E-Governance: A special focus to Bhoomi Project

Rachita Ota, Faculty in Rural Marketing, Amity Global Business School, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India
Sushree Sangita Ray, Faculty in Information Technology, Amity Global Business School, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India
Ch Siddharth Nanda, Faculty in Marketing, Amity Global Business School, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Abstract
Today’s rapid global change has introduced lot of new developments and among these development one of the prominent development is the increased use of IT in making the government services easy accessible and transparent. E-governance has also turned out to be one of the eminent parameters of development indices of any country. Along with the developed countries, the developing countries like India are also moving forward in this area.

In this paper, we have focused on the concept of E-governance and its presence in developed and developing countries. We have provided with a brief list of the projects that Indian government has come across. In our paper, we have given a brief outline on the Bhoomi Project. Bhoomi project is an attempt made by Karnataka State Government for Computerization of Land Records. This project is sponsored jointly by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and State Government of Karnataka. Under the Bhoomi E-Governance project all 20 million land records of 6.7 million land owners in 176 taluks of Karnataka have been computerized. We have analyzed the impact of Bhoomi project on the Rural Development of India and to what extent it has fulfilled its objectives.

Keywords: Bhoomi Project, E-Governance, Information Communication Technology, Global Change, Rural development.

Introduction
“Information technology and business are becoming inextricably interwoven. I don't think anybody can talk meaningfully about one without the talking about the other.” - Bill Gates

Information and communication technologies has helped mankind to improve their work culture and providing the people better delivery of government services, improved government interactions with firms and industries, empowering the citizens through easy accessibility to information and people participation in decision-making. All in all, to have an efficient management in government system, which would make it possible to locate service centers closed to stakeholders and here the stakeholders are the citizens of the country. Hence, in order to reduce the gap between the Government and its stakeholders and create a transparent environment, e-Governance concept came into existence.

Information Communication and Technology has created a simplified delivery system of the Government services to large segments of people from different geographical locations. This has helped in making the government administration more effective and efficient by reducing the communication costs and increasing the transparency in the operational part of various government departments. It has also helped the citizens in the functioning of simple applications like online form filling, billing sourcing and payments or even in complex applications like distance education and Tele-medicine.

Before defining e-Governance, let me explain the concept of governance. The term governance may be described as the process by which society steers itself. When the interactions among the State, Private Enterprise and Civil Society are being increasingly conditioned and modified through the influence of Information and Communication Technologies, then it constitutes the phenomenon named as E-Governance. Hence, E-governance may be defined as delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means. It has radically defined the way a government provides service to citizens, businesses and other arms of the government using the following delivery models:

a) Government-to-Citizen (G2C) - Comprising of Government services that are shared by the citizens. For example – Online registration of applications, online filling of complaints, etc

b) Government-to-Business (G2B) – A platform where the government and private sector interacts and shares information. For example – Collection of taxes; Payments of all kinds of bills and penalties, etc

c) Government-to-Government (G2G) – A common place for all the government agencies, departments and organizations and a common platform for all of them where they can share different information. For example – Government document exchange, Includes most of the finance and budget work, etc
d) Government-to-Employees (G2E) – Common medium for the Government and their employees where both the parties can keep a check on each other’s functioning and working. For example – Rules and regulations that need to be circulated, employees can check their records and payments, etc.

Hence to sum it up, E-Governance is the use of IT to improve the ability of government to address the needs of society. It includes the publishing of policy and programme related information to transact with citizens. It extends beyond provision of on-line services and covers the use of IT for strategic planning and reaching development goals of the government.

The UNESCO definition is, “E-governance is the public sectors use of information and communication technologies with the aims of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective.

E-Governance comprises of four major pillars and they are Connectivity, Knowledge, Data Content and Capital. With the help all these four pillars E-Governance simplifies the processes and has reduced the gap between the citizens and the Government, improving the accessibility to the Information. The following are the benefits provided by E-Governance:

a) Improvement in the efficiency of the services and their delivery system
b) Standardization of the services
c) Improving the accessibility of the services, in order to have more transparency and accountability
d) A convenient and cost effective method of the storage and access of the stored data
e) Reduction of the duplication work
f) Online government services have reduced the use of papers and hence creating a greener environment
g) Enhanced citizen participation in the governance of the country

E-governance has benefitted in strengthening the government and creating efficient governance with an increase in its transparent and bringing the government functioning more closely to its stakeholders which includes all parties right from the citizens to the businesses and even the among the different departments of the government agencies along with its employees. This mutual free and transparent interaction between all the parties has been possible with the entry of the ICTs.

E-Governance In Developing Countries
This is a generation of Information Technology and IT has penetrated in the entire field from business to governmental administration. All over the world countries are trying to initiate different projects to create an efficient and transparent government. This dream has been able to come to reality with the growing implementation of Information technology in all the department of the government. Countries like United States, UK, Brazil and many more have come forward with variety of projects related to e-governance. Among all these projects many have turned out to be great success and were able to fulfill their major objectives. Among such examples is the story of eEurope, a political initiative of European Union with an objective bring all the stakeholders from citizen to business enterprises with the presence of their government organization. With the help of the eEurope project it was easy to have an efficient implementation of each of their action plan and hence it resulted in the creation of the so called knowledge-based economy and society which would be beneficial for each one of them.

Following the steps of the developed countries and after witnessing the success of e-governance projects like eEurope and many more projects of developed countries, the developing countries have taken their stand and started creating such projects. But it is observed that in order to achieve the same level of achievements, the developing countries has to strive more. It has been taken into consideration from the experiences of the developed countries that this can be possible only in cases where the government has the willingness to go for the process of decentralization. It is well understood that developing countries like India, can follow this procedure and efficiently serve everyone by creating more of people participation.

Dr. A.P.J Abdul Kalam, the former president of India quotes, “Delivery of service to citizens is considered a primary function of the government. In a democratic nation over one billion people like India, e-governance should enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the state and central government in the federal set up. No country has so far implemented and e-governance system for one billion people. It is a big challenge for us.”

Bhoomi Project: An initiative of e-Governance....
Though e-Governance has been a part of India since the 70s era, but it was confined to the areas of defense, economic monitoring, planning and the use of IT to manage data related functions related to elections, census, etc. With the establishment of National Informatics Center (NIC) in 1977, there was an onset of e-Governance era in India. However with the advent of internet and tele-
communication revolution which took place during the 90s, forced Indian government to search for new initiatives for inculcating IT solutions in the functioning of the Government administration. This era witnessed the creation of many e-Governance projects all over the country and one of the most popular initiatives being Bhoomi Project.

Land records form the major tool for the assignment and settlement of land titles. Land recordings are quite essential for land taxes, reforms and administration. The manual record keeping does not satisfy the real needs and it is unable to do the proper collection and analysis of data which is essential for the land markets.

Previously it was the role of the so called Village Accountants who had the responsibility of maintaining the land records. But, mostly these village accountants were not easily accessible and even if the farmers were able to come in contact, these accountants would ask them for a lump sum amount of bribes, in order to provide them information which were the right of the land owners.

In case of mutation requests i.e. cases where land record alteration was required the procedure was quite lengthy and a complex which may take around a year or two for updating.

Hence, the formation of an efficient Land Information System has turned out to be a major challenge for the Central and State Governments of India.

Karnataka was also having a manual system of maintaining land records. This required a total of 9000 village accountants each responsible for 3-4 villages. Due to the issues mentioned earlier, the Land owners were having a hard time to access the information. The village accountants used to take 3-30 days, to provide RTCs (Record of Rights, Crops and Tenancy) to the farmers. The time taken would also depend on the size of bribe given by the farmer.

Hence, Bhoomi - Computerization of Land Records came as a boon to the people of the Karnataka state which got completed by March 2002. The main goals of this project were:

a) Assisting in the efficient maintenance of land records.

b) Special concern would be taken to make sure no manipulations can be done.

c) Easy accessibility of the records by the farmers.

d) An efficient way to assemble the information in order to construct database.

e) Enable the easy access of the information by courts, banks, private organizations and companies as per their requirement.

For the easy delivery of the RTCs the Karnataka state government formed Bhoomi center across 177 taluks in order to minimize the rate of corruption in the process. Even for the Mutation procedure the farmers can very well depend on these Bhoomi centers. Once the manual verification of data and documents are done, the applicant is assigned with a number which is used to check the status of the application.

The verification automatically generates notices for the concerned parties which are delivered to them through the village accountants. On the receipt of the acknowledgment from the parties, a mutation order is passed by the Revenue Inspector within a time span of 30 days. All these documents are verified by the Deputy Tahsildar which is followed by the updation of the land records.

The challenges which the team of Bhoomi got tangled into are as follows:

a) Forging of documents

b) Lack of funds

c) Deteriorated quality of crop survey

d) Incompetent in filling the forms by the illiterate farmers.

Even after all the challenges, Bhoomi turned out to be a success because of its robust design and its focus on the basic needs of the farmers. These projects which are intended for the rural community should create a mass awareness regarding the reforms. Incase of Bhoomi even after a high degree of publicity, still there was a mass of rural folk who were still unaware of its implications.

E-governance can drastically alter the real state of the governance, especially in countries like India with a large population and supply the people of the country a platform to create a efficient government services.

References


