gateway, payment gateway etc.

This is being made possible by creating the required infrastructure, making devices available cheaply, incentivising their adoption by linking basic services

and facilities like subsidies to these initiatives and imparting required skills to the citizens. Its institutional framework includes Directorate of Information Technology (DIT), SETU, MahaOnline Limited, Maharashtra State Data Centre who has implemented fully operational Cloud in May 2012.. The Maharashtra SWAN (State wide area network) is envisaged as the backbone network for data, voice and video communications throughout the State and caters to the information communication requirements of the entire state government and its departments. It consists of a 3 Tier structure. These tiers are: 1. State Head Quarter (SHQ) 2. District Head Quarter (DHQ) 3. Taluka Head Quarter (THQ).

Basically, digitisation in services is done at four levels in a seamless and cost effective manner:

**Government to Citizen (G2C)**- covers more than 25 services like age, birth, nationality, caste certificates, electronic payment of stamp duty, direct benefit transfer of government schemes, tax payments, health services, admission services etc.

**Government to Business (G2B)**- online tax payments, e-tendering, single window clearance by MIDC, online clearances required to set up a new unit etc.

**Government to Government (G2G)**- creating a digital workplace, creating files electronically, standardising processes etc.

**Government to Employees (G2E)**

Maharashtra, a state with 93% telephone density, 73% adhar seeding completed, using 1.60 Jandhan accounts and 1.23 Rupay cards has taken many initiatives for e-governance. The state is amongst the leading Registrar in the country in terms of enrolment wherein 9.3 Cr. residents enrolled and more than 8.7 Cr. UIDs have been generated. It is a leading State in the country in terms of no. of machines operational. It is the first State to launch end to end UID Linked DBT in beneficiary schemes in Wardha and is a leading State in UID Linked DBT in the country.

The state is implementing the Common Service Centres (CSCs) scheme under the aegis of the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), funded by Government of India as one of its Mission Mode Projects for delivery of G2C/B2C services to the Citizen at a location near his/her residence. 10,518 CSCs have been rolled out across Maharashtra. It has set up SETU Centres which are CSC like centres at Panchayat & District

Level respectively. Over 333 SETU centres are operational in Maharashtra providing 47 services. Sangram centres have been set up as permanent UID enrolment and updation stations. SARITA - Stamps & Registration Information Technology based Administration aim to design, develop, and implement a computerized application for Registration of documents received at each Sub-Registrar Office and provide data updation on timely basis to their respective Joint District Registrars and higher offices under the purview of Department of Registration, Pune, and Maharashtra State. e-Office is a Digital Workplace Solution that replaces the existing manual handling of files and documents with an efficient electronic system. E-tendering, e-office and e-Auction are some other initiatives. A panoramic view of some of the e-governance G2C initiatives taken in Maharashtra are as under:

### **i. SETU centres**

Integrated Citizen Facilitation Centres (SETU) is a one stop service centre for all routine matters and facilitate the interaction of the citizens with the Government making it more transparent, pleasant and satisfying at district headquarters & subsequently at taluka headquarters.

35,000 centres (Common Service Centers, Sangram centers, Setu centers) are running in Maharashtra for efficient delivery of G2C services. Certificates like Income, Caste, Birth, Age, Nationality, Domicile etc. encompassing 80% of the citizen requirement, are being made available to citizens at a nominal price. Here, more than 12 Crore e-Transactions are noted on an annual basis in 2014 and a total of over 21 crore transactions in eTaal Portal were reported.

The way they work is that the CSC operators scan documents and upload them through a portal to the relevant government office who will then send back a completed certificate or card. CSCs have been assigned to propagate the use of digital financial tools for transactions. They participate in the digital financial literacy programme of the government by going out and training at least 10 merchants and 40 citizens each

### **ii. SANGRAM Centres**

These provide front end service delivery in Maharashtra under the e-Panchayat Project and all the 33 Zilla Parishads, 351 Panchayat Samitis and 27900 Gram panchayats in Maharashtra are equipped to provide e-panchayat service through ICT. They are also called CSCs (Common Service Centres), with MahaOnline as a (Service centre agencies) SCA offering panchayat as well as other CSC services. They make use of Banking Correspondents (BCs) to facilitate financial inclusion in the state. About 2000 of the Sangram Centres are being established as permanent UID enrolment and updation stations which will be permanent centres. They are providing 19 kinds of Certificates (G2C Services) from more than 26000+ Gram Seva Kendra's of Maharashtra State. Citizen services available on Mahaonline.gov.in are:

1. Application form for Non Agricultural Permission
2. Application form for Land less Farmers
3. Application form for Farmer Certificate
4. Ration card related services
5. Certificate related services
6. Various commercial services (eg hotel license, lodging and boarding license, cracker license etc.)
7. Other services like:
  - Booking of national parks
  - Certified copy' related services
  - Online ticket booking offers or a MSRTC buses

Cloud based Common IT platform for recruitment process caters all recruitment related requirements of Government / Semi Government offices

Online recruitment solution offers unmatched breadth and depth of functionality to manage MPSC's recruitment process

Heir certificate

Reservation for women

Land record Land record certificate

Income, domicile, senior- citizen certificate

Some achievements are as follows:

- Total Applicants – 151640 for assessment of Disability, Maharashtra
- Total Disability Certificates Issued – 108116
- Total number of F forms submitted till date – 7833553 (This application is used in various hospitals & clinics across Maharashtra to keep a track on the count & details of sonography as well as details of sonography centres & Doctors performing sonography).

This is the complete citizen centric system for submission of online applications for post of constables and bandsmen in Maharashtra State Police.Total 5,82,251 number of applications received is all over Maharashtra during 5th May to 25th May 2014 (20 Days) for advertisements of 58 units of Maharashtra state police department.

- In its endeavour of computerization, State Excise Department has developed various online applications.
- For minority students, all applications related to free coaching are accepted through this application only. Till date Total 1163 online applications are accepted for free coaching classes.
- Maharashtra State PSU'S Reporting System-Total 239 records are entered in this system till date.

**iii. Direct Cash Transfer through Aadhaar**

Maharashtra was the first state to launch a system that gives direct benefits using Aadhaar details for verification in August 2017. The DBT portal "Maha DBT" ensures that human intervention and thus red-tapism is removed from the administrative work.Under e-kyc the data captured on the Aadhaar card can be taken electronically by Govt. department/ entity based on biometric authentication. The eKYC is being used by Directorate of Government Printing and Stationary (DGPS) by Department of Registrations and Stamps for Registration of Leave and License agreements.All the state government incentives and benefits will be disbursed through this portal with Aadhaar as a mandatory requirement. The benefits of such schemes like subsidies or services will be directly received by the beneficiaries into their Aadhaar linked bank account. Once the beneficiary enrolls and provides necessary documents, it will be validated by the concerned department, approved and delivers the cash or good in kind or service. The beneficiary while using the benefit has to provide progress reports(for some benefits) for ongoing use of funds while the Department validates progress for correct use of funds. The total registered applicants are 23,31,376(source-mahadbt.gov.in) applied to 1894729 schemes. 2.83 Crore (86%) citizens in age group 5-18 years are enrolled on Aadhaar.

**Department-wiseRegistration Count**

|                                     |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Social Justice & Special Assistance | 1375713 |
|                                     |         |

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| Minorities Development         | 41765  |
|                                |        |
| Tribal Development Department  | 144683 |
|                                |        |
| Higher and Technical Education | 320003 |
|                                |        |
| School Education               | 12565  |
|                                |        |
| Registered Institute list      | 60237  |

source- mahadbt.gov.in(Feb 24, 2018)

#### iv. i-SARITA

SARITA (Stamp And Registration Information Technology Application) project was started in 2002. Earlier the "Department of Registration and Stamps registers, preserved the registration documents and collected of stamp duty and registration fees, Provided certified copies of the registration documents and Property search report. This department got computerised in 2002 and slowly as a part of e -Governance reforms led to the foundation of web based application of i-SARITA in 2012, to make the process transparent. Hence, the e-Governance Vision of the department automated the following core functions of the department using ICT.

- Registration of documents
- Completing the registration process in 20 minutes or less.
- Verification and scrutiny of documents
- Online valuation of property
- Centralized e-Storage of data of all registered documents
- Property transactions search report
- Tie up with land records for accurate data transfer and protection of rights
- Online payment of the stamp duty and registration fees
- Stamp inventory management
- Empowering citizen by providing data entry into govt records by citizen.
- Possibility of identity verification thru UID

This real time web based mechanism was a phenomenal step in the direction of digitisation and efficiency. i-SARITA is a web based application developed by National Informatics Centre which connects the 480 Sub Registrar offices in the State of Maharashtra and centralises the whole administration and implementation of the registration process. The project utilized the ICT for storage, retrieval, transmission or receipt of digital data. The total Documents Registered and Collecting a total revenue has steadily increased over the years. The number of user registrations too increased from 5723 in 2014 to 9133 in 2017.

#### Number of Document Registered and Total Collections under i-sarita

| Years     | Number of Document Registered | Total Collection (in Crore) |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2012-2013 | 2297545                       | 17548.00                    |
| 2013-2014 | 2330373                       | 18666.00                    |
| 2014-2015 | 2297929                       | 19959.09                    |

|           |         |          |
|-----------|---------|----------|
| 2015-2016 | 2308809 | 21767.01 |
| 2016-2017 | 2122591 | 21010.13 |

Source: igrmaharashtra.gov.in

#### v. Aadhaar-enabled Public Distribution System

Linking the PDS with Adhar card has been rolled out in Nagpur and has helped the state save 4500 metric tonnes of foodgrain in its first month itself and so the state is now planning to link the ration system with the Aadhaar system across the state's 52,000 ration shops by March 2018 end. Rs800 crores are expected to be saved by plugging leakages and corruption. As per record, Maharashtra government has discovered 4.0 million fake ration cards in state. It will help identify many beneficiaries falsely registered under the BPL (below poverty line) category, possibly to avoid the disclosure of actual income due, as their identities were reportedly authenticated during the Aadhaar seeding process. They will be gradually removed from the food security category. The initiative will weed out more such fake beneficiaries and save Rs800 crore a year, according to government sources,.

The computerised system will have the following features:

- Existing ration card will be converted into a bar code based laminated ration card
- All the ration cards will be digitized
- Biometric finger prints will be used for the identification of card holder
- Entire rationing process will be automated with real time transaction records
- POS terminals with in-built Smart Card Reader, Magnetic Stripe Reader and Bar Code Scanner will be deployed at 1,06,740 Fair Price Shops (FPS)
- Deployment of Data Center and Disaster Recovery System
- Deployment of GPS instruments in trucks carrying food grains for efficient tracking
- Development of 33 different Software Applications on a SOA architecture

#### Challenges

The state has won a number of awards and has been at the forefront in adopting e-Governance to facilitate anytime, anywhere access to citizen services. The above initiatives have not been without challenges. In the case of SETU, the one stop service centre, despite the government saying that all these services are online, much of the work had to be done offline. Even though the SCA got the documents uploaded and scanned copies back, they still had to be taken to a corporation in Pune to get an official stamp. Public awareness about G2C services given by CSCs is lacking and so SCAs are often in competition with the local government. The inconsistency in government mechanisms and the legal framework which are essential for these services hampers its efficiency. Banking correspondents face delay in getting permissions.

In the case of The department Stamp And Registration, the department had to invoke the clause of termination of one of the vendors due to non-compliance. The private partners of the Government sometimes do not comply with the pre-decided norms. In the case of Sarita the connectivity provided was not only of the bandwidth specified in the work order and was also of poor quality. Due to this sometimes there is no network for a few hours at Sub Registrar's office, stalling all the work. The manpower of vendors is often insufficient to meet the increased workload at the Sub Registrar's office and the hardware supplied by the PPP vendors is not up to the mark. The lack of data standardization in the UID databases was another roadblock in implementation of the Direct Cash Transfer Scheme (DCTS) and other attempts for Aadhaar integration.

The e-seva kendras for the sangram project, face problems in Internet Connectivity in Rural areas, load shedding, lack of awareness at the grass root level and insensitivity of elected members and functionaries.

Despite digitization, the system of preservation of all the documents in hardcopies is prevalent due to the threat of data loss due corruption of software or incompatibility of the system due to future technological



developments. Although these issues are being ironed out by the department, the kind of confidence required to be built for these services still lacks.

## Conclusions

The state of Maharashtra runs a number of e-governance G2C services where, as many as 39 departments are providing 399 services. These services are a great step towards empowering citizens and promoting inclusive and sustainable growth. The initiatives of Digital India are transformational in nature and would ensure that Government services are available to citizens electronically.

Various initiatives like Computerization of Land Records, Single Window Facility providing citizens the means to pay taxes, handling of grievances, online admissions, making UIDan objective efficient delivery of welfare services, making pension/ retirement related information, services and grievances handling mechanism accessible online to the needy pensioners, e-Governance in Municipalities, Computerization of the PDS, use of ICT including for Hospital Information Systems, supply chain management for drugs and vaccines, offering web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas and many others have been successful. Here technology will help bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of government's services electronically, enhance speed of delivery, reduce government expenditure and all the information of the Government would be now made available on the internet. For the citizens, public services can be accessed much more conveniently, it would encourage public participation and increase accessibility of government information to citizens.

Lastly, the state has still a long way to go when compared to other states. The issues of manpower shortage, lack of co-ordination among departments, duplicity of work, unsuitable PPP partners, network issues, lack of awareness etc. will have to be ironed out to provide efficient and effective e-governance to the states.

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