



## E- GOVERNANCE INITIATIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

*Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has made it possible for people to communicate more quickly, access data more quickly, and use information more effectively. E-Governance makes government services available to citizens and businesses in a simple, effective, and open manner. To achieve excellent governance, e-governance is a useful instrument. The tool of e-Governance aids in the development of social networking sites, rural empowerment, and the involvement of citizens in government, among other things. The lack of awareness of the benefits of e Governance in developing nations like India, where literacy is poor and many people live below the poverty line, is a major obstacle to implementing e Governance operations. For rural development in India, this article focuses on the e governance programmes initiated for rural development like Warana wired village, Bhoomi project, Gyan Dhoot, FRIENDS projects discussed in this article.*

**Key words: ICT, e Governance, Warana, Bhoomi project, Gyan dhoot, Friends.**

E-Governance has become the key to good-governance in a developing country like India. To be at par with developed countries, the government of India had made out a plan to use Information and Communication Technology extensively in its operation to make more efficient and effective and also to bring transparency and accountability. In every developing country, E-Governance has been talked about a lot, E-Governance is nothing but use of internet technology as a plat form for exchanging information, providing services and transacting with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. E-governance provides a sound strategy to strengthen overall governance. It can not only improve accountability, transparency and efficiency of government processes, but also facilitate sustainable and inclusive growth.

E-Governance also provides a mechanism of direct delivery of public services to the rural areas of any nation, without having to deal with intermediaries. India is a nation with 70% of population lives in rural areas. With such large rural population government is required to make concrete efforts for the development of rural areas. Undoubtedly government of India has made considerable efforts to reduce the digital divide and ICT has proved to be a tool for its successful implementation. As per Chambers rural development is strategy which enables people to benefit themselves and their families by fetching more of what they need. The percentage of rural population in India is decreasing since last two decades but still it accounts for major proportion of total population. In 1991 the percentage of rural population was 74.3% which reduced to 72.2% in 2001 leading to 69.9% in 2011. This decrease in rural population could be understood as an indication that there is a need to provide better facilitates in rural areas. To provide opportunities, information and easy access of the rural development schemes to all citizens in rural India, several efforts at various levels have been taken by the Government of India.

Government of India has undertaken many projects for the benefit of rural India. Many of these projects have been successful. Still more initiatives can be taken and the one which are currently working can be improved further keeping in mind the problems being face by the people in accessing these projects. E-



Governance in India is not uniform. Some states are advanced and some are very backward technologically. In Central Government, some Departments had initiated steps to adopt E-Governance long back while some departments are lagging behind. In this context it would be useful to highlight some of the important E-Governance initiatives implemented by the Union and State Governments in the last 10 to 15 years and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Some of these projects are discussed below,

### **Warana Wired Village Project in Maharashtra**

Warana “Wired Village” project was launched in 1998 as collaboration between the National Informatics Centre (NIC), the Government of Maharashtra, the Warana Vibhag ShkshanMandal (Education Department) and the WGC. This project uses ICT to streamline the operations connected with sugarcane growing and harvesting. This benefits small farmers, both in terms of transparency and time saved on administrative transactions, as well as the cooperative in terms of monetary gains. The rights conditions to bring ICT to Warana exist both in terms of human development and of infrastructure, as, for instance, there is uninterrupted power supply in the area. The project aims at bringing agricultural, market and education information to 70 villages around Warana Nagar and intends to simplify other business operations of the co-operative. Warana is well-developed rural areas located 30 kilometers northwest of the city of Kolhapur, in one of the richest states of India, Maharashtra.

### **Bhoomi (Online Delivery of Land Records): Karnataka**

Bhoomi is a self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers through 177 Government owned kiosks in the State of Karnataka. It was felt that rural land records are central conduits to delivering better IT enabled services to citizens because they contain multiple data elements: ownership, tenancy, loans, nature of title, irrigation details, crops grown etc. In addition to providing the proof of title to the land, this land record is used by the farmer for a variety of purposes: from documenting crop loans and legal actions, to securing scholarships for school-children. These records were hitherto maintained manually by 9000 village offices. Through this project, computerized kiosks are currently offering farmers two critical services- procurement of land records and requests for changes to land title. About 20 million records are now being legally maintained in the digital format. To ensure authenticity of data management, a biometric finger authentication system has been used for the first time in an e-Governance project in India. To make the project self-sustaining and expandable, Bhoomi levies user charges. During project implementation, all the officials involved were assigned well-defined roles and responsibilities, down to the grass roots level. However, in the initial stages, in spite of elaborate and detailed guidelines, these were not percolating down. This was finally achieved through State level workshops and intensive trainings for bringing about changes in the attitude among departmental staff. The Bhoomi project is a noteworthy effort and sets an example for other projects in its approach towards piloting a project, as well as its rolling out and sustenance. It may be mentioned here that manually written Records of Right, Tenancy and cultivations (RTC) have been declared illegal. Based on the success story of this project and its innovations, the Union Ministry of Communication and Information Technology has announced that Bhoomi would be a national model for computerization of land records and replicated throughout the country.



### **Gyan Dhoot in Madhya Pradesh**

Gyandoot is an Intranet based Government to citizen (G2C) service delivery initiative. It was initiated in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh in January 2000 with the twin objectives of providing relegating information to the rural population and acting as an interface between the district administration and the people. The basic idea behind this project was to establish and foster a technologically innovative initiative which is owned and operated by the community itself. Initially, computers were installed in twenty village panchayat centers and connected to the District Rural Development Authority in Dhar town. These were called Soochanalayas which were operated by local rural youth selected for this purpose. No fixed salary or stipend was paid to them. Later, 15 more Soochanalayas were opened as private enterprise. The Soochanalayas are connected to the Intranet through dial-up lines. The services offered through the Gyan doot network include Daily agricultural commodity rates, Income certificate, Domicile Certificate, Caste Certificate, Public grievance redress, Rural Hindi email, BPL family list and Rural Hindi newspaper. There is a prescribed service charge for each service which is displayed at each kiosk along with the information about the expected delivery time. The citizen generally submits his application online (with the help of the Soochak) and has to go back to the Soochanalaya to collect he response. If the service is related to obtaining some certificates or documents, the citizen will have to collect them by visiting the government department. Alternatively, they are mailed to the citizen. The implementation of this project assumes significance as it throws light on the issues involved in taking e-Governance to rural areas.

### **Friends in Kerala**

FRIENDS (Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient, and Network forthe Disbursement of Services) are Single Window Facility providing citizens the means to pay taxes and other financial dues to the State Government. It was launched in Thiruvananthapuram in June 2000 and replicated in other district headquarters during 2001-02. The services are provided through FRIENDS Janasevana Kendrams located inthe district headquarters. This project is a classic case of achieving front end computerized service delivery to citizens without waiting for completion of back end computerization in various government departments. This project thus tries to avoid the complex issues involved in business process re-engineering in the participating departments. In fact, the FRIENDS counters are not even networked with the participating departments/entities. Print outs of payments made through the counters are physically distributed to participating entities for processing. To remove bottlenecks at the time of processing, a government order was issued to treat a receipt from a FRIENDS counters as equivalent to a receipt from the concerned government entity. Owing to the success of the project, efforts have been initiated to develop FREES(FRIENDS Re-engineered and Enterprises Enabled Software) which would incorporate the ‘Any centre Any Payment model.

### **Some of Challenges of E- Governance**

- Lack of effective project management tools and methods.
- Absence of proper planning, various ad hoc tasks are taken up by the project team due to which the focus on critical activities is lost.
- Inadequate training of how the project is being implemented, tasks causing delays.
- No monitoring of Cost and Schedule at project heck points. And it is not easy to grass level rural people spending on money.
- There is no strong administrative set-up for implementing the project.
- A critical obstacle in implementing e-Governance is the privacy and security of an individual's



personal data that he/she provides to obtain government services. The e-governance initiative in the rural areas should be taken by identifying and analyzing the grass root realities.

- The states that the strategy devised for the implementation of e-governance should be comprehensive; approach should be citizen centric and should follow multiple channels of communication for dissemination of e-services.

### **Conclusion**

Use of Information and communication technology in public service delivery is very much significant and Government of India through National e- governance plan and also other states taking initiatives for rural development through e governance programmes and these are all citizen centric governance models at door step service. E governance in rural areas created awareness and brought corruption down.

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