

E-Governance

Evolutionary Stages in E-Governance

- Stage 1: Use of e-mail and setting up of internal network
 - Most fundamental, cheapest and easiest ICT tool.
 - E-mail can lead to increased lateral and bottom-up communication.
 - E-mails break the official hierarchy of communication, as anyone can send e-mail to any other.
 - However, its limitations are its transparency and security risks of the content, unless used with digital signatures or key encryption. Sensitive and critical messages are still best sent over the telephone or in person.
- Stage 2: Use of internet by connecting internal activities to internet
 - It has been noticed that most government employees spend a few hours a day surfing the internet whether for official purpose or personal benefit, or for pleasure.
 - The internet has inculcated an information culture in the people in general and government employees in particular, to surf the internet for all purposes of information retrieval.

- Stage 3: Allowing public access to information
 - Web pages, General information service, citizen charters and application forms
 - Providing access to integrated workflow in different divisions of the government department concerned.
 - Workflow management and workflow integration in a department can be viewed in terms of the ability to move images, files, documents from one workstation to another using specific relevant rules of business to review, authorize, authenticate, validate, enter and edit data and assign tasks.
 - Business processes originally involving movement of paper can now be handled electronically from the very beginning to the final disposition. Once the workflow is automated in a government office, the related subject functionalities concerned also need to be automated and integrated with simple workflow automation.

- Stage 4: Allowing two way interactive communication with stake-holders to enable internet-enabled transactions (including financial transactions)

Once a web site is operational, correspondences from the citizens can be allowed through e-mail by providing them the appropriate e-mail addresses. For example, in China, the Beijing city government web site provides e-mail section to citizens apart from other important information such as government regulations, rules, laws or information about services offered by the government. In this e-mail section, the citizens are asked to express their suggestions, ideas, complaints (if any). The appropriate office concerned will be receiving these e-mails. Another approach is to permit citizens to clarify some queries (such as how to move the residence to Beijing) and the response to such queries will be posted on the web site itself.

The two-way interaction need not necessarily be online and web based. In the case of CARD (Computer aided Administration of the Registration Department) Project (executed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and NIC in Andhra Pradesh State), title deeds are registered in one hour and encumbrance certificates are issued in 20 minutes. The entire set-up is within the concerned sub-registrar office and managed by the office staff themselves. The citizens are provided the requisite services by the officers concerned in a very efficient manner.

In Dhar District (in the State of Madhya Pradesh), the **Gyandoot** project, executed with the support of NIC, rural citizens get their information and assistance on a variety of subjects ranging from information and assistance on broken pumps to obtaining land title extracts. This is operated through an intranet linked to the district headquarters. Village committees contract the operational management of kiosks to local entrepreneurs who are poor and recover their costs for the services rendered such as obtaining and filling up of applications forms, etc. social services such as matrimonial information service, and educational services are also made available.

Similarly, in Karnataka State, under the **Bhoomi** project (and its various versions and variations in other States also) rural citizens can obtain the official online land record extract at the kiosk (after online mutation and workflow automation) a small amount payable to the operator of the kiosk.

- Stage 5: Allowing online transactions by the citizens
 - In addition to permitting single online enquiry access to information, citizens may be enabled to make payments of fees and taxes, lodge complaints, file applications and perform any other transactions online through citizen kiosks installed at busy public locations.
 - This is a much more advanced stage in e-governance not yet reached in developing countries but already reached in the developed world.
- Stage 6: Enriching digital democracy
 - ICT has been used by the governments in various countries for strengthening democracy, democratic processes and reforms of democratic processes.
 - Examples include virtual parliaments, electronic voting, keeping voters information in websites by the Election Commission along with details of timing and location of polling booths, etc.

- Stage 7: Electronically integrated or joined up government with legislature and judiciary
 - In the final stage of e-governance a comprehensive web portal and a smart card integrates information and services from various responsible government agencies.
 - In this stage, both horizontal integration of services across departments and vertical integration of service delivery is expected to take place.
 - It is being experimented in many states of India such as Andhra Pradesh and even in country like Singapore, on a web portal.

To Be Continued...