



Effort of E-Governance of the Government of West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Now a days the changes and adopting in public administration is too difficult in the world. Government is in the process of building their pro-people image by adopting new strategies. E-governance is a relatively new tool that has taken steps to provide much needed transparency and ease of doing business. Government Process Re-engineering using IT to simplify and make the government processes more efficient is critical for transformation to make the delivery of government services more effective across various government domains and therefore needs to be implemented by all Departments. All databases and information should be in electronic form and not manual. The workflow inside government departments and agencies should be automated to enable efficient government processes and also to allow visibility of these processes to citizens. IT should be used to automate, respond and analyse data to identify and resolve persistent problems. These would be largely process improvements. The Government of West Bengal has initiated a number of e-governance initiatives which are discussed in this paper. It also speaks of the virtues of initiatives that have enhanced the credibility of the present government in the eyes of the common people of the state.

INTRODUCTION

The “e” in e-Governance stands for ‘electronic’. So, e-governance is basically associated with ICT (information and Communication technology) to performance and governance results today. The reason why countries around the world are increasingly opting for ‘e-Governance’ is that governance per se has become more complex and varied in the last few decades and more importantly, citizens’ expectations from government have increased manifold. Information technology (IT) helps revitalize government by increasing transparency through information dissemination, creating more remote participation, innovation, low cost, improved efficiency and quality, and effective communication between government and citizens. The Government of West Bengal trying to implement all the governments schemes through e-Governance service as the same of internationally maintained in the term of service delivery quality. It has successfully implemented a number of e-Governance projects to establish fast, error-free and real-time connectivity across all Gram Panchayats, Municipalities, Blocks, District Collectorate Headquarters, Heads of Departments, Headquarters Departments and State Secretariats. The target has to implement all the state secretariat, directorates regional offices into a single entire network within 2021. The primary objective of the e-Governance initiative of the Government of West Bengal is to transform itself from an ancient bureaucratic structure into a knowledge-driven welfare society so as to make extensive use of IT and ITs in administration and positively influence the day-to-day life of the citizens of the State. The Government is sincerely committed to building an inclusive, citizen-friendly and information-based society so that, through e-governance, public services are easily accessible to all classes of people in the state through the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). To move forward with this noble mission, the Government of West Bengal has undertaken a number of e-Governance projects in line with the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) as well as the Digital India Initiative with the technical assistance of Weble Technology Limited. (WTL) which is the state designated body (SDA).

NEED OF THE STUDY.

In this paper has two main objectives, namely to introduce the readers to the various e-governance principles and their merits and to discuss the various e-governance initiatives taken by the Government of West Bengal. Most of the projects are part of the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) as well as the Digital India initiative but some are unique projects of the state government. This paper seeks to distinguish between the pre- and post-scenario of launching such a user-friendly initiative. It also points out the merits of the introduction of such an initiative in government and how it has touched the lives of ordinary people.

All the available literature in this context is read in order to get a clear perspective into the subject. Each and every e-portal launched by the Government for different functions are studied thoroughly as almost all of them are used by the author of

this research paper in his job as a public administrator. Handbooks, manuals and orders issued by the state government at various levels in 2010. When e-governance was first introduced as a pilot project. It has been carefully studied to understand the administrative decision to introduce it till date of this initiative.

Issues in governance

1. **Delay:** - Time is very precious and we should not waste it in any way. In government function is carelessly linked with red-tapism and delay. Because the decision taken has to be pass through several layers before it receives final approval and even after competition the process, it takes unusual delay for making the payment. This result due to the delay of the overall process and payment the government loss their momentum in monitoring the scheme, so the they compromise their quality and supplier do not invest their best effort to execute the scheme. Excessive delay is also affected on cost of the project.
2. **Lack of transparency:** - There was an absolute desolation about the dealing along with the government and the general public. All the government procedure and even the directives were kept away from the general public even the media. Which as not so active in those days, but after the low of the Right to Information Act 2005 that we got to know all about their activities and procedures. Compulsory disclosure schemes are still quite disguised, and it is clear from there shameless tactics that is still reluctant to share relevant government information with the general public.
3. **Complexity:** - From a simple tender notice to the land registration process, every official procedure is deliberately complicated and many vague and unwanted documents are required to complete the application process. To get the income certificates from the gazette officers need to applying through the hand writing application along with the unwanted documents even to issue of birth registration certificates faced many complexities and to get the printed certificate it is also the longer procedure to done this job. Applying for a home loan from a government bank or obtaining a trade license from the concerned municipality has become a nightmare for the common man. He would instead resort to paying a mediator a hefty sum (several times the amount of the application) to complete the process within a specified time. To see the lowered credibility of the government procedures the common people lost faith in them and being forced to take the hep of bribes.
4. **Corruption:** - Due to the longer process and the careless delay, corruption and favouritism has become a common thing in governments services. For the speedy action or people have used bribery as a tool for their own interests by killing someone's rights and the executives are also do not missed any stone unturned to take advantage of this. In this mechanism the general public is as much responsible for as the administration. Generally, both peoples are doing same as illegal or agents for the civil society.
5. **Resistance from employee union:** - The introduction of e-governance will ultimately lead to the efficiency of government service delivery and level the organizational hierarchy. This would reduce the importance of a section of government employees who had a habit of harassing the general public unnecessarily just to show their influence and even to earn "cut money". E-governance will easily enable officials to track the skills of their employees and may even lead to redundancy in some government positions. This is why almost all government employees' unions opposed the idea of introducing computers in government offices, fearing that their "Hornet's nest" would be disrupted, initially by cutting political lines. However, over a period of time, due to public pressure and mature political sentiments, almost all offices have adopted e-governance and most employees have been trained to work comfortably in the e-environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Strategies in E-governance

In governance it is revealing a new direction and shown more results towards success. It empowers the administration in several ways –

1. **Speed:** Technology makes communication faster. The Internet enables smartphones to instantly transmit high amounts of data worldwide.
2. **Saving cost:** A lot of government money is spent on stationery for government purposes. Correspondence and written records use plenty of stationery. However, replacing them with smartphones and the Internet can save billions of dollars in costs each year.
3. **Transparency:** The use of e-governance helps to make all business activities transparent. All official information can be uploaded on the Internet. Citizens can access any information they want, especially when they want to. However, for this to work, the government must ensure that all data is made public and uploaded to government information forums on the Internet.
4. **Accountability:** Transparency is directly linked to accountability. Once government functions are available, we can hold them accountable for their actions.
5. **Empowerment of citizens through access to information:** Citizens can now apply for almost all schemes online through e-Governance portal. Certificates of Caste, Income and Residence Certificate, Weapons License, Ration

Card, Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), Kanyashree, Yubashree, Gatidhara, Ayekashree and many other beneficial portals and application for creation of new self-help group can be done online and complete approval process and it will be tracked online and finally the certificate can be downloaded from any convenient place. This application has made the whole process of issuing the certificate fair and transparent and it is mandatory for the government agency to provide adequate and justifiable reasons if the application is rejected at any stage.

6. **Less corruption and more transparency in administration:** Improving efficiency in public service delivery, faster processing of applications, online tracking and mandatory rationale for rejection have clearly reduced the level of corruption. E-Governance has enabled the submission of most applications with adequate documentation even without visiting the concerned government office. It has become much easier for superiors to track the workflow of their subordinates and any additional delays can be easily noticed.

IT initiatives in West Bengal

In the structure, there are four categories of e-Governance services. These are discussed below-

1. Government-to-Citizen(G2C)

The Government-to-citizen refers to the government services that are accessed by the familiar people. And Most of the government services fall under G2C. Likewise, the primary goal of Government-to-citizen is to provide facilities to the citizen. It helps the ordinary people to reduce the time and cost to conduct a transaction. A citizen can have access to the services anytime from anywhere.

Furthermore, many services like license renewals, and paying tax are essential in G2C. Likewise, spending the administrative fee online is also possible due to G2C. The facility of Government-to-Citizen enables the ordinary citizen to overcome time limitation. It also focuses on geographic land barriers.

2. Government-to-business (G2B)

The Government to business is the exchange of services between Government and Business organizations. It is efficient for both government and business organizations. G2B provides access to relevant forms needed to comply. The G2B also consists of many services exchanged between business sectors and government.

Similarly, the Government to business provides Timely business information. And A business organization can have easy and convenient online access to government agencies. G2B plays a crucial role in business development. It enhances the efficiency and quality of communication and transparency of government projects.

3. Government-to-Government (G2G)

The Government-to-Government refers to the interaction between different government department, organizations, and agencies. This increases the efficiency of government processes. In G2G, government agencies can share the same database using online communication. The government departments can work together. This service can increase international diplomacy and relations.

In conclusion, G2G services can be at the local level or the international level. It can communicate with global government and local government as well. Likewise, it provides safe and secure inter-relationship between domestic or foreign government. G2G constructs a universal database for all member states to enhance service.

4. Government-to-Employee (G2E)

The Government-to-Employee is the internal part of G2G sector. Furthermore, G2E aims to bring employees together and improvise knowledge sharing.

Similarly, G2E provides online facilities to the employees. Likewise, applying for leave, reviewing salary payment record. And checking the balance of holiday. The G2E sector provides human resource training and development. So, G2E is also the relationship between employees, government institutions, and their management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Major e-Governance initiatives

1. **West Bengal State Data Centre:** West Bengal State Data Centre is constituted of a world class Tier II data centre (having redundant capacity components and distribution path serving business continuity) as per TIA 942 standards with a guaranteed service level of 99.749%. The data centre ensures safe, secure, constantly monitored and uninterrupted services with highly available power supply along with efficient cooling systems. The West Bengal State Data Centre has achieved both ISO 27K: 2013 and ISO 20K: 2011 Standards.
2. **West Bengal State Wide Area Network:** The Government had approved the Scheme for establishing State Wide Area Networks (SWANs) across the country, in March, 2005 at a total outlay of Rs.3,334 crore to be expended by the Department under Grant-in-Aid of Rs. 2,005 crores, over a period of five years. Under this Scheme, technical and financial assistance are being provided to the States/UTs for establishing SWANs to connect all State/UT Headquarters up to the Block level via District/ sub-Divisional Headquarters, in a vertical hierarchical structure.

It is a project with the objective of making the State's services available to the citizens through an online system. The services may be availed through internet personally, by visiting the nearest CSP (Customer Service Point) or a nearby Kiosk. There is no necessity to visit the Government office for submitting the application, knowing the status or receiving the certificate.

3. **State Portal & Service Delivery Gateway:** Silpa Sathi is Single Window Services can be accessed through an Online Single Window Portal www.silpasathi.in using IT-enabled devices which includes desktop PCs and laptops. Later, this facility will also be available on tablets and smartphones. It serves as a digital gateway for providing the necessary statutory compliances under the applicable Acts, Rules, Policies and Schemes of the Govt of West Bengal. Investors can get certificates and licences required for setting up and operating business in the State in a smooth and time-bound manner, without the need to visit any government department or office. In addition, SilpaSathi Kiosks are available at 23 Industry Facilitation Centres (IFCs) located in every district of the State. The IFCs provide handholding support to the investors seeking statutory compliance services from SilpaSathi portal. Silpa Sathi is a dedicated set up in West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation Ltd. (WBIDCL) to facilitate investors in obtaining services required for setting up and operate business in the State in smooth and time bound manner. Industry Facilitation Centre (IFC) in every district of the State provides handholding support to the investors seeking services from Silpa Sathi. Online Single Window Portal serves as a digital gateway for providing the necessary services under the applicable Acts, Rules, Policies and Schemes made thereunder from a single point in a time-bound manner.
4. **Crime & Criminal Tracking & Network System:** NCRB has created a web portal for the convenience of the citizens. It hosts four national civic services, namely 'Missing Persons Search', 'Create Vehicle NOC', 'Declared Criminal Information' and 'Locate Nearest PS'. This portal can be accessed through the URL 'digitalpolicecitizenservices.gov.in' or a link to the existing 'Digital Police Portal'.
5. **Centralized e-office:** The state government has created a number of employee related portals such as IFMS (Integrated Financial Management System), HRMS (Human Resource Management System), e-Pension and Workflow Based File Tracking System (WFTS) which has created an open and open environment for employees. The State Secretariat, Government Departments and Departments and almost all the District Magistrates' Offices in West Bengal have a centralized e-office system based on the DAR & PG's e-Office system of the Central Secretariat Manual. It provides a role-based access mechanism, electronic file processing system, central storage of documents including managed access, a single employee directory and a central management information system.
6. **e-Municipality:** The Department of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs has provided a portal for citizens to pay municipal taxes, apply for various licenses and complete the entire mutation process online. The same portal has a separate login facility for municipal employees from where they can access their IFMS and HRMS related issues.
7. **e-Panchayat:** Under the institutional strengthening of the Gram Panchayat Scheme (ISGPS), almost all the Gram Panchayats in West Bengal have been connected through internet facility and most of the work is now done through e-Governance Portal. Individual entrepreneurs are encouraged to open Information Friend Centers (CSPs) in remote villages from where ordinary villagers can apply online for various projects at nominal cost. Such CSPs are often doubled as computer training centers that provide much needed computer skills training for rural youth at a subsidized rate.
8. **e-Land & Land Records:** With the help of the National Informatics Center (NIC), West Bengal, West Bengal is probably the first state, if not the only one, to fully digitize the entire land records, land registration and land mutation process. The government started digitization of 68386 map sheets in 2008. Initially the activity was slow but with the help of the state government it was increased in the last three years.
9. **Computerization of Court Cases:** The CONFONET project was implemented in the context of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. It provides online information on consumer rights and protection, online cause list, online litigation, online litigation status and case history and statistical reports (for state commissions and forums only). The project caters to a wide range of beneficiaries, such as consumers, advocates, consumer workers, members of the bar council, consumer courts and law students.
10. **e-Procurement:** The system enables eligible bidders to download the free bidding schedule with appropriate credentials and then submit bids online through the same portal (wbtenders.gov.in). This makes transparency and participation easier and the entire tender process can be tracked online. All stakeholders are required to login using their own Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) which denies the possibility of impersonation.

CONCLUSION

The early life of e-governance initiatives has already seen a shift in understanding, from the view that increasing access to services by putting them on the web was all that was needed, to a more sophisticated notion of a transformed public realm. ICTs of course only enable this transformation; they do not create it and hence the social and political norms in any areas will determine the outcome of the 'e-governance' systems.

We are now starting to see change in governmental institutions: a greater emphasis on 'partnership working,' both with citizens, businesses and third sector organisations; decentralisation and changes in working processes; more knowledge intensive and personalised services and in some cases, greater openness and transparency of political processes. All of these trends have a long way to go and many could be stopped in their tracks, by issues of uneven access to technology or content which alienates or patronises users.

We need to develop far more sophisticated systems for capturing and measuring the impact of e-governance, so that we can judge its success in other than just crude, 'availability' terms. And we need to be able to judge the real impact on citizens, not just changes in production or distribution of public services.

Above all, e-governance needs to be seen as part of governance, not as an add-on. Decisions about technology – from use of open source to the treatment of personal data – are more and more in the political realm and this is to be welcomed. Because only when we can drop the 'e' and return to talking about governance, can e-governance be said to have succeeded.

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