



# IMPROVING THE IMAGE OF RURAL INDIA THROUGH E-GOVERNANCE OF PANCHAYATS

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**Abstract:-** The term "e-governance" or "electronic governance" refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by the governance agencies to transform private businesses and public agencies. It empowers the citizens. This results in speedier and more efficient delivery of public services. It improves internal efficiency and revenue. It enhances the process of administration. In this paper, ICT is applied to Panchayat Raj to improve the governance and the transparent interaction between the government and the villagers.

**Keywords-** e-governance, Information and Communication Technologies, government and villagers.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) like Wide Area Networks, the INTERNET and mobile computing, enable the governing agencies to deliver its services to the citizens. It helps to deliver services at convenience to organizations at grass root level like panchayats and NGOs. The goal of e-Governance is not only to digitize the records of the government but to transform the process of governance to suit the aspirations of modern e-age. ICTs can play a vital role in this regard. In the words of **Dr. APJ Sbdul Kalam**, Ex President of India, e-Governance in context of India can be stated as,

*"A transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen."*

ICT applications enhance the delivery of services to citizens by improving the process. It redefines the traditional concepts of citizenship and democracy. The impact of ICTs on societies is not homogeneous. The uneven brunt of ICT is responsible for irregular economic development in India. This aspect brings out clearly the criticality of the role of government in the age of the information.

## II. E-GOVERNANCE WITH ICT

- a) ICT facilitates in developing public service delivery and best practices in administration. It helps in redesigning the processes and service delivery at lower transaction cost with improvement in transparency and accountability. E-Governance information systems should not mean just an electronic reproduction of existing system of inter-departmental cooperation. It brings about

transformational change rather than merely a technical change.

- b) b) E-Governance models integrated with ICT enable administrative processes and establish communication on line real time basis providing status tracking and information. It provides users interface through ICT platforms, with minimal public interface time. It gets the delivery of services without delay and corruption. The ICT enabled e-governance models provide improved transparency and help bridge the performance gap.
- c) The prime objective of integrated models is to provide basic service delivery to the citizens.
- d) It is also important to integrate Government services between various departments and eliminate redundancy and duplication of meta data and processes to be used by the information users.
- e) Architectural change of organizations is also part of this transformation. The concept of networking of organizations and information systems, with public administration functioning changes the hierarchical command structures is the future administrative setup.

## III. E-GOVERNANCE FOR VILLAGER

In India Panchayati Raj keeps majority of villagers happy. Gram Panchayats play key role to look after the welfare of village folk. So when villagers get benefits of e-Governance, then India will prosper. A block diagram of connecting Panchayat with centralized network is shown in Fig. 1.

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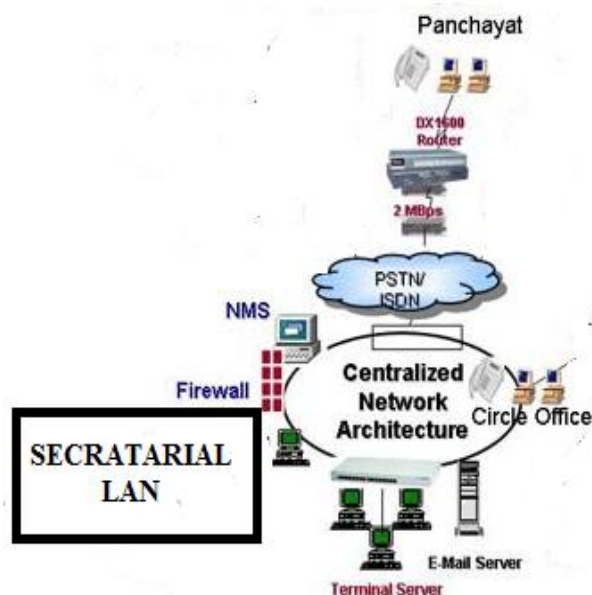


Fig. 1. Block diagram

#### IV. TYPES OF INTERACTIONS IN E-GOVERNANCE

E-Governance facilitates interaction between different stake holders in governance. Some interactions to improve the life of villagers are presented here.

#### V. E-VILLAGE

The project undertaken by Pathavada village of Gujarat is to facilitate better performance of the delivery of Panchayat services like birth and death registration, primary health and education, village cleanliness, water supply, sewage and street lights through e-governance to villagers of Pathavada. It makes use of intranet/ Internet connectivity. Villagers have the facility to pay through net/bank/ cyber café.

#### VI. HEALTH MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

This service is provided by the Government of Gujarat. HMIS is to build trust and confidence for the general hospitals in the hearts of the citizen of the state. It provides efficient and quality health services through IT application. They streamline the Operations with improved Patient care and effective Administration and Control. HMIS project was conceptualized by the department of health & family welfare to ensure the quality health care by IT application. It provides standard clinical & diagnostic tools, hospital management tools and integration of management information at the state level so as to ensure online review & monitoring. The Project is undertaken by Department of Health and Family welfare of Gujarat.

#### VII. E-DHARA

E-Dhara enhances complete Computerization of Land Records across the state. Elimination of Manual Records,

computer controlled mutation process and self sustainability are the leading objectives of e-Dhara system.

#### VIII. E-GRAM VISWAGRAM

E-Gram Vishwagram Project has been launched from Haripura, the place where Subhash Chandra Bose had given call for freedom. This Project Initiates e-Gram Project connecting 13716 Gram Panchayats and 6000 Citizen Common Service Centres as a part of the e-Gram connectivity Project. Some features of e-Gram Project are Video conferencing facilities at all villages, issuing the documents and certificates, application forms for various development and welfare schemes. Also 7/12 certificates to the farmers from panchayats. VSat communication technology based broadband connectivity, free of cost communication between panchayats, common service facilities, advantages of Internet and cyber connectivity and electricity telephone bills, visa, E-postal services and many more facilities are provided through the online e-Gram project website.

#### IX. STATE WIDE ATTENTION ON GRIEVANCES THROUGH APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY

SWAGAT-Online project is hosted on every 4th Thursday of the month in the presence of Chief Minister Narendra Modi in the Jansampark Department of his Chief Minister Office. In his presence with all the department heads and the district representatives, the grievance of the villagers are addressed through Video conferencing and solutions are provided online to the villagers immediately. All the department heads try to find the solution to the problems of villagers in the best possible way. Of the applications received, justice to 92.45% is done by the mutual united initiative since the implementation.

#### X. ICT

Gujarat Government promotes information sharing with the villagers by way of display and disclosure of information of large number of functional departments and their subordinate organizations through their respective websites which act as 'Information tools' in the State.

State Govt. has adopted Innovative, constructive and result oriented progressive policies for the promotion of e-governance in the State. Through the Nodal Agency, the Government's Science and Technology Department positions Gujarat, as a Key State in the Knowledge Economy sector and acts as a medium to make Government-Villager Interface more effective, transparent and efficient.

#### XI. GOVERNMENT TO VILLAGERS

In this case, an interface is created between the government and villagers. It enables the villager to benefit from efficient delivery of a large amount of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. It gives villagers the choice of when, where and

how to interact with the government. The primary purpose is to make government, villager friendly.

## **XII. NEWS**

Ajmer, Sep.15: A delegation, comprising senior officials of US Administration and industry, paid a visit to village Kanpura in Srinagar Panchayat Samiti of Rajasthan's Ajmer district here on Wednesday. The visiting delegation was keen to witness a demonstration of the potential of Optical Fibre to the Village Project being implemented here. The demonstration was organized in the wake of recent meeting of the Union Minister of State for Communication and IT Sachin Pilot with Anish Chopra, Chief Technology Officer to the United States President Barack Obama.

The team witnessed this system was providing rural people an access to health and education related data as well as its role in streamlining the functioning of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) processes.

As an example of how indigenous technology can bring improvement in the lives of rural people, the team was shown a live telemedicine demonstration between Kanpura village and Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) Chandigarh.

During the demonstration, patients were examined and prescribed treatment through the Video enabled tele medicine set up in which doctors and patients were able to watch and communicate with each other.

For e-School, e-Seva and Akshaya the E-Governance projects are more popular. These cut across all applications from basic PC connectivity for schools to automating processes of various Government departments. They provide services like bill collections, land registration and online information services.

For data sharing and communication end to end solutions offered cover analog, ISDN & leased lines, matching the infrastructure at village/Panchayat offices. Routers and leased line modems provide reliable high speed dedicated links between Panchayat Office and State HQ.

To maximize the use of available data networks, Voice over IP solutions result in zero telephone calls between departments.

## **XIII. BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE**

### **a. Creating a better business environment.**

Technology is a proven catalyst in increasing productivity and economic growth, especially in rural and underserved communities. The use of ICT in government and the establishment of an e-governance infrastructure help streamlining the interaction. Further ICT enables improvement in the interface between government and business, especially SMEs. By cutting out redundancies in procedures and emphasizing immediate and efficient delivery of services, e-governance creates the conditions that attract

investors/ investment. Country's industrial strengths and global competitive advantage should be incorporated in e-governance strategy and agencies, the bureaucracy and public services be aligned towards promoting these strategies. E-procurement, for example, can open new markets to local businesses by opening up the government procurement process, making it more competitive and fair.

### **b. Customers online, not in line.**

This refers to the effective delivery of public goods and services to citizens accompanied by quick government response with minimal direct intervention by a public official.

### **c. Strengthening good governance and broadening public participation.**

Proliferation of ICT in management and operations promotes transparency and accountability in government. This offers opportunities for citizens to be more actively involved in the policy- and decision-making processes of government, curbing corruption. However, e-governance by itself will not put an end to corruption. It must be accompanied by other fully effective mechanisms..

At the same time, e-governance facilitates the swift delivery of complete information. The broad dissemination of information helps empower villagers and facilitate informed decision making. The transparency of information will not only further democracy but also instill a sense of accountability among government leaders and compel effective governance.

### **d. Improving the productivity and efficiency of government agencies.**

Re engineering processes and procedures to cut red tape, facilitate delivery of services, increase productivity of the bureaucracy, and increase savings are benefits inherent in e-governance.

More specifically, e-governance can help:

- Increase government staff productivity, reduce overhead from fewer offices and less paper management, improve capacity for planning management by government (using better tools and improving access to critical information, for example, in city planning through the use of a GIS), and increase revenue as businesses and citizens actually apply for more licenses, due to the fact that the process is much easier and less corrupt.
- Induce cost savings in the medium to the long term. In the short term, however, staffing and costs tend to increase as government must offer multiple delivery platforms (both the traditional and e-government) during the initial transition.
- Streamline the operations of government. Most government processes have evolved over many years, and usually involve many steps, tasks, and activities. Streamlining government processes through ICT

eliminates redundant procedures and helps to reduce red tape.

#### **XIV. CHALLENGES OF E-GOVERNANCE**

E-governance can be implemented in phases. The implementation costs will depend on current infrastructure availability, capabilities of supplier and user, and mode of service delivery (whether through the Internet or through telephone hotlines and one-stop shops). The cost is proportional to the sophistication of the services offered by the government. Governments should focus on small, self financing or outsourced projects. To make e-governance projects financially sustainable, there must be a revenue/ cost reduction model in place from the beginning. Smaller projects with a clear revenue generation strategy and minimal initial investment are the most likely to be sustainable over the long term. For instance, Web sites are one of the easiest and cheapest ways to achieve high impact e-governance with a minimum of investment.

E-Governance projects are, more often than not, long term endeavors, requiring large capital infusion in software, hardware, infrastructure and training. A viable financing plan should not only pay for the immediate needs to jumpstart e-governance. It must also consider its long term financing options for the sustainability of the project. There are various business models for funding e-governance projects. The private sector plays a critical role in these. Under partnership arrangements, the private sector builds, finances and operates public infrastructure such as roads and airports, recovering costs through user charges. Various financing schemes exist from soft and development assistance loans from donor/multilateral aid agencies to partnerships and outsourcing deals with private third party vendors under special financing schemes (e.g., the Build-Operate-Transfer or BOT scheme) that can minimize the initial cost to government.

BOT and its variants are usually the favored financing models/arrangements for government projects that require large and immediate financing from the private sector. Under BOT, the private sector designs, finances, builds, and operates the facility over the life of the contract. At the end of this period, ownership reverts to the government. A variation of this is the Build-Transfer-Operate (BTO) model, under which title transfers to the government when construction is completed. Finally, with Build-Own-Operate (BOO) arrangements, the private sector retains permanent ownership and operates the facility on contract. Cooperation, rather than competition, with the private sector can facilitate effective e-government. Government can encourage private sector investment by complementing and supporting private sector efforts rather than duplicating them. The key to e-governance is to improve villagers access to service delivery, not further expand the role of government. Government should not attempt to create products and services where public private partnerships or private service providers can adequately

provide these products and services more efficiently and effectively.

#### **XV. CONCLUSION**

It is concluded that objectives of achieving e-governance goes far beyond mere computerization. The Information and Communication Technologies have facilitated the design of solutions to deliver government services for social development at the door step of villagers. Successful ICT projects implies a new set of responsibilities for all stakeholders involved, in the design process, such as government officials, legislators, regulatory agencies, villagers, voluntary organizations, technology consultants and vendors, academics, researchers, funding agencies, and media. It will require basic change in work culture and goal orientation, and simultaneous change in the existing processes. The most important of all is to create a culture of maintaining, processing and retrieving the information through an electronic system and use that information for decision making. Without disturbing the existing services a smooth transition to new automated services is required. It will need skilled navigation. Most of these can be accomplished using the Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model. Significant benefits can be derived from such projects.

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**Prof Wg Cdr R.K.Gera:** Born on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 1944. He received the B.Sc. Engg.(Electrical) degree from RIT Jamshedpur (Now NIT Jamshedpur) in 1968 and M Tech in 1980 from IIT Kharagpur. He is ex-veteran of IAF and has been trained in France on Mirage-2000 as system analyst. After his premature retirement from IAF he had a stint as consultant in telecommunication, DBMS, worked in chemical and export industry before penetrating in teaching profession. He took up teaching assignments in Bahir Bar university, ETHIOPIA and EIT ,Asmara in ERTREA(N-W Africa) and India since 2000. He has completed various projects in IAF and Ethiopia, published papers in International journals and presently writing a book. Presently he has taken up PhD work at JJT University, Jhunjhnu(Raj). His area of interest is the technologies for renewable energy. At present he is he is Professor ECE, St Margret Engineering College, Neemrana Rajasthan.



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