

## 3. E-Government in India: The need to ponder current e-government uptake

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### Abstract:

*Since the emergence of Public choice theory, New Public Management and Re-inventing government in 1990s, governments around the world are attempting to improve the system of public service delivery. The Information age and its rapid stride in the 2000s facilitated the re-invention of governments and prepare them to serve the needs of a diverse society. The information age has redefined the fundamentals and transformed the institutions and mechanisms of service delivery forever. The vision is the articulation of a desire to transform the way government function and it relates to its constituents. This concern gave rise to the concept of E-Government. It was being felt that E-government can be more productive version of government in general, if it is well implemented and managed. With rapid strides being made in the field of ICT, government all over the world are using digital technologies to re-invent their internal operations and in serving the needs of the diverse society and thereby becoming electronic governments. The idea lies in the successful remodelling of traditional form of 'citizenship' into 'e-citizenship', which redefines the relationship between government and citizens. The world is moving towards Next generation e-government where the citizen is becoming a unique customer.*

*The ICT revolution on the global level affected the developing economy of India and it was being realised that Indian Government machinery cannot isolate itself from the IT revolution and its effect on the public administration systems and the process of delivery of Information and, services. Therefore a large number of initiatives were undertaken by various Governmental levels to usher in this era of e-Government. Sustained efforts have been made at multiple levels to improve the delivery of public*

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*services and simplify the process of accessing them. The significance of E-government is being widely recognized as technological advancements facilitate the administrative systems by enabling Administrative Development and Effective service delivery.*

*This paper tends to highlight the initiatives taken by the Governments in India at various levels to modernise their processes and functions for delivery of information and services to the citizens, using the Information and Communication technology [ICT]. It also highlights E-Government uptake in different parts of the world, highlighting its need in India, as in developing countries like India, there is no comprehensive data on actual e-government uptake on a global scale.*

### **Keywords:**

*E-Government, Government, Citizen-centric, OECD, ICT, E-Government uptake.*

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# E-Government in India:

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### Introduction:

E-Government is the modernisation of processes and functions of the government using the tools of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) so as to transform the way it serves its constituents. In other words it is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to the process of government functionalities for *Good Governance*. It is an initiative to achieve better government through electronised and sophisticated transformation of the traditional government operations and functions to an efficient, effective, transparent and accountable government. It is also an initiative to positively alter the relationship of the government with the public through public participation and engagement and better information and service delivery.

E-government consists of the digital interactions between a citizen and their government (C2G), between governments and government agencies (G2G), between government and citizens (G2C), between government and employees (G2E), and between government and businesses/commerce (G2B). This digital interaction consists of e-citizen at all levels of government (city, state/province, national, and international), governance, information and communication technology (ICT), and business process reengineering (BPR). (Jeong (2007) Fundamental of Development Administration. Selangor: Scholar Press. ISBN 978-967-5-04508-0)

### Difference between E-Government and E-Governance:

E-government is the modernisation of process and functions of the government using the ICT in the delivery of information and services. E-governance on the other hand goes beyond the service delivery aspects and is seen as a decisional process. It is about the use of ICTs in the systems of governance that is using ICT to involve multi stake holders in decision making and in making government open and accountable. This study focuses on service delivery aspects of the government, i.e. *E-Government*.

### Emergence and Impact:

Since the emergence of Public choice theory, New Public Management and Re-inventing government in 1990s, governments around the world are attempting to improve the system of public service

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delivery. The Information age and its rapid stride in the 2000s facilitated the re-invention of governments and prepare them to serve the needs of a diverse society. The information age has redefined the fundamentals and transformed the institutions and mechanisms of service delivery forever. The vision is the articulation of a desire to transform the way government function and it relates to its constituents. This concern gave rise to the concept of E-Government. It was being felt that E-government can be more productive version of government in general, if it is well implemented and managed. With rapid strides being made in the field of ICT, government all over the world are using digital technologies to re-invent their internal operations and in serving the needs of the diverse society and thereby becoming electronic governments. The ICT revolution on the global level affected the developing economy of India and It was being realised that Indian Government machinery cannot isolate itself from the IT revolution and its effect on the public administration systems and the process of delivery of Information and, services. Therefore a large number of initiatives were undertaken by various State Governments and Central Ministries to usher in an era of e- Government. Sustained efforts have been made at multiple levels to improve the delivery of public services and simplify the process of accessing them. The significance of E-government was being widely recognized as technological advancements facilitate the administrative systems by enabling Administrative Development and Effective service delivery.

The following provisions laid down the legal and policy framework for ICT and EGovernment in India:

1. Information Technology Act 2000
2. Report of the working group on convergence and E-Governance 2002-07
3. Common Minimum program of the UPA Govt.
4. National E-Governance plan.
5. Expert committee for the amendments in the IT Act 2000
6. Right to Information Act 2005

In India, the main thrust for e-Government was provided by the launching of NICNET in 1987 – the national satellite-based computer network. This was followed by the launch of the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) programme to computerise all district offices in the country for which free hardware and software was offered to the State Governments. NICNET was extended via the State capitals to all district headquarters by 1990. In the ensuing years, with on-going computerization, tele-connectivity and internet connectivity established large number of e-Government initiatives, both at the Union and State levels.

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The formulation of National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR&PG) in 2006 has boosted the e-Governance process.

The Central initiatives include:

- National e-Governance Plan (NeGP): The NeGP aims at improving delivery of Government services to citizens and businesses with the following vision: "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man."
- National e-Governance Division (NeGD)
- e-Governance Infrastructure
- Mission Mode Projects
- Citizens Services
- Business Services
- Government Services
- Projects and Initiatives
- R&D in e-Governance
- Model RFPs for e-Governance Project

Several State Governments have also taken various innovative steps to promote e- Governance and have drawn up a roadmap for IT implementation and delivery of services to the citizens online. The applications that have been implemented are targeted towards providing Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Government (G2G) services with emphasis on use of local language.

Every State has the flexibility of identifying up to five additional State-specific Mission Mode Projects (relevant for economic development within the State). In cases where Central Assistance is required, such inclusions are considered on the advice of the concerned Line Ministries/ Departments. States have MMPs on Agriculture, Commercial Taxes, e-District, Employment Exchange, Land Records, Municipalities, Gram Panchayat, Police, Road Transport, Treasuries, etc.

Apart from MMPs the States have other e-Governance initiatives.

Integrated MMPs:

- National e-Governance Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG)
- India Portal

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- Electronic Data interchange (EDI) for e-Trade
- E-procurement: The vision of the e-Procurement MMP is "To create a national initiative to implement procurement reforms, through the use of electronic Government procurement, so as to make public procurement in all sectors more transparent and efficient".
- e-Courts
- E-Biz: The e-Biz Mission Mode Project, being executed by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India was conceptualized with the vision.
- Common Services Centres: The CSC is a strategic cornerstone of the National e- Governance Plan (NeGP), approved by the Government in May 2006, as part of its commitment in the National Common Minimum Programme to introduce e-governance on a massive scale. The CSCs would provide high quality and cost effective video, voice and data content and services, in the areas of e-governance, education, health, telemedicine, entertainment as well as other private services. A highlight of the CSCs is that it will offer web-enabled e-governance services in rural areas, including application forms, certificates, and utility payments such as electricity, telephone and water bills. In addition to the universe of G2C services, the CSC Guidelines envisage a wide variety of content and services that could be offered as listed below:
  - Agriculture Services (Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Veterinary)
  - Education & Training Services (School, College, Vocational Education, Employment, etc.)
  - Health Services (Telemedicine, Health Check-ups, Medicines)
  - Rural Banking & Insurance Services (Micro-credit, Loans, Insurance)
  - Entertainment Services (Movies, Television)
  - Utility Services (Bill Payments, Online bookings)
  - Commercial Services (DTP, Printing, Internet Browsing, Village level BPO).

The Scheme creates a conducive environment for the private sector and NGOs to play an active role in implementation of the CSC Scheme, thereby becoming a partner of the government in development of rural India. The PPP model of the CSC scheme envisages a 3-tier structure consisting of the CSC operator (called Village Level Entrepreneur or VLE); the Service Centre Agency (SCA), that will be responsible for a division of 500-1000 CSCs; and a State Designated Agency (SDA) identified by the State Government responsible for managing the implementation in the entire State.

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## E-Government uptake:

While E-Government refers to the delivery of information and services to citizens through information and communication technologies (ICTs), the action of taking up or making use of available e-Government services. E-Government uptake by the citizens is “the percentage of individuals (aged 16–74) who have used the Internet to interact with public authorities.

## E-Government uptake: Significance

E-Government uptake is important, because the tangible benefits of e-Government services can be realized only through actual and effective e-Government uptake by the citizens. There is therefore a compelling need to achieve maximum impact of the investments on e-Government by improving uptake to the greatest extent possible. E-Government uptake is a major concern, As Government has planned to move service functions online, a significant portion of the population lose access to job openings, health care, education, and other Government services provided through the internet.

The underprivileged that are deeply reliant on public services but lack access and/or skills become even more excluded due to their inability to access such services.

## E-Government uptake in different parts of the world:

### OECD countries:



*The Nordic countries (Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland) have the highest e-government uptake with over 80% of the citizenry availing of e-government services.*

*At the opposite side of the spectrum, less than 20% of the citizens in Chile and Italy make use of e-government services.*

**Source: OCED (2013), Governance at a Glance 2013, Preliminary version.**

### European Union countries:

Just like the OECD countries, European Union (EU) countries are facing a great “E-government uptake divide.” The uptake of more advanced e-government services remains relatively low.

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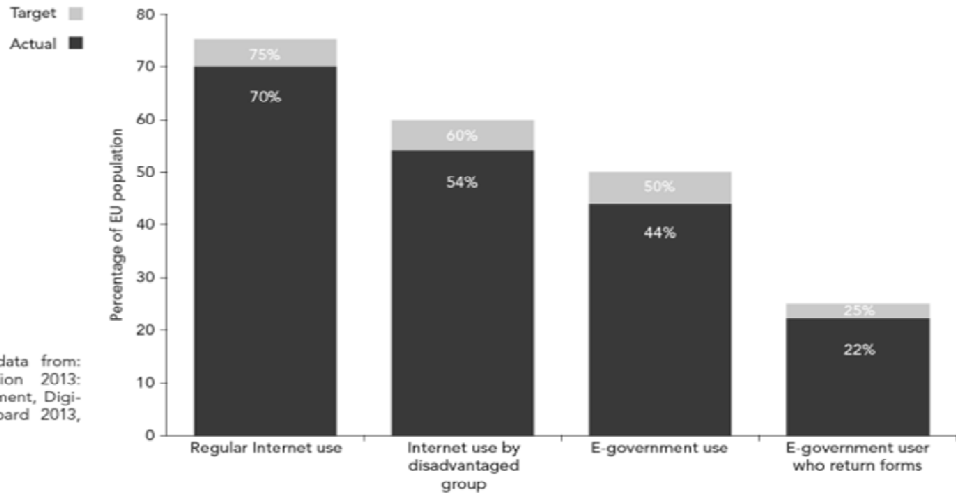
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Source: Based on data from: European Commission 2013: Staff Working Document, Digital Agenda Scoreboard 2013, Brussels

2012 European Union Digital Agenda targets and actual internet and e-government uptake (as a percentage of the total population of the EU)

As figure shows, in 2012:

- 52% of residents in EU obtained information from websites of public authorities.
- 35% of these users availed of more advanced services such as downloading official forms, and
- 29% submitted filled forms.

### In developing countries:

- In developing countries including India, there is no comprehensive data on actual e-government uptake on a global scale. Available country data show that rates of e-government uptake greatly vary.
- In Columbia, 50% of the citizens interacted with the government through electronic channels in 2012.
- In Egypt, only 11.3% of Egyptian households are aware of the existence of e-government services and only 2% of these households actually availed of these services.
- In Turkey, 41.3% of Internet users interacted with public authorities online, only 37.5% of them obtained information.

**Source:** OCED (2013), OCED Public Governance Reviews Columbia: Implementing Good Governance 2013, Paris. Turkish statistical institute (2013), News Release: ICT usage survey on households and Individuals 22 August 2013, OCED (2012) E-Govt. Studies: Egypt, 2012 Paris.

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**Image: The Millennium Development Goals are a UN initiative.**

## **Need to ponder E-Government Uptake:**

In India, the traditional form of Government is rapidly transforming into modern E-Government. The entire process of transformation, re-engineering, experiments and initiatives taken by the government in this direction, has made the government more citizen centric. The government in India has kept the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in its top priorities. The main objective of e-government uptakes is to provide real assistance of public services and its ICT delivery towards citizens. E-government uptakes can be shown as emerging challenges with two sides and its importance: supply side and demand side uptakes. The demand side of the equation presents scope of improvements while establishing e-services on the supply side. Supply side uptakes show investment on e-government with better Implementation of how public service delivery and its content reach to the citizens. E-government uptakes on supply side mainly focus on the areas or application which can generate high returns for sustainable development. Strategic Development leads to succeed in the e-government by not only considering the high end usage of e-services but it should gain actual benefit from that usage for citizens. Instead of focusing only supply side uptakes government needs to invest more in strengthening capacity building as a demand side uptakes for interactive Government to citizen as well as Citizen to Government e-service delivery and its extend usage to achieve social, environmental and economic sustainability. Current situation needs to focus on the e-government uptakes by the citizens making the use of e-services and improving it to the greatest possible extend.

In process of e-government development the E-Government uptake shows emerging challenges of e-government usage, global efforts, policy suggestions to increase e-service uptakes towards citizen centric services which generate high returns on investment of e-government for sustainable development.

### **Conclusion:**

India being one of the world's largest democracies needs to have a bidirectional communication between government and citizens at all the levels of Governance. With the vision of the Government that believes "*Success of democracy is impossible without participation of the people*" an earlier framework of National E-Governance Plan has been innovated to increase the outreach of the existing system to expand the usage. The Vision of this plan states that: "*Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure*

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**Image: MyGov logo**

*efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man."*

With this specific vision government has launched "MyGov: A Platform for Citizen Engagement towards Good Governance (i.e. Surajya)" on July 26, 2014. This web portal enables the citizens to "Discuss" as well as "Do" through multiple channels. To expand the usage Government had initiated a competition through the portal to create an App for Android, iOS and other mobile platforms which would increase the participation of citizens as 117 million of the Indians were using smart phones in 2013 according to the latest 'Internet trends 2014' report by Mary Meeker, partner at the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers (KPCB). This is expected to rise by 45% this year. With this increasing trend we can expect an increasing participation of citizens and mostly the current generation diving in governance through the Mobile App. After indexing the term E-government as Effective, Efficient and Engaging role of government makes use of the maximum attainment of the Information and Communication Technology assets into public service governance and its delivery towards citizens, next focus on usage perspective and the future aspects.

Therefore there is a need to ponder the Current e-government uptake situation in India, to find out various lope holes in the Policy strategies and actions taken by the Government. It would be very essential to increase the e-government uptake and, we also need to establish mechanism for evaluation and monitoring. The ponder of E-Government uptake situation is needed, as in rapidly transforming government services and delivery mechanism lack of access and inability of disadvantaged groups to avail of e-Government services diminish social inclusion hence, weakens the effects of social and economic development programmes Disadvantaged groups are often more in need of Governments services but are more likely to miss out on what e-Government has to offer. There is a need to ponder Policy strategies and actions taken by the government to increase uptake. A policy strategy is needed to ensure that underprivileged citizens can take advantage of e-Government services. To achieve the objectives of E-Government programmes needed is the Increased Government capacity to monitor and analyse usage trends will allow for service digitization and integration of relevant data into policies.

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