

E-Governance and E-Government in Bangladesh: Performance, Challenges and Remedies

Md. Rizwan Hassan

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, International Islamic University Chittagong, BANGLADESH

ABSTRACT

The essence of good governance lies in successful implementation of e-governance in wide range of government activities. In current days of digital and ICT based environment, it is impossible to have good government without e-government. The purpose of this study is to discuss the performance of Bangladesh in e-government implementation, identify some of the challenges and suggest some of the remedial measures. As per UN e-government survey Bangladesh performed worse in 2012 than 2010. The challenges arise from change in government policy with change in government, lack of sufficient skilled well-trained human resource, supply of sufficient fund for implementing such capital intensive project, etc. But the situation can be changed by taking necessary steps like political consensus, development of human resource, ICT penetration, and taking proper long-term plan implementing e-government in Bangladesh.

Keywords: E-governance, SMART Governance, ICT penetration, IT policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

Widespread use of ICT is increasing the gap between developed and developing countries and the gap is increasing day by day. Because the rate of growth of developed countries is much higher than that of developing. The developed countries all over the world are harnessing ICT to obtain the maximum benefit through creating IT infrastructure, changing policy, managing the change, business process reengineering, etc. As a result the developing countries can't keep pace with developed, even can't maintain the distance constant. But it is the time for developing countries to turn around for changing their age as well as lifestyles with ICT. Countries without high levels of resources like Bangladesh can hope to accelerate development if they are able to develop knowledge, which, combine with adequate ICT related infrastructure, can allow successful integration into knowledge-based economies. Only the use ICT in the government functioning is expected to bring a radical change in this field

E-governance is the most attractive, interesting, useful people-oriented and growing phenomenon and has become one of the pivotal parts of administrative reform to bring good governance in any country (Moon, 2002).

The primary goal of e-governance is to establish a relationship between government officials and citizens, providing greater access to government information and services by making the government accessible for any part of the country or even world; promoting citizen participation in government affairs by enabling citizens to interact more easily 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 (Asaduzzaman et. al. 2011).

2 CONCEPT OF E-GOVERNANCE

Now-a-days e-related terminologies are very common in all over the world. Due to wide spread advancement of telecommunication technologies, people awareness about good governance, popularity of new and innovative gadgets, stakeholders' pressure to ensure accountable and transparent functioning of public services, etc. e-governance and e-government have gained momentum.

E-Governance is described as the application of hardware, software, internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) to the functioning of government to bring about effective, efficient, transparent and accountable governance enabling the citizen to reap the maximum benefit from the government. It is a comprehensive tool for bringing a revolutionary change in the operation of the government through ensuring a system of speedy transaction and a system of check and balance. Electronic governance is also defined as:

Electronic Governance is defined as the application of Information Technology to the processes of Government functioning in order to bring about Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) Governance Budhiraja (2002). That is why it is also called SMART governance.

According to the World Bank,

"E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions."

UNESCO defines e-Governance as:

"Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-Governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities."

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is aimed at fulfilling the following objectives

- To conceptualize e-governance and e-government in Bangladesh context;

- To evaluate performance of Bangladesh in implementing e-governance;
- To recognize probable challenges and ways to overcome those;

4 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study is based mainly on secondary data. Some primary data were collected through discussion with the government officials of Dhaka and Chittagong. Secondary data were collected from different books journals, websites, etc. The performance of Bangladesh in e-government development was measured based on the survey conducted by United Nations in 2012. Here the performance of Bangladesh was compared with other countries of SAARC, as Bangladesh belongs to this region and is a member of SAATRC. It shares mostly similar socio-economic and political situation with other countries. To present these data different statistical tools like average, chart, etc. were used.

5 PERFORMANCE OF BANGLADESH

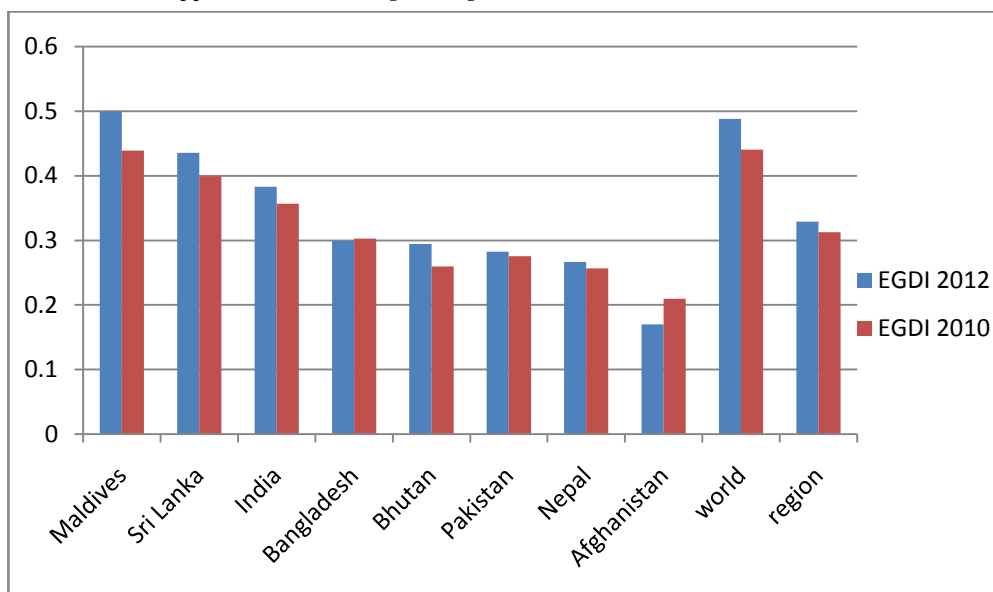
Many of the countries have achieved significant progress in implementing e-governance and making e-services easily available and accessible to their citizens. As per the United Nations E-Government Survey 2012, many countries have undertaken e-government initiatives and applications of information and communication technologies (ICT) for the people to further improve public sector efficiencies and modernize governance systems to support sustainable development and achieve millennium development goals. Among the e-government leaders, innovative technology solutions have gained special recognition as the means to revitalize lagging economic and social sectors. The survey was undertaken on all the member countries of the world. However, for the purpose of the current study only relevant countries (SAARC countries) have been discussed here.

Table: Showing E-government development index and ranking.

Country	E Gov. development index		Percentage Change in the index	World e-Gov. development ranking		
	2012	2010		2012	2010	Change
Maldives	0.4994	0.4392	13.71%	95	92	-3
Sri Lanka	0.4357	0.3995	9.06%	115	111	-4
India	0.3829	0.3567	7.35%	125	119	-6
Bangladesh	0.2991	0.3028	-1.22%	150	134	-16
Bhutan	0.2942	0.2598	13.24%	152	152	0
Pakistan	0.2823	0.2755	2.47%	156	146	-10
Nepal	0.2664	0.2568	3.74%	164	153	-11
Afghanistan	0.1701	0.2098	-18.92%	184	168	-16
World Average	0.4882	0.4406	10.80%			
Regional average	0.328763	0.312513	5.20%			

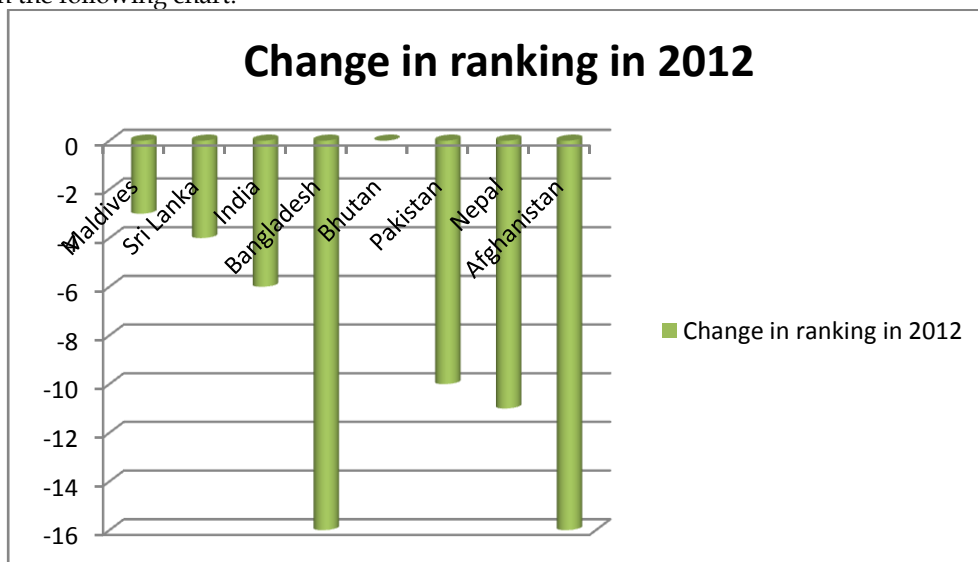
Source: United Nations, E-Government Survey 2012

The e-government development index of the SAARC region along with world and regional average is shown in the following bar chart.



From the table and the graph it is revealed that all the countries of south Asia have performed better in 2012 than in 2010 except Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Maldives had the largest increase in its index followed by Bhutan, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Pakistan. On the other hand Afghanistan had the largest decrease of approximately 19% in its e-government development index. Of course Bangladesh (1.22%) did not have a huge decline. But if the world and regional averages are compared it is seen that the world had an increase of 11% on the other hand, SAARC region achieved only 5% increase. But the matter of fact is that instead of increasing Bangladesh had decreased in 2012 in comparison to 2010.

The change in ranking of SAARC countries in e-government development index is shown in the following chart.



From the chart it is seen that all the countries of the region except Bhutan declined several steps down from their respective ranking in 2010. Bhutan was able to retain its position. Here also it is seen that Bangladesh accompanied Afghanistan in case of decline in ranking in e-government development index. Though the other countries were able to increase their index, they could not retain their position. It reveals that other countries of the world are doing much better in delivering their e-government services. To keep pace with those countries these countries are taking a number of endeavor but these are not sufficient.

6 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Implementation of e-governance in a developing country like Bangladesh is not out of challenges and debates. The critical issues should be delineated and solutions worked out properly. Here we find out some of the issues that may hinder the implementation of e-governance in Bangladesh.

- a) Political issues: Political factors are very effective in government functioning, which may hinder implementation of e-governance if interest of a group is hampered. Political stability is important for successful implementation of e-government in any country. But in Bangladesh this is yet to be achieved. For this reason, implementation and continuation of any e-government project suffer (Bhuiyan 2011).
- b) Human Resource issues: To implement e-government in any country sufficient trained human resource is a must. The quality of e-governance heavily depends on the skill, training and performance of human resources (Bhuiyan 2011). But in Bangladesh this is still in scarce state. Of course establishment of a number of private university have mitigated the problem to some extent.
- c) Funding issues: As e-governance has a very ambitious work plan, it requires a significant amount of fund to be invested. Timely and cost effective supply of fund is required not only during the process of digitalization but also for the maintenance of the projects. As we know Bangladesh is a developing country it sometimes becomes difficult to supply so much fund for such ambitious projects.
- d) ICT penetration: Recently Bangladesh has achieved a good advancement in use of ICT in mass level; especially the growth rate is impressive. But this applies more to city than to village. However in spite of this, quite understandably owing to our late entrance in the ICT field our PC penetration (4.5 per 1000) is one of lowest in the world (Bangladesh Computer Society). On the other hand mobile penetration is quite satisfactory in Bangladesh as such internet connectivity is also high if we consider mobile internet. There are some 30 million internet users and 98.6 million mobile users as per February 2013 update data (BTRC).
- e) Management of Change: The issue of management of change is the most fundamental issue to be addressed. Use of ICT in governance is expected to bring a revolutionary change in the functioning of government. But, it may be difficult to manage the change, if proper planning is not made in advance.
- f) IT policy: The government as a whole should have a consistent IT policy that is congenial to invigoration of IT sector and its use. Like other policy, it is difficult for the government to have a uniform IT policy. Now we have IT policy 2009. It took too much time to have a sound IT policy for the country. It is one of the impediments of increasing e-governance in Bangladesh.

7 REMEDIAL MEASURE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The necessity of e-governance and e-government is undeniable in today's world. None can avoid the positive changes made through the use of electronic media in governance for bringing good governance in the country. A number measure could be taken to overcome the challenges identified in the way of successful implementation of ICT. Some of the measures are discussed below.

- (a) Political consensus: To have a successful implementation of e-governance in Bangladesh it is very necessary to have consensus among political parties regarding the issue. It should be so undertaken that there will be no change in the policy and no alternation will be brought in any project with the change of government.
- (b) Developing Human resource: Development of skilled, efficient, knowledgeable and able human resource is a key to e-government success. In all the relevant positions of the projects skilled and able personnel should be appointed to carry out e-government projects.
- (c) Ensuring fund: Fund is one of the most important impediments for such high capital intensive projects in developing countries like Bangladesh. The government may seek fund from donor agencies to fund such projects.
- (d) Spread of ICT and its education: High rate of ICT penetration does not ensure a high rate of ICT literacy. ICT education in technical and vocational institute and private and public universities are to be spread (Alam & Hassan 2011).
- (e) Proper Planning: Good planning is good stewardship. Success in any endeavor requires careful preparation and planning. Without proper planning and preparation, failure is almost guaranteed.
- (f) Congenial IT policy and its consistent implementation: To flourish e-government in Bangladesh the proper ICT policy should be promulgated and these policies should be implemented consistently.

8 CONCLUSION

Government is the key player in the process of e-governance. But it is not possible on the part of the government alone to bring about the expected revolutionary change in the field of e-governance. Government and private initiatives as well as NGOs can contribute much towards this end. The donor agencies should also realize the need of implementing e-governance in the developing countries like Bangladesh and can play a proactive role in this regard. As we know lion's share of our development budget comes from foreign aid, donation, loan, etc. But fund is not the only factor, what is important here is to make a long-term plan through dialogue with experts and consensus with all the political parties and to implement e-governance gradually. As time is passing, it is to be remembered that bureaucracy and delay in this regard is not desirable. Otherwise the optimum benefit from e-governance can't be obtained. It is a matter of pleasure that government is realizing the need for wide spread use of ICT in governance. But real effort to materialize this end is non-existence.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alam, Md. Shariful, Hassan, Md. Shoeb, "Problems when implementing e-governance Systems in Developing countries: A quantitative investigation of Implementation problems in Bangladesh" unpublished Masters' thesis, University of Baros

- [2] Asaduzzaman, Mohammed, Rahman, AKM Motinur & Jinia, Nasrin Jahan, "E-governance Initiatives in Bangladesh: Some Observations" *Nepalese Journal of Public Policy and Governance*, Vol. xxix, No.2, December, 2011
- [3] Bhuiyan, Shahjahan H., "Modernizing Bangladesh public administration through e-governance: Benefits and challenges" *Government Information Quarterly* 28 (2011)
- [4] Budhiraja, Renu & Sachdeva, Sameer, "E-Readiness Assessment", International Conference on Building Effective e-Governance. November, 2002, Punjab, Chandigarh - INDIA.
- [5] Joarder, Md. Muntasir Mamun (2003), "Challenges, Key success factors and advantages of e-governance from the view point of developing countries", 6th International Conference on Computer and Information Technology;
- [6] Moon, M. J. (2002), "The Evaluation of E-Government among Municipalities: Rhetoric or Reality?" *Public Administration Review*, 62 (4) pp424-433.
- [7] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations E-Government Survey, 2010, pp. 25-26
- [8] <http://go.worldbank.org/M1JHE0Z280> (extracted on 18.08.2008)
- [9] http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.phpURL_ID=4404&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html
- [10] http://www.bcs.org.bd/IT_scenario_of_bangladesh.htm retrieved on March 30, 2013
- [11] http://www.btrc.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=682:internet-subscribers-in-bangladesh&catid=49:telco-news&Itemid=502 retrieved on March 30, 2013
- [12] http://www.btrc.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=681:mobile-phone-subscribers-in-bangladesh-january-2012&catid=49:telco-news&Itemid=502 retrieved on March 30, 2013

AJASE Publish
Online and Print Version Both

AJASE adopt a blinded review policy. Authors are blind to reviewers. Typically, the review period is within 6 weeks. If authors do not receive a decision letter by email in 8 weeks after the submission, the corresponding author may send an email to inquire the status of their submission. If you need a shorter review period due to special circumstances, you may request such along with your explanation of the situation by email; however, AJASE cannot guarantee granting the request because high quality judgment of scientific work in short time is a challenge.