E-Governance for Good Governance in Nepal

What is e-Government?

E-government is the use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to transform the traditional government by making it accessible, transparent, effective and accountable. E-government does not mean putting more computers on the desks of government officials. And e-government is more than just a government website on the Internet. Political, social, economic and technological aspects determine e-governance. It establishes a relationship between government officials and citizens, providing greater access to government information and services by making the government accessible online; promoting citizen participation by enabling citizens to interact more conveniently with government officials, such as by requesting government service and filing required documents through website; increasing government accountability by making its operations more transparent, thereby reducing the opportunities for corruption; and supporting development goals by providing business, rural and traditionally underserved communities with information, opportunities and communications capabilities. E-government is not only used in developed countries. Some of the most innovative uses of the Internet in governance are being successfully used in the developing countries, as well.

E-government will not be successful just only buying more computers and putting up websites. It's not sufficient to automate administrative practices from the paper system to digital system. Rather, e-government is a process of transforming government; it requires planning, political will and a sustained dedication of resources. Success of e-government will not be guaranteed with the mere purchase of advanced technology or the direct automation of complex procedures until it can increase the rate of citizen participation there by bringing about the greater effectiveness in government. Technology introduction can not change the mentality of bureaucrats who do not view the citizen as valued customer of government or an important participant in decision-making.

Why e-Governance?

We are in the process of building "New Nepal". "New Nepal " should not become only a popular slogan but really the "New Nepal" with all the positive values and aspirations of its citizens geared towards the peace and progress. There are many dimensions streamlined and drivers identified to make our "New Nepal" dreams come true. One of such dimensions is the reformation of the government. Governance and

its service process should be well reengineered to fulfill the aspirations of its citizens. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and its tools can help its effective and efficient transformation.

With the advent of the information age, the ways we work, study, and live have been experiencing dramatic changes. Due to the influence of economic and information globalization and the rise of the digital economy, governments are "reinventing" themselves to meet new expectations and the priorities of citizens and businesses. These dynamics are compelling many governments to create a new vision for its relationship with businesses and citizens and to create a new organizational structure to fulfill its mandate. E-Government can fulfill the mandate of government formulating a new vision of how government views its citizens, employees and businesses, and building a citizen-centered, service-oriented, public-participative government with efficient, accountable, transparent and performance government system. ICT based online service is the most democratic and unbiased service system. It offers equal opportunity to all races, genders, ethnic groups.

E-Government breaks the barrier of geographical diversity and makes the government services handy to all citizens at villages who are even not connected by roads and opens up many opportunities, provided Internet connectivity is available either through wireless communication, fiber optic cables, dial-ups, VSATs or whatever other medium.

Besides providing service to citizens, it's important to empower and motivate government employees to expect better service from them. E-Governance should transform the government workers into empowered knowledge workers. Nepal should not miss the benefits of global economy and specially the benefits offered by Internet.

Strategic Objectives of e-Governance:

The strategic objective of e-governance is to support and simplify governance for all parties - government, citizens, businesses and its employees. The use of ICTs can connect all three parties and support processes and activities. There may be two major objectives of e-governance:

1. *Service to the Public:* This objective of e-government is to satisfactorily fulfill the public's needs and expectations on the front-office side, by simplifying their interaction with various online services. The use of ICTs in government operations facilitates speedy, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective interaction with the public, citizens, business and other agencies.

2. *Efficient Government:* In the back-office, the objective of e-government in government operations is to facilitate a speedy, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective process for performing government administration activities. Significant cost savings (per transaction) in government operations can be the result.

For implementing these strategies into reality, government must be subjected to transformation.

The transformation process is not so easy and not so simple. It requires a coherent strategy and should begin with an examination of the nation's regulatory environment and the ability of the population to make use of planned technologies. The primary driving factor for e-government reform should not be the potential it offers to save money and reformation does not mean cutting staff. The savings incurred from e-government initiatives most often benefit the businesses and citizens utilizing the improved system more so than the government agencies that invested in them to begin with. In order to realize the benefits of transformation themselves, governments must develop a citizen-centric model involving key stakeholders outside of government—community, businesses, professional associations, scientists, academics and NGOs. Without their input and demand, even e-government projects that focus on internal government processes may not prove successful because citizens are unlikely to use a system that does not respond to their needs.

Process reform, leadership, strategic investment, collaboration and citizen participation are essential elements in the transformation process. Once government makes strategies to transform the governance process, it must prepare to meet the significant challenges and opportunities that will arise during implementation. The implementation process should address the issues of infrastructure development, law and public policy, e-literacy, accessibility, privacy, security and workforce issues. Awareness, education and rollout programs are also needed. To make the e-governance initiative successful, a good marketing program is required through out the country to encourage citizens to make use of them.

Evolution of E-governance, Its Scope and Content

- Initiatives were take up as early as 1972 by Chile
- Prof. Stafford Beer implemented for President Allende of Chile, the first governance software that would help the government survive a severe crisis.
- Major contribution by US Vice President Al Gore in early 1990s which rooted worldwide in the information superhighway.
- Widespread in US, UK, Canada, Australia and India
- focus largely on development of infrastructure such as fiber optic networks.
- concept of **Information Society** or **Knowledge Society** evolved
- E-governance came into a formalized and focused manner with partial success to implement Information System in the government departments and public organizations

Evolution of E-governance, Its Scope and Content

- During 1980s and 90s, govt. all over the world lagged behind the commercial world in accepting and implementing ICT.
- Commercial and industrial world went far ahead all over the world in harnessing the potential of ICT in their core and peripheral activities. They used ICT to reach out to their customers and business partners, thereby impressively enhancing their quality, speed and convenience.
- Visible success cases of use of ICT
  - ATM services
  - 24 hour call center
  - E-Shopping
- Software export increase (banking, financial, aviation, industrial sector from India, Ireland, Israel, China)
- 1990s and 2000 - Development of ITES (IT enabled Society) – resulted in remote services like call centers, data entry

Evolution of E-governance, Its Scope and Content

- **Point to be noted -- All the above mentioned services are not e-Governance service**
- Government last in the queue of institutions providing IT services
- Initial Efforts in E-governance:
  - Partial automation of existing paper bases manual process
  - Did not result in significant Business Reengineering Process compared to private sector
  - No big changes seen in government enterprises
    - **May be because of**
    - **Conservatism**
    - **Resistance to change**
    - **Rigidity of legislative body**

Evolution of E-governance, Its Scope and Content

- Major issues that has become highly relevant for large scale implementation of ICT in governance
  - Issue of Security
  - Privacy
  - Vulnerability (exposure) of public ICT infrastructure to crime
  - Potential to abuse, terrorism and general crime
  - Problems in social cohesion (unity)
  - Social Exclusion --- digital divide

Evolution of E-governance, Its Scope and Content

- The scope of ICT implementation in government machinery result in
  - Improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of the executive function of government, including delivery of public services
  - Greater transparency of government to citizens and business permitting greater access to the information generated or collated by the government
  - Fundamental changes and improvement in relations between citizen and the state thereby improving the democratic process
  - Better interactions and relationships amongst different
    - Wings of the same government
    - State or local government within a country
    - Countries whose governance are web-enabled

Evolution of E-governance, Its Scope and Content

- Any e-governance activity/project involves appropriate
  - Hardware and corresponding system software
  - Networking of the hardware identified above- both the Internet and Intranet environment
  - Application software along with appropriate database management software

Present Global Trends of Growth In E-Governance

- According to press reports during the end of 2002
  - Indicate a trend of global growth in e-governance utilization
  - Adults using internet world wide increase by 15% according to the findings of Second Government Online Study published my Taylor and Nelson.
  - 3 out of 10 citizens (30%) access government services online compared with only a quarter (26%) in 2001
- Government online services mostly used for
  - Search Information (24%)
  - Download Information (11%)
  - Increase in % to search info – 20% to 24% from Sep 2001 to Sep 2002
- Globally, online government transactions increased from just 6% to 7% during 2001 and 2002 and the percentage of those providing personal details to government increased from 7% to 8%

Present Global Trends of Growth In E-Governance

- E governance usage in different countries (between 2001-2002)
  - Australia – significant increase from 31% to 46%
  - Turkey – 3% to 13%
  - Netherlands – 32% 41%
  - US – 34% to 43%
  - Japan – decrement by 4% - 17% to 13%
- In 2001, security issue was the main concern which improved globally in 2002.
- 2001 – 14% felt secured with credit card and bank account numbers
- 2002 – this increased to 23%
- Highest levels of safety was seen in the Scandinavian Market (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden) together with some South East Asian markets (Singapore and Hong Kong)--- around 1/3 of users felt safe.
- In contrast- 90% of Japanese felt accessing online services unsafe.
- Germany 82% and France 76% --- unsafe

Other Key Findings

- Governance online service is more prevalent to men (33%) than women (26%)
- 2001 – 2002 - Subsequent rise in government online usage among
  - 35-44 years old (22% to 36%)
  - 55-64 years old (2% to 18%)
  - 65 years and above (7% in 2001 and 5% in 2002)
- Globally, no. of people making government transaction online = people making online shopping transaction
- 15% of internet users have made online government transactions and in addition 15% have made an online purchase at least during that year.
- Only 16% users in Hungary access government online services while its 81% in Norway

Other Key Findings

- In countries like Singapore, Norway and Sweden – high usage of online government services as the citizens feel comfortable with this approach of dealing with the government
- In Britain, New Zealand and South Korea – usage of government online services lags behind the normal internet usage

- All the above statistics on usage of e-governance services is time bound. Over the years, there has been a definite rise in the usage of e-governance all over the world

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