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CASE STUDY ON E-GOVERNANCE STATUS IN NEPAL

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Abstract:

It is my sheer pleasure to write this foreword for the report of the seminar which I opened. The High Level Seminar on E-Governance was able to forge a consensus, among the government officials, on the major issues of e-government programs. The participants analyzed advantages and disadvantages of e-government programs, prioritized the e-government services and drafted action plans for introducing e-government programs in Nepal.

All these and the papers presented are included in this report, which made it an effective decision support tool for the policymakers and will encourage knowledge sharing amongst the stakeholders at ministries and departments. While we live in a world of constantly evolving information and communications technology (ICT) and its enabling power, the benefits of the ICT revolution have not fully percolated to the everyday life of the common people, particularly those in the rural areas. ICT can serve as one of the key enablers of citizen centric government services delivery mechanism to create easily accessible interfaces such as one-stop, single-window, automated service delivery outlets or common public service centers, devoid of harassment or corruption, minimizing waiting time and inconvenience to the public. ICT can be used to reduce the paperwork, improve efficiency, transparency, accountability and expedite the decision making process. The march towards e-governance involves several agencies, including government ministries and agencies, the financial and banking institutions and the procedures for scrutiny of decisions and audit. Without properly re-engineered administrative procedures in the large number of agencies that touch upon the citizen, our “patchwork” of e-governance could create more problems than it could solve.

Such re-engineering is possible if only all the government ministries and agencies share common e-government objectives. During the seminar we were able to identify such common objectives for e-government in Nepal and expressed our collective commitment to achieve them within the reasonable time frame

Acknowledgement:

It is my pleasure to present overall report on the Consolidated Financial Statement of FY 2017/18 of the Government of Nepal. It is one of the prime job of the FCGO given by Financial Procedure Acts and Regulation. This report is a part of our sincere commitment towards maintaining transparency and accountability in public expenditures and overall PFM system of Nepal. This report briefly discloses Macro Financial Scenario of the Government of Nepal. Furthermore, it also furnishes overall performance of Public Financial Management (PFM) of the Government of Nepal. The province and local level PFM information is stating that as per reported by local level and province government at the reporting time, so the declaring statement of Local and Province are limiting up to provided information by those Governments. I believe that this report would be useful to all Development Partners, public entities, Researchers, and who are eager to know the facts and figures of Nepalese Public Financial Management System. It also give very fruitful information to the policy maker of the developing policy and implementation in PFM areas for the better reforms. This publication has become possible with the usage of the existing IT based Financial Management Information System such as Revenue Information Management System (RIMS) & Treasury Single Account (TSA). There is a need of further strengthening the financial management system and TSA system to produce quality and complete report in a timely manner where FCGO will work hard in coming days to maintain and archive those quality and timely required information for dissemination on time. I would highly appreciate any suggestions and comments on the report, which help us in improving the quality of this report in the coming fiscal Years.

March, 2022

Introduction to E-governance:

E-Governance in Nepal has steadily evolved from computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency. Lessons from previous e-Governance initiatives have played an important role in shaping the progressive e-Governance strategy of the country. Due cognizance has been taken of the notion that to speed up e-Governance implementation across the various arms of Government at National and Local levels, a program approach needs to be adopted, guided by common vision and strategy. This approach has the potential of enabling huge savings in costs through sharing of core and support infrastructure, enabling interoperability through standards, and of presenting a seamless view of Government to citizens.

E-Governance Master Plan (e-GMP) 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 GMP.

"Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets, and ensure efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man"

Past status of E-governance in Nepal:

Even discussions on electronic governance, or e-governance, might sound like misplaced priority in present-day Nepal when, in general, the brick-and-mortar governance itself is making a volte-face. Nepal ranks 137 among 193 countries in the e-governance development index (EGDI) in a world that excelled in e-governance over the last 30 years by using information and communication technology (ICT). The United Nations defines e-governance as "the application of ICT in government operations, achieving public ends by digital means". Therefore, e-governance has the twin objectives of paperless and speedy public policy decisions through bureaucratic processes and operations and efficient and effective service delivery to citizens and businesses. The end goal is good governance by every level of government.

But, for Nepal, e-governance-enabled public service delivery has increasingly become a pipe dream for all and sundry. Long queues of people in front of the Passport Department, vehicle registration offices and a of about a million across the country to obtain a driving permission are only a few examples that manifest very inefficient, if any, use of ICT by even resourceful government offices.

It's been two decades since the Asian Development Bank supported Nepal in the Governance Reform Programme (2001). A study report on the importance and rationale of paperless government was prepared by the then joint secretary in the Ministry of General Administration Dependra Bahadur Thapa. Nepal also enacted essential laws required for operationalising e-governance. The Electronic Transaction Act 2006, which theoretically legalised the digital signatures for "some" contracts and transactions, and the Information Technology Umbrella Act 2014 are key legal breakthroughs. The IT Policy 2010, ICT Policy 2015, e-Governance Master Plan (eGMP) 2007 and eGMP-II 2015 and 10 Year Master Plan 2011, among others, complemented.

Present Condition of E-governance in Nepal:

A growing application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their subsequent use on strengthening interaction among public entities, civil societies, communities and citizens has given rise to a new governance paradigm known as e-governance. E-governance is ‘the application of information Technology to the processes of government functioning to bring about simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent government. It came as a quest of making the public institutions more transparent, accountable, and efficient for the better delivery of public services. Using the ICT as a tool it helps to improve governance to be more effective, transparent, professional and cost-effective. Therefore both the developed and developing countries today are found adopting ICTs for making their government efficient, transparent and customer friendly.

Governance started to attract policy attention and get into development discourses around the period of late 1980s. Governance as a concept came in recent times to the increasing interaction of three actors – state, market and the civil society. It is taken as a process rather than immediate decision. It is a set of continuous process that usually evolves slowly with use rather than change dramatically. Good governance started to drive policy debates as a means of securing development and growth, thereby requiring governments to be open and predictable. This openness and predictability of government functioning is further echoed at e- governance. Following UN’s five guiding principles shows the key note of e-government

- Building services around citizens choices
- Making government and its services more accessible
- Social inclusion
- Providing information responsibly, and
- Using IT and human resources effectively and efficiently

Advantages of E-governance:

Government in a democratic setting is an administration that uses public resources to work for and satisfy the needs of the citizens. Governance entails proper management resources and the citizens for common good. To achieve that, many governments has come up with e-governance system. This e-government system has a whole lot of benefits for the municipalities and the citizens. Some of the benefits of e-governance are as follows:

- **Inclusive Governance**

E-governance helps in building trust between governments and citizens, an essential factor in good governance by using internet-based strategies to involve citizens in the policy process, illustrating government transparency and accountability.

- **Easy and Quick Implementation**

With e-government, paperwork has been made so simple and intuitive. This facilitates sharing of information and ideas between all government agencies and department to build one mega data base. Getting the government decisions and policies across to the citizens is easy as well, since e-government gives every citizen access to information.

- **High Operational Efficiency**

What matters a lot to citizens is the efficiency of the services being provided. The effectiveness of government is measured by the quality of its interactions with citizens. The processing of paperwork in a traditional government system is a difficult task which consumes a lot of resources; time spent on paperwork does not create much value for citizens. This issue becomes even more relevant when we consider the fact that citizens are demanding more from public services. By the establishment of a centralised point of communication through e-government, governments can achieve high operational efficiency.

- **High Level of Trust on Government**

For any government to survive or maintain or keep control of power, such government must win the trust of the majority of the citizens. E-government can always afford that for any government that embraces it. It improves services through better understanding of citizens' requirements, thus aiming for seamless online services. That it achieves through improving transparency, accuracy and facilitating information transforming between government and citizens.

- **Reduces Costs of Running a Government**

E-government is very cost effective. Let's take for example that government wants to seek a public opinion on an issue, with e-government system it can take a survey and the opinion very fast at extremely low cost. That also applies when government would want to capture some data. Thanks to a new innovation called cloud solutions, which helps governments realise substantial savings from the previously needed expensive IT infrastructure and its related high maintenance costs.

It is obvious that implementation of e-government not only saves resources, effort and money but it can also extensively increase service quality levels and reducing time spent in government departments.

Future references:

Several opportunities for future work remain. The validity of the findings in this study, the possibility of EG implementation in Nepal could be tested in a variety of contexts with the application of a wider range of tools and available technologies. Further statistical methods can be put into use in order to access the impact of EG on various facades. Primarily, this study has been conducted to find out the existing barriers to EG implementation in Nepal through the readings and ideal exploration of various readers and knowledge workers around the world, whereas there is more space for further research. Possibly, future research can explore these findings and maybe those can be replicated with other technologies and studies. In conclusion, the current study suggests that EG system can be implemented in Nepal if we could eliminate the existing barriers and add mediums, tools, and technologies to support the erection of EG pillar in the government as well as non-government bodies of Nepal, so that the combined effort of both shall aid towards effective implementation of EG.

Conclusions:

The advent of ICT is getting its highest fleet around the world, especially with the intensive use of smartphones and advanced communication technologies. Nepal has seen the abundant development and progress in mobile communications with the increased access of internet and social media to the people. The social media like Facebook, YouTube are the most used application in Nepal and people are increasingly developing mass awareness and getting enlightened with the use of these applications and technologies. The government has introduced few e-based services in the country and the public is using those services very fluently with having the system accessible into their touchscreens. Nepal is very much close towards the digital adoption of EG in near future.

Based on the literature review and the gathered data, it is evident that the expectation for the adoption of EG is too high, although the ER level is low. Despite the fact, that Nepal's ranking globally has incremental values, the resultant is not so satisfactory in terms of e- service implementation, since the country is at its very early stage of adopting EG. The use of e-services in government is also increasing day by day.

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