

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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Abstract: The, globalization, liberalization and new policy regimes have brought stronger competition in economic field laying more emphasis on governments to create proper and conducting economic, political and social conditions within which the private sector can compete more effectively. During 1980s and 1990s, state was considered to continue as an important political institution, though, the role of government was likely to be reduced to cope up with the unleashed challenges and opportunities of the modern forces of change. Hence the realization that the governments could no longer carry on their functions, as the globalization and technological advances, time and again, are sure to continue changing the rules of the game. The role of governments as central planner and the controller of the national economy, as the primary provider of goods and services, and as the engine of economic growth, have largely been discredited for functioning effectively in the countries seeking to promote national competitiveness.

In view of the widespread global changes, many developed and developing countries adopted new approaches in public administration and governance in 1980s and 1990s. The principles and characteristics of New Public Management movement included catalytic change, community empowerment, competitiveness, mission driven, results orientation, customer driven, enterprising, decentralization and market oriented. These characteristics become the principles for government reinventions for many federal agencies and state as well as local governments. Though, governments have crucial role in achieving sustainable human development and reducing poverty, they cannot achieve these goals alone. Effective governance implies cooperation and partnership with private sector and civil society organizations through democratic, transparent and, participatory forces. United Nations has taken a leading role in reconceptualising governance and, for the first time, emphasized on good governance in 1997. The characteristics of good governance included participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision. United Nations Development Programme has noted that in order to alleviate poverty in developing countries, governments and the private sector must take actions to prepare the poor to participate effectively in the economy. This requires providing social services and increasing the access to the poor to basic education and health services; enacting agrarian reform policy that give the rural poor a more equitable distribution of land and agricultural resources; and opening access to credit for the poor by changing criteria of credit worthiness and decentralizing credit institutions To percolate the benefits of globalization and economic liberalization to the poor, innovative governments place poverty reduction at the core of the development process.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of administrative efficiency has been in the central stage with the shifting of paradigms of development and governance at the global level and particularly in India.

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There has been increasing demand of transparency and accountability in administration in the context of globalization, economic liberalization and new policy regime. The improved technologies of information, communication and office management have also widened the scope of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in governance in India. The efforts for bringing in transparency, accountability and openness in administration include introducing mainly Right to Information, e-Governance, Citizen Charters, Service Level Benchmarking, Report Cards, Public Disclosure Law, and Community Participation Law etc. The administrative reforms, legislatures, constitutional and legal provisions have ever lasting impact on the functioning of the organizations and delivery of public goods and services.

With increasing urbanization and growth of cities, there is need and urgency for better governance. Urban governance is no more limited to provision of infrastructure and operation of civic services. Conventional methods of governance with top-down approaches are considered inadequate, inappropriate and restrictive. Good urban governance is characterized by sustainability, equity and efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement, security development of partnerships, etc. Liveability, competitiveness and bankability are the other features of a modern city. There is a need for prudent and efficient financial and asset management to increase their capacity to facilitate market borrowing for investment in city development. Keeping these emerging challenges of 21st century, the Government of India launched Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission with three interrelated and complimentary components – governance, infrastructure development and provision of basic services to poor. Later on, Government of India introduced Smart City Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, AMRUT, and Prime Minister Housing for All in order to strengthening the local government to deliver civic services efficiently as per service level bench marks and creating urban infrastructure.

The idea that quality of governance contributes to improved human well being and sustainable development has gained widespread recognition in the past decade and a half. The concept of governance received greater attention as multilateral agencies such as the UNDP and the World Bank discovered that successful development required reforms in political and administrative regimes. The term governance is being used in variety of ways. As per view of Stoker (1998), five dimensions are important in the context of governance. These dimensions are focusing on (a) governance as a complex set of institutions and actors which are drawn from the government; (b) governance recognizes the boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues; (c) governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationship between institutions for collective action; (d) governance is about autonomous self governing networks of actors; (e) governance recognizes the capacity to get things done through using of new tools and techniques. Thus, governance is concerned with network of relationships of three actors such as state, market and society. Indian policy makers are seeing corruption as the most endemic and entrenched manifestation of poor governance in India. Therefore, Planning Commission in its National Human Development Report (2002) has emphasized on devolution of powers, functions and

resources to manage local affairs and decentralization of decision making; civil service reforms for improving transparency, accountability, efficiency and sensitivity in public administration at all levels; enforcing incentive structures that reflect social values and norms; procedural reforms encompassing all aspects of governments' interface with public; and empowerment of women, marginalized and weaker sections of society.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

'Governance' by itself is a neutral term while 'Good Governance' implies positive attributes and values associated with the quality of governance. Most measurement frameworks tend to measure how good the quality of governance is without actually deconstructing governance into its various elements. Hence, most frameworks apply generic principles in assessing quality of governance while the content of governance remains largely unexamined. The fundamental limitation of such an approach is that it does not lead to actionable diagnostics that can be identified and related to specific country institutions.

Principles of Governance

The quality of governance has been the focus of governments and multi lateral / donor agencies across the world. This has led to many of them defining qualitative standards of governance in the form of characteristics or principles that 'governance' ought to reflect for it to be good or ideal. Some of the basic governance principles or attributes include the following:

- Accountability - both horizontal and vertical
- Transparency
- Equity
- Performance (effectiveness and efficiency)
- Participation / voice
- Rule of Law
- Strategic vision
- Lack of arbitrariness
- Ethics and integrity
- Predictability

Accountability

In ethics and governance, accountability is answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and the expectation of account-giving. As an aspect of governance, it has been central to discussions related to problems in the public sector, non-profit and private worlds. In leadership roles, accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of

responsibility for actions, products, decisions, and policies including the administration, governance, and implementation within the scope of the role or employment position and encompassing the obligation to report, explain and be answerable for resulting consequences. In governance, accountability has expanded beyond the basic definition of “being called to account for one’s actions”.

Transparency: It is used in science, engineering, business, humanities and in a social context more generally which implies openness, communication, and accountability. Transparency is operating in such a way that it is easy for others to see what actions are performed.

Equity: In governance context, it is used in creating opportunities for all citizens for their development, welfare and empowerment. Thus, inclusive policies, programmes and schemes ensure equity in administration. It also focuses on absence of discrimination in creating opportunities and giving justice.

Performance: It is used in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in the system for delivery of services and functioning of institutions. Standards, indicators, and parameters are fixed for measuring the performance and functioning of institutions.

Participation: In social science it refers to different mechanisms for the public to express opinions regarding political, economic, management or other social decisions. Participatory decision making can take place along any realm of human social activity, including economic, political, management, cultural or familial . For well-informed participation to occur, it is argued that some version of transparency is necessary. Participation in governance refers participation of public in planning and implementation of development programmes , and decision making process.

Rule of Law: The rule of law refers to the institutional process of setting, interpreting and implementing laws and other regulations. It means that decisions taken by government must be founded in law and those private firms and individuals are protected from arbitrary decisions. The rule of law generally refers to the influence and authority of law within society, especially as a constraint upon behavior, including behavior of government officials. The functioning of government is based on rules of law. The Constitution is the supreme law of the nation while legislations and other legal provisions govern the institutions. The judiciary is powerful for interpretation of law.

Strategic Vision: It has worldwide experience developing tools to measure decision-making, human behavior, attitudes and perceptions. Its globally relevant, comprehensive theory of human behavior creates the most effective strategies addressing decision-making in product development and communications in the widest variety of fields, including automotive, customer service, government and politics, medicine and healthcare, organizational and jury, travel and leisure, food and beverages, and education.

Lack of Arbitrariness: It is a term given to choices and actions subject to individual will, judgment or preference, based solely upon an individual’s opinion or discretion.

Arbitrary decisions are not necessarily the same as random decisions. It also refers to absence of arbitrary decisions and actions in governance system.

Ethics and Integrity: Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct. Integrity is a concept of consistency of actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes. In ethics, integrity is regarded as the honesty and truthfulness or accuracy of one's actions. Integrity can be regarded as the opposite of hypocrisy, in that integrity regards internal consistency as a virtue, and suggests that parties holding apparently conflicting values should account for the discrepancy or alter their beliefs.

Predictability: Reliability requires governance that is free from corruption, nepotism, patronage or capture by narrow private interest groups; guarantees property and personal rights; and achieves some sort of social stability. This provides a degree of reliability and predictability that is essential for firms and individuals to take good decisions. Reliability and predictability do not mean that the more specific the regulations are the better. Excessive specification can lead to rigidities and risk of selective application of regulations. Interpretation and effective implementation of individual regulations requires a degree of discretion. This discretion can be counterbalanced by administrative procedure legislation and external reviews of decisions. Reliability and predictability require certain degree of political stability. Governments need to be able to make credible commitments and persuade the private sector that decisions will not ultimately be reversed due to political uncertainty. While this is not necessarily related to a particular political system in the short term, over the longer term democracy enhances stability by giving a voice to citizens to express their preferences through an open competition.

Social Accountability

In reaction to a perceived lack of trust in government, there is an urge in many Western democracies for more direct and explicit accountability relations between public agencies on the one hand and clients, citizens and civil society on the other (McCandless, 2001). Influenced by the debate on corporate social responsibility and corporate governance in business, more attention has been paid to the role of NGOs, interest groups and customers or clients as relevant 'stakeholders' not only in determining policy, but also in rendering account (European Commission, 2001; Algemene Rekenkamer, 2004). Agencies or individual public managers should feel obliged to account for their performance to the public at large or, at least, to civil interest groups, charities, and associations of clients. A first step in this direction has been the institution of public reporting and establishment of public panels. The rise of the internet has given a new dimension to this form of public accountability. Increasingly, the results of inspections, assessments and benchmarks are put on the internet. For example, in The Netherlands, as in the UK (Pollitt, 2003), the National Board of School Inspectors, makes its inspection reports on individual schools widely available on the internet.

Parents, journalists, and local councils easily can compare the results of a particular school with similar schools in the region, because quantitative and comparative benchmarks are provided for, but they also have access to the quite extensive qualitative reports. Even though there is little evidence, so far, that many parents exercise exit or voice on the basis of these qualitative reports, local principals increasingly do feel obliged to publicly account for themselves (Meijer, 2004). It remains an empirical question to what extent these groups and panels fulfil the accountability mechanisms, because, the possibility of right judgment and sanction often are lacking. Also, not all these accountability relations involve clearly demarcated, coherent and authoritative forums that the actor reports to and could debate with.

The citizens, particularly the poor and disadvantaged among them, depend on the government for a host of services viz. primary healthcare, education, water and sanitation, basic infrastructure, etc. The administrative dimension is a critical aspect of governance because it determines the ability of government to deliver basic services to citizens by efficiently managing the human and financial resources. The administrative dimension also includes performance of the State on vigilance and anti corruption matters as well as responsiveness and transparency in administration. This dimension has been broken down into four components:

- **Citizen Interface and Engagement:** This component indicates the citizen centricity of government agencies in their day to day functioning viz. accessibility, responsiveness, quality of grievance redressal /complaint handling, compliance with RTI Act provisions, etc.
- **Managing Human, Financial and Other Resources:** This aspect looks at how human resources in government are managed with particular focus on the profile of the staffing, recruitment process, transparency in transfers and postings, training and skill building, motivation levels among employees, performance appraisal, etc. A key aspect of governance is effective financial management. This aspect examines the quality of financial management in terms of expenditure patterns, liabilities, outstanding loans and compliance to basic financial accountability systems like audit etc. It also assesses use of IT in governance.
- **Basic Service Delivery:** The cutting edge of administrative governance is the timely delivery and the quality of basic services such as primary healthcare services, primary schooling, drinking water, sanitation facilities, public distribution system, electricity, roads and transportation. For the majority of population, this reflects governance – good or otherwise.
- **Corruption Perception, Vigilance and Enforcement:** Lastly, this dimension also examines corruption (in terms of citizen perception) and vigilance mechanisms and the willingness of the State to punish the defaulters, particularly those at the higher echelons of administration.

Good governance is being recognized as an important goal by many countries across the world. Many nations have taken up specific initiatives for open government. Freedom

of information is being redefined and supported by detailed guidelines. Along with this, there is a conscious effort to put the citizen as the centre of focus of the governance. Citizens are being perceived as customers and clients. Delivery of services to citizens is considered as a primary function of the government. The Internet revolution has proved to be a powerful tool for good governance initiatives and the world is moving towards Internet governance. An important dimension of the Internet potential is the possibility of providing services any time anywhere. Particularly in a democratic nation of a 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 setup. E-governance has to be citizen friendly. Smart card is the core of e-governance.

Transparency and accountability initiatives are based on a set of assumptions and aspirations of improving the quality of governance and supporting democratic outcomes, improving the effectiveness of development initiatives, and leading to stronger roles for citizens in government processes (Mc Gee & Gaventa, 2010). These initiatives are based on goals of expected impact such as increased state or institutional responsiveness, lowered levels of corruption, the development of new democratic spaces for citizen engagement, increased participation or role for local voices, and improved utilization of budget and delivery of services (Mc Gee & Gaventa, 2010). Other claims are based on the premise that transparency will lead to accountability. With increased transparency in the decision making process of the state, greater accountability can result for citizens.

Citizen Report Cards and Community Score Cards

Citizen report cards (CRCs) are based on the premise that measuring quality and responsiveness of service providers in governance will spur these providers to improve (Deichmann & Lall, 2007). This is usually influenced by the “glare effect” of putting the services under the “public scanner” and shaming poor performers (Paul, 2006). Frequent executions of the report card also monitor performance improvement over the years. The underlying premise is therefore a shift from seeing citizens as beneficiaries to citizens as clients who provide customer feedback (J. M. Ackerman, 2005; Paul, 2006). The most well known case of citizen report cards is that implemented in Bangalore by the NGO Public Affairs Centre (Paul, 1998, 2006; Ravindra, 2004). Although citizen report cards were implemented in other countries including the Philippines and the Ukraine as well as other Indian cities such as New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai (Ravindra, 2004), there needs to be a more concerted effort on understanding the impact of these initiatives. Making services transparent through Citizen Report Cards can clearly have a wide impact. Paul (2006) states that one outcome was the incentive of inter agency competition, and employee pride in comparing with other agencies.

Public Hearings and Social Audits

Social audits are initiatives in which organizations audit public program through various mechanisms including public hearings. The case of MKSS in Rajasthan, India and RKS or Action Committee for rationing movement in Mumbai illustrate that “when

reformist bureaucrats are faced with an active pro accountability movement in civil society, it is possible to make important inroads into the area of social auditing" (Ackerman, 2004). Both of these organizations faced accountability problems in service delivery to the poor. The MKSS was a pioneer in holding public officials accountable for local level implementation of programs through the use of public hearings. These hearings are based on collecting information about the budget and expenditures, and verifying these in a public gathering with all the relevant stakeholders present (Joshi, 2010). There is strong evidence of impact on public services in these cases – mainly revealing discrepancies between official accounts and reality of practice. These initiatives empowered people to demand accountability and claim rights. The evidence is more mixed, however, on the impacts on quality of service itself.

Public Expenditure Monitoring

Public expenditure monitoring activities have a variety of forms and methodologies. Among them Carlitz (2013) notes that the most prominent example is the social audit scheme developed by the Indian social movement Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) founded in 1990 in Rajasthan, India's largest state. MKSS originally campaigned for the payment of the minimum wage in public work and later expanded its mission to 'Right to Information' campaign. After successful this campaign, the MKSS launched a participatory process for monitoring government programs in their communities by adopting social audit, public hearings and expenditure monitoring (<http://www.mkssindia.org>).

Participatory Budgeting

Although more and more governments are making budgets transparent, there is a growing acknowledgement of the necessities of public engagement in budgeting. Budget transparency and accountability strategies include the now well known participatory budget approach as well as gender budgeting, public expenditure monitoring, participatory auditing, the use of the Open Budget Index, and other forms of budget advocacy (McGee & Gaventa, 2010). Among them, we will examine participatory budgeting and gender budgeting. With each initiative, we will look at the definition, its impact and factors of success and limitations. In the last two decades, it has been a growing belief that broader participation in budget setting is essential for effective, democratic and relevant local governance. Governments started to support information sharing between citizens and local governments. This helped strengthen the ties between communities that have an interest in discussing local budgets, authorities and statutory agencies such as the health services and police. Participatory budgeting can be instrumental in increasing the transparency of public expenditure and in improving budget targeting (Sinker and Cosi, 2007). Participatory budgeting is different from a regular budget planning process in that it establishes a reciprocal process in which the diverse actors give feedback to directly impact policy change and distribution of public resources. It is beyond a simple consultation of fiscal policies or lobbying, but a direct participation in a decision making process in democratic way.

Broadly speaking the impacts of Participatory Budgeting on transparency and accountability are:

1. Enhanced participatory democracy
2. Improved quality as well as the quantity of budget information to citizens by making them more accessible and developing citizen's capacity to analyze and influence government budgets,
3. Reduced possibilities for corruptive behavior and political use of government budget through providing alternative channels for civil society
4. Better decisions tailored to citizen's need
5. Increased budget and administrative transparency
6. Enhanced the citizens' trust in government's activity

Urban administration of the 21st Century has endured by conceding and adapting to the changing times and has risen to the challenges of the times. The State has not been static but has metamorphosed from a Political State to the Administrative State and further to the Bureaucratic State which is today on the threshold of becoming a Cybernetic State. In this State, "government functions as a servo-mechanism, conjoining the polity and economy to achieve public objectives", and distinction between public and private disappears. Even the decision making is likely to be more efficient and rational due to easy accessibility of information through computers. Besides; new concept of man i.e. the highly educated (urban class), complex, violent, over ambitious replaces the simple, innocent, submissive and contended man. Now it is not easy that public can accept maladministration which is corrupt, unaccountable, unresponsive, insensitive, time consuming, inefficient, etc. For faith and belief in administration some tools of trust are essential for the present times. Some such tools are as following:

Redressal of Public Grievance

Redressal of public grievances also plays a significant role in modern administration. The objective of redressal machinery has been not only to provide speedy and effective redresses of grievances, but also to smoothen the relationship between public and government. For public trust, government even tries to utilize the media for transmission of information on various innovative measures taken by it and for creating awareness among the people about their rights and privileges and the services, including grievance redress arrangements available to them. The machinery includes police, anti-corruption departments, CID, CBI, *Lokpal* (not yet appointed in India), *Lokayukta* (States), Central Vigilance Commission etc. To supplement the governmental effort in the sphere of public grievances, voluntary agencies are being involved like the Standing Committees of Voluntary Agencies (SCOVA) in the Ministry of Health, Department of Women and Child Development, Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Department of Electronics, Department of Pensions and Pensioner's Welfare etc. Besides, with a view to bringing face to face, the aggrieved with the department

concerned for on the spot redress of public grievances, the concept of *Shikayat Adalat* (Grievances Court) has been introduced as an innovative scheme. The scheme has been tried out in the Department of Tele-Communications, Delhi Development Authority, etc. and has evoked good response.

Client-Oriented Administration

In developing countries like India development administration is positively oriented towards meeting the needs of the specific target groups, like small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers and rural artisans. Many target groups centered or beneficiary-group oriented organizations have to be created so as to provide these under-privileged sections the requisite goods and services. It has been suggested that today development administration is 'people-oriented' administration which give priority to the needs of its beneficiaries by preparing, reviewing, and if necessary, changing the policies, programmes and activities aimed at the satisfaction of the needs of people in question. The welfare of the weaker sections (SC & ST women, minorities, children, elderly, disabled and other disadvantaged) is a part of the Constitutional and administrative values that exhibits the 'humane' character of administration.

Participation-Oriented Administration

Administration accepts for its purposes the principle of associative and participative system. Here, people are not treated as mere passive recipients of benefits or goods and services rather they are taken as active participants in the formulation and implementation of development plans, policies and programmes. It is recognized that centralized administration will not only be unable to take cognizance of local problems in a realistic frame, but it would also be deprived of the use of local initiatives, energies and resources. Their implementation, with the help and association of local people is now a well-recognized principle of administration that gives people an increasing share in the governance and management of developmental affairs.

Efficient Administration

The activities of administration are directed towards two ends - provision of certain services for the benefit of the people such as transport, education, health, welfare, etc. and regulation of the individual's conduct in the interest of the public good. The former activity is beneficial and does not present, except in rare cases, any serious problems of enforcement, but latter i.e. regulatory activity is often onerous and restrictive in relation to the individual and often produces clashes between him and the administrative authorities. Therefore administration has to be efficient and effective to earn people's trust. There is, however, considerable frustration and dissatisfaction amongst the public, especially the weaker sections of society, about the apathy, inefficiency, irresponsiveness, corruption, and lack of accountability of public servants.

Code of Ethics for Public Services

People trust administration if it is responsive and clean. This depends, inter-alia, on adherence of the employees in public services to ethical standards and the basic principles of the Constitution, such as secularism, social and economic justice, attention to the needs of weaker sections and vulnerable groups, equality and rule of law. It is the obligation of every employee in the public service to uphold the Rule of Law and respect for recommendations and exercise administrative authority. Administrators must maintain the highest standards of probity and integrity. The efforts could be centered on immediate and exemplary prosecution and removal of corrupt officials without any political protection, while supporting honest and competent employees. Even in states the *LokAyuktas* could be adequately empowered and resourced to deal effectively with all cases/ allegation of corruption.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION LAW

Since independence, may be the most remarkable and quoted amendments to the world's largest written Constitution – Constitution of India – are the 73rd and 74th amendments for enabling local bodies as institutions of self-government. The amendments provided legitimacy to the third and fourth tier of legislative institutions widely known as - Panchayat and Nagarpalika Raj - for rural and urban areas respectively – to be participatory and to decide on local issues with active participation of citizens. However, even after a decade, the implementation of the amendments in its true essence is not championed in many states. Community Participation is one of the *JnNURM* reforms to involve citizens in municipal governance, e.g. setting priorities, budgeting provisions, etc. to ensure that the 74th Amendment is fruitfully implemented in the country. The Community Participation Law under *JnNURM* suggests creation of a 3rd tier of decision-making in municipality functions below the ward-level called the area sabha. The area sabhas will be linked to the ward committees through the areas sabha representatives. This is to ensure that the citizens in the urban areas will get an effective platform to convene, deliberate, decide and monitor the development issues in their locality.

Area sabha is the platform for citizen participation below the level of the ward creating a political space for the citizen to participate in the city's decision making process. Area sabha is envisaged as the counter part of Gramasabha in the rural areas. Every ward in the municipality will have a ward committee comprising of representatives from each Area Sabha in the ward and also representatives from the institutions in the ward jurisdiction. There are some duties of the Ward Committee that requires special mention. It is given in the Community Participation Law by Ministry of Urban Development that failure in accomplishing these responsibilities can invoke penalties to the ward committee members. These are (1) Preparation of Meeting Calendar for monthly meetings of the ward committee during the year (2) Preparation and compilation of Annual Ward Plans (3) Preparation of Ward budget six months before the municipal budget. Types of community participation are discussed below:

- **Passive Participation:** People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened through unilateral announcement by administration.
- **Participation in Information Giving:** People participate by answering questions posted by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches and do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings.
- **Participation by Consultation:** People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views and may modify these in the light of people's responses but do not involve them in decision-making.
- **Participation for Material Incentives:** People participate by providing resources, for example labour, in return for food, cash, or other material incentives, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
- **Functional Participation:** People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project after major decisions have been made.
- **Interactive Participation:** People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans, and formation or strengthening of local institutions.
- **Self-mobilisation:** People participate by taking initiatives independent of external institutions to change systems. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and the technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used.

Community Participation

Community development is a structured intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives. This does not solve all the problems faced by a local community, but it does build up confidence to tackle such problems as effectively as any local action can. Community development works at the level of local groups and organisations rather than with individuals or families. The range of local groups and organisations representing communities at local level constitutes the community sector. Community development is a skilled process and part of its approach is the belief that communities cannot be helped unless they themselves agree to this process. Community development has to look both ways: not only at how the community is working at the grass roots, but also at how responsive key institutions are to the needs of local communities.

Good community development is action that helps people to recognize and develop their ability and potential and organize themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share. It supports the establishment of strong communities that control and use assets to promote social justice and help improve the quality of community life. It also enables community and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government. There are several key concepts central to the concept of

community organizing approach to effect change in the community, namely: (1) empowerment; (2) community competence; (3) community participation or starting from where the people are; (4) issue selection; and (5) creating social consciousness. Community participation is defined as the creation of opportunities to enable all members of a community to actively contribute or to influence the development process to share equitably the fruits of development. Arnstein is of the view that there are eight levels of participation, the highest being citizen with people power. These levels of participation include (1) Citizen Control; (2) Delegate Power; (3) Partnership; (4) Placation; (5) Consultation; (6) Informing; (7) Therapy and (8) Manipulation. There are several techniques of community participation in urban administration. The revolution in information technology and wider application of internet has also affected the level of community participation in urban administration. The urban reforms and initiatives of central government in terms of introducing legislations and bringing transparency and accountability in administration have enabled the community in urban areas for their enhanced role in urban development planning and implementation of development programmes and schemes.

TOWARDS SERVICE DELIVERY EXCELLENCE

Improving Governance is a part of development process. It is argued that corruption can be curbed by bringing systematic changes in governance by introducing participation, transparency, accountability and probity in administration. The right to good governance is also considered as an essential part of the citizen's rights that one can expect from the administration. Accordingly, a number of initiatives have been taken by the government to incorporate citizen's concerns as inputs in the formulation of policy as well as in the quality and reliability of services. These can be brought through various tools, including the Citizens' Charters, Right to Information, e-Governance, Report Cards and Social Audits. Right to information is a part of fundamental rights under Article 19(1) of the Constitution of India. It empowers citizens to know their entitlement to avail a particular public service, and redress the grievance, if any. It also includes the 'Right to be Heard and Consumer Education', i.e., educating the consumer about his rights. It is based on the rationale of 'participatory, transparent and accountable governance.' Under the Right to Information Act, public servants can also be questioned on their conduct and, thus, made accountable. Electronic governance has emerged as one of the frontline applications to reinvent the way the government works, and to ensure better transparency and services to the public. It may, therefore, be defined as delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means. Such means of delivering information in government facilitates an efficient, speedy and transparent process for disseminating information to the public and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities. It demonstrates how citizens relate to governments as much as to each other. Thus, e-governance allows citizens to communicate with government, participate in the governments' policy-making and to communicate each other. Thus, e-Governance is considered an effective tool of improving governance and service delivery. Citizens'

Report Card is a participatory service delivery assessment system and provides organizational leaders an opportunity to reform and reorient service delivery. It involves generation of credible user feedback on a variety of qualitative and quantitative indicators of services where random sample survey of users of public services based on a mix of household and exit interviews. Public grievances redressal has now developed its public grievance redress mechanism by designating a senior officer for the purpose with authority to call for files/papers relating to grievances projected by the clients. The public is at liberty to approach him/her for seeking redressal of its grievances any time. He/she is obliged to remain available on every Wednesday between 1000 and 1300 hours. The grievance petitions should carry the following information. A Citizens' Charter represents the commitment of an organization towards standard, quality and time frame of service delivery, grievance redress mechanism, transparency and accountability. Based on the anticipated expectations and aspirations of public, Citizens' Charters are to be drawn up with care and concern for respective service users. They enable the service seekers to avail the services of the government departments with minimum inconvenience and maximum speed.

CITIZEN REPORT CARDS AND SOCIAL AUDIT

The use of citizen report cards as performance monitoring and feedback mechanisms has also gained currency since the late 1990s. Citizen report cards evaluate different service providers from a user perspective and thereby make the service providers more accountable to the citizens. With the Public Affairs Centre, in Bangalore, India has been a world leader in applying and using these tools in Bangalore's public agencies since 1994. Since then, the Public Affairs Centre has brought out report cards on several other cities, rural services, and also on specific sectoral services such as health care. Since the 1950s, the concept of Social Audit has evolved from a corporate management tool to its present form as a means of feedback and participation for increased state accountability and transparency. A social audit usually records and interprets the experience of the clients or citizens the organizational entity is meant to service.

The international nonprofit agency Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies (CIET) has developed a social audit approach that conducts user surveys and provides formal mechanisms for user participation in the interpretation of evidence and identification of local solutions. Across Asia, social audits are proving useful in promoting public accountability and responsiveness. In Delhi, a successful civil society movement *Parivartan* (fighting corruption) using the Right to Information law has been conducting public audits of civil works and other services and rallying people around common concerns of mal-governance. In many instances, the state government and its agencies have responded by rectifying the immediate causes of discontent.

With the increasing role of state in modern societies, bureaucratic control in social and economic fields and the increasing use of administrative discretion in various matters has caused concern. In view of the good governance, there has been greater emphasis on ethics and social accountability on development bureaucracy as well as

public officials. Administrative accountability assumes significance in the participatory democracy and inclusive governance. The Administrative Reforms Commission has also emphasized on ethics and social accountability in administration besides ensuring imposition of ethical code in governance.

SERVICE LEVEL BENCHMARKING

Performance benchmarking is a powerful management tool to make service providers more accountable, and to measure progress while improving performance. This review of urban services examines the introduction of performance benchmarking in over 30 urban water utilities across Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan since 2003, with the support of their respective governments and the Water and Sanitation Program- South Asia. Ministry of Urban Development, Govt. of India initiated SLB in 26 cities in 14 states and one Union Territory in 2003. Two rounds of SLB data were collected for 2003-04 and 2005-06 and third round of SLB during 2009. The SLB program is a first of its kind, and represents an important shift in the orientation of decision making at the national, state, and local levels. It promotes benchmarking as part of an overall performance improvement strategy through performance monitoring on a systematic and regular basis for tracking performance, comparing with other similar utilities and sharing best practices, identifying performance gaps, and devising plans to improve performance. The SLB initiative targeted the operationalization of the framework outlined in the SLB Handbook on the ground, representing different operating environments.

CITIZENS' CHARTERS

Citizen's charter, as one of the strategies of new public management, aims at providing quality services within a particular time frame. It has been introduced in local government with the view of enhancing the excellence of public service deliverance in a responsive, transparent and accountable manner, which in turn aims at increasing the level of satisfaction. Citizen's charter policy was implemented in the United Kingdom for the first time in 1991 with the aim to continuously improve the quality of public services. The Citizen's Charter based on the model of United Kingdom has been adopted by developed nations. Citizen's Charter was also introduced in India in 1997 for the first time. Citizen's Charter is a document which articulates the commitment of government organizations towards citizens through clearly specified yardsticks (Ghuman, 2011). Thus, the Citizen's Charter at the local level is an important tool of good governance. Most of the National Charters are posted on the government's websites and are open to public scrutiny. The essential ingredients of a Citizen's Charter include listing of specific services being offered by the department/institution; location and timings of offices connected with the delivery of services; the details of concerned officials responsible for delivery of the aforesaid services; the time required for delivery of each service; the grievance redress authority in case of services promised are delayed or denied; and provision of a compensation clause. In view of the growing importance of information technology, Citizen's Charters are loaded on websites of concerned departments/organizations as the e-governance is gaining importance.

PUBLIC DISCLOSURE LAW

Right to Information Act 2005 came into force on 12th October, 2005. The Act extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu & Kashmir. This Act will have jurisdiction over every public authority in the country. However, RTI Act has created a historic opportunity. The hopes of the people from this legislation are very high. The Public Disclosure Law essentially aims at two kinds of disclosures viz., financial and operational. Financial disclosures include disclosure of audited financial statements (annual & quarterly) and disclosure of key financial indicators to assess financial performance. Operational disclosures include: disclosure of levels of services provided disclosure of programs, schemes, rules, procedures etc. The main objective of the Law is to ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of municipalities & parastatal agencies.

Principles for Effective Disclosure

- Maximum disclosure (*suo motu* disclosures desirable)
- Frequent disclosure
- Wide spread dissemination of information
- Usage of simple language

Manner of Disclosure

- Newspapers in regional, Hindi and English languages
- Internet
- Notice Boards of the Municipality
- Ward Offices

People participation in the development process can be achieved only if the citizen's are well informed about the programs, schemes and the various processes that enable people's participation. To achieve the true spirit of decentralization and enable people's participation in the development process ULBs would do well to implement the Right to Information Act in its true spirit. The RTI Act provides for 17 points of mandatory disclosures by the Public Authority. It is advisable that the Public Authority disclose as much information as possible under this section to reduce the burden of receiving requests from citizens. Among the various types of information to be disclosed by the Public Authority, the Local body may be required to disclose the following kind of specific information:

Service Levels

- Service levels of each services viz. water supply, sewerage, drainage, solid waste management, roads, street lighting etc.
- Statement of officers responsible for delivery of various officers and their contact phone numbers.
- Particulars of fees and user charges for various services.

Finance

- Annual budget
- Details of Income and Expenditure, Receipts and Payments, Balance Sheet on a quarterly basis within 2 months of the end of each quarter.
- Details of municipal finances, particularly, (i) income from various taxes and non-tax resources, assigned revenues, grants, loans and contributions etc. (ii) taxes and non-taxes uncollected (iii) list of defaulters etc during the previous year.

Development Plans

- Particulars of Master Plan, Development Plan or any other plans concerning the development of municipal area
- Particulars of plans, outlay, expected time of completion etc of all major programs

Important Policies and Decisions

- The policy/decision
- Reasons for the same.

Register of information sought under RTI Act

Under the RTI Act, the following information can be sought with respect to services provided by the ULB:

- Identification of benefiting areas and/or beneficiaries of public services
- Plans and programs of services improvement and spending on works
- Working of institutions providing basic services
- Works-allotments, execution, supervision and completion
- Expenditure on staff (wages), capital and maintenance works
- Maintenance of records of various assts and services

For providing the above information, the following Registers must be maintained by the concerned functionaries in the ULB. They must be regularly updated so that the citizen is provided with the right information at the time of request.

- Register of assets
- Registers relating to water supply
- Register of works
- Register of estimates and allotments
- Registers relating to Establishment
- Grievance Register

Steps of Public Disclosure Law

- Formulate a Public Disclosure Policy or enact a suitable law for public disclosure
- Ensure wide spread dissemination of information through the internet, newspapers, publication in ward offices etc.
- Adopt proper practices for management and maintenance of financial and operational records. Computerization of records is the best way for ensuring easy maintenance and availability of records
- Ensure dissemination of information in simple and plain language easily understood by a majority of the population in its area of operation
- Ensuring compulsory audit of financial statements and disclosure of the audit reports to the public in a suitable forum.
- Financial statements are not sufficient to assess the government's achievements of its goals viz., maintaining the well being of its citizens and other stakeholders. It is also important to know how efficiently and effectively the services for which revenues were raised by the ULB are being delivered. The community must be consulted for determining standards of service delivery they expect from the Municipal bodies. Accordingly, performance standards may be fixed.
- Having determined the standards of service delivery the people expected from the municipal bodies, the ULBs must evolve suitable strategies for achieving the desired outcomes. This would help greatly in improving performance and achieving citizen satisfaction of the services rendered by the municipal bodies.
- If the internal structuring needs to be changed to provide prompt and efficient services to the citizen, the ULB may consider doing the same to meet the desired goals.
- The ULBs must work in tandem with citizen groups whether to arrive at performance standards or for seeking feedback on services rendered. Active citizen groups will encourage public debate on the financial and operational performance of the ULB and make suitable recommendations. This process will go a long way in improving functional efficiency of the ULB and ensuring citizen participation and thereby citizen satisfaction in local municipal governance.
- The functional and working skills of the ULB personnel must be updated on a regular Basis to be able to meet the performance standards expected of them. Requirements of service delivery may keep changing owing to various social and economic change factors. To be able to meet and fulfil the changing requirements, the ULB staff must be sufficiently and suitably equipped.

Enactment of public disclosure law requires reforms to be undertaken by states/cities in the area of proactive disclosure of periodic and mandatory information to the public (Government of India, 2009). Municipalities/parastatals are supposed to publish information pertaining to its functioning at periodic intervals for sharing with citizens.

Most of the government organizations have not been disclosing or denying information to the public. The Official Secret Act has largely been instrumental in institutionalizing the mechanism of secrecy in the system of governance of our country over the years. The lack of transparency and accountability in the system has resulted in corruption, arrogance, distressed, non-responsiveness and apathy between the government and citizen (Rai and Bagga, 2010).

Disclosure of information is essential for the active and meaningful participation of community. Hence to ensure community participation in the development programmes, enactment of Public Disclosure Law has been mandatory to ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of urban local bodies and other parastatal agencies. The Government of India has circulated Model Urban Local Government Disclosure Bill to all the state governments for their guidance. However, only a few states have enacted law for proactive disclosing of information pertaining to functioning of local governments.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Right to Information has been the key to strengthen the participatory democracy and to usher in people's centered governance. Access to information can empower the poor and weaker sections of society to demand and acquire information about public policies and actions and inactions, leading to the welfare of the people and good governance. Without good governance no account of developmental schemes can bring improvements in the quality of life of citizens. Good governance has four elements – transparency, accountability, predictability and participation. Transparency refers to availability of information to the general public and clarity about functioning of governmental institution. Right to information opens government's records to public scrutiny, thereby arming citizens with a vital weapon to inform them about what the government does and how effectively it does, making the government more accountable. Transparency in government organizations makes them functional more objectively thereby enhancing practicability. Information about functionary of government also enables citizens to participate in the governance process, effectively. Thus, Right to Information is a basic necessity of good governance (Shrinkhal and Swapnil, 2010). RTI has significant bearing on good governance and development. The implementation of the law on right to know for setting up information regime therefore augurs well for strengthening the knowledge society as well as for increasing the accountability of public bodies. RTI has enabled people to participate in the process of development which has resulted in reduction of corruption. As the functioning of public authorities becomes more transparent and ensure proactive disclosure of the policies, programmes and their outcomes, there would be greater participation by people in every sphere of development (Ansari, 2008). India adopted Right to Information Act, 2005. Since then there have been a number of studies which have examined the challenges in implementing the law. The Right to Information has been enacted in India however; there has been variance in the performance between and within states. The functioning of Information Commissions has been reported to be

poor. RTI Act is one of the most people friendly legislation ever. The Act has made both tangible and intangible impact on the system and its people. People have used the RTI tool to get their ration cards, passports, pension funds, birth certificates, income tax refunds etc. There have been cases when aged people and young have taken recourse to RTI to get their work done. RTI Act has been also incorporated in employment oriented schemes such as NREGA. RTI has been judicially used to expedite the programme. Right to Information definitely resulted in greater transparency in governance. All the levels of governments – Centre, States and Local Bodies have put their records in public domain, through publication as well as internet in the regional languages.

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005

The need for the legal status to the right to information is the cause and concern today. India observed the judicial pronouncement and democratic need of such right during the post independence years. The Law Commission of India's 179th Report and reports of number of committees and councils working on the subject sensitized the Government of India to enact a specific law on the right to information. In pursuance, the Central Government enacted Freedom of Information Act in 2002. This Act, however, never came into force as it was never notified. In order to ensure greater and more effective access to information the Government resolved that Freedom of Information Act, 2002 enacted by Parliament needs to be more progressive, participatory and meaningful. The important changes proposed to be incorporated, inter alia include establishment of an appellate machinery with investigating powers to review the decisions of Public Information Officers; penal provisions for failure to provide information as per law; provision to maximum disclosure and minimum exemptions, consistent with the Constitutional provisions and effective mechanism for access to information and disclosures by authorities etc. In view of significant changes proposed in the existing Act, the Government also decided to repeal the Freedom of Information Act, 2002.

Public Information Officers

Public Information Officers (PIOs) are officers designated by the public authorities in all administrative units or offices under it to provide information to the citizens requesting for information under the Act. Any officer, whose assistance has been sought by the PIO for the proper discharge of his or her duties, shall render all assistance and for the purpose of contraventions of the provisions of this Act, such other officer shall be treated as a PIO (Sathe, 2006).

Central Information Commission

Central Information Commission to be constituted by the Central Government through a Gazette Notification shall:

- Include one Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and not more than 10 Information Commissioners (IC) who will be appointed by the President of India.

- Oath of Office will be administered by the President of India according to the form set out in the First Schedule.
- Shall have its Headquarter in Delhi. Other offices may be established in other parts of the Country with the approval of the Central Government.
- Exercise its power without being subjected to direction by any other authority (Government of India, 2005).

The State Information Commission

The State Information Commission will be constituted by the State Governments through Gazette notifications. It will have one State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC) and not more than 10 State Information Commissioners (SIC) to be appointed by the Governor of the concerned state.

- Oath of office will be administered by the Governor according to the form set out in the First Schedule.
- The headquarters of the State Information Commission shall be at such place as the State Government may specify. Other offices may be established in other parts of the State with the approval of the State Government.
- The Commission will exercise its powers without being subjected to any other authority (Government of India, 2005).

Powers and Functions of Information Commission

The Central Information Commission/State Information Commission has a duty to receive complaints from any person- (a) that has not been able to submit an information request because a PIO has not been appointed (Das: 2006):

- Who has been refused information that was requested;
- Who has received no response to his/her information request within the specified time limits;
- Who thinks the fees charged are unreasonable;
- Who thinks information given is incomplete or false or misleading; and
- Any other matter relating to obtaining information under this law.

Implementation of RTI Act and Its Impact

Democracy requires an informed citizenry and transparency of information which are vital to its functioning and also to contain corruption and to hold governments and their instrumentalities accountable. Citizen's access to information is an essential step in ensuring transparency and accountability in government systems and processes. First RTI Law was enacted by Sweden in 1766, largely motivated by the Parliament's interest in access to information held by the King. The Swedish example was later

followed by the US, which enacted its first law in 1966 and then by Norway in 1970. By 1990, there were 13 countries which adopted RTI Laws. By 2010, more than 85 countries have national level RTI laws or regulations in force including the major developing countries like China and India.

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India adopted Right to Information Act, 2005. Since then there have been a number of studies which have examined the challenges in implementing the law. During 2007-2009, Indian citizens filed more than 2 million requests under the Act. Two large scale assessments of the Act were produced in 2009. One was completed by private consultancy – Price Water House Coopers for the Indian Government's Department of Personnel and Training, the lead organization within central government for implementation of the Act with the financial support from DFID. The other was undertaken by a coalition of civil society organization, the RTI Assessment and Analysis Group, with support from Google.org. The study conducted by RTI Assessment and Analysis Group in association with National Campaign for People's Right to Information (2009) estimated that Indian citizens filed about 2 million requests for information under the Act in the first 2 and half years of its implementation from October, 2005 to March, 2008. Another study by Price water House Coopers estimated that 8.5 lakh requests were made in 2008 alone. In many cases, the requests revealed corruption in public services. There are several daunting barriers to the more frequent use of the Right to Information. One of the most substantial is the lack of awareness about rights granted by the Act, particularly among marginalized groups. PWC's survey of the general public found that only 15 per cent were aware of the Law. Similarly, the study conducted by RTI Assessment and Analysis Group highlighted that the most important constraints being faced by the rural respondents in exercising their right to information was harassment and threats from officials. The success rate for availing information ranged in between 23 per cent to 82 per cent among the surveyed states.

The Right to Information Act and Municipalities

People's participation in the development process can be achieved only if the citizens are well informed about the programs, schemes and the various processes that enable their participation. To achieve the true spirit of decentralization and enable people's participation in the development process municipalities would do well to implement the Right to Information Act in its true spirit. The RTI Act provides for 17 points of mandatory disclosures by the Public Authority. It is advisable that the Public Authority

discloses as much information as possible under this section to reduce the burden of receiving requests from citizens. Among the various types of information to be disclosed by the Public Authority, the Local body may be required to disclose the following specific information:

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- Grievance Register

E-GOVERNANCE

The revolution brought about the information and communication technology in the era of globalization and economic liberalization had induced transformation in administrative, economic and social sector around the globe. These technologies have brought a paradigm shift in the administration and governance of countries across the globe. Governments around the globe are embracing electronic governance. The last decade has seen India embarking on a wide range of experiments led by visionary administrators in e-governance, in their quest to use information and communication technologies to transform the government and governance in India. The National e-Governance Plan is an ambitious programme of the Government of India to make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, throughout common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable cost to realize the basic needs of the common man. The National e-Governance Plan has transformed India into one of the world's largest e-governance laboratories, teeming experiments at all levels of government to leverage ICT to improve governance and citizen services (Ernest and Young, 2012).

Good governance is mostly characterized by providing information to citizens, aiding entrepreneurship and supporting social and economic enterprises, maintaining transparency in governance system, aiding decision support systems for village institutions as well government administrators. Electronic service delivery is actively being considered as one of the alternative of "good governance". ICT is advocated to be very useful tool in support good governance. e-governance and e-governments are manifestations of these systems with a view to ease various governance and government processes to support development. It is critical for any governance system in India to cater to their needs through better and relevant government systems.

E-Governance: Conceptual Framework

Electronic governance or e-governance has been defined in varieties of ways. E-governance is about a process of reform in the way governments work, share information, and deliver services to internal and external clients. E-governance refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the E-governance, wide area networks, mobile phones etc. to deliver services to citizens that have the ability to transform relations with clients, businesses, and other arms of government.

Christopher Baum defines e-government as the “transformation of public sector’s internal and external relationship through net-enabled operations, information technology and communications to optimize government service delivery, constituency participation and governance” (Kumar 2004). E-governance is defined as the application of electronic means in (1) the interaction between government and citizens, and government and businesses, as well as (2) internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of governance (Backus, 2003). Rogers W’O Okot-Uma opines “e-governance seeks to realize process and structures for harnessing the potentialities of information and communication technologies at various levels of government and public sector and beyond for the purpose of enhancing good governance” (Kumar, 2004). The term ‘e-government’ refers to the use of ICT by government agencies to transform relations with citizens and businesses (Venkatesh, 2003; Barthwal, 2003). E-governance has different interpretations. It implies a smoother interface between the government and the citizen’s governance is nothing but good governance. The ‘e’ is only a tool. E governance is to enhance the use of the information technology and to help enhance lives of the citizens. E-governance enables active citizen involvement by informing the citizens, representing the citizens, encouraging them to vote consulting them as required and encouraging their participation (Patel, 2001).

E-governance can be classified under a variety of models depending upon the nature of interaction and agencies involved in the interaction. These are government to citizen (G2C), citizen to government (C2G), government to government (G2G), government to business (G2B), government to NGO (G2N) (Sachdeva ,2003). In G2C model, the government interacts with the citizen to provide information and various services. Information about government services is published on the web sites and citizen can have access to information regarding procedures for getting jobs. Citizens can download a number of application forms for a variety of services, such as filling of tax returns, and renewal of licenses.

A large number of government departments also offer a number of facilities and services at one place through internet portals. Citizens can also submit applications and make online payments. Important examples in this regard are: e-education, e-medicine, e-registration, e-transport and so on. E-governance also can be classified under two groups on the basis of policy formulation and implementation, viz. e-administration and e-democracy. E-administration aims at harnessing ICTs to

streamline administrative procedures and enhance public service delivery. This vision of e-governance is greatly influenced by the ideals and objectives of new public management, which mainly focuses on lean government (downsizing, less bureaucracy and few rules) for provision of customer friendly services at lower cost, such as renewal of driving license or declaration of income and payment of taxes online. E-democracy seeks to harness the internet for more direct empowerment of the individual.

Benefits of e-Governance

Most citizens felt that application of e-Governance projects saves money, time and effort, while infusing efficiency into the system faster than expected. The speed of service delivery is excellent compared to the earlier system. Hence, several of these projects kept coming up as examples of success stories with potential of replication. Thus, these factors have ensured Panchayats and other bodies to install e-Governance projects. They have benefited them in monetary terms. Further, it recommended that e-Governance projects should be citizen friendly built with defined deliverables for citizens. Further, the government needs to be at the doorstep of the citizen offering a basket of services. Rural Employment Guarantee Plan and the Right to Information would be an immediate case in point.

- Even rural projects are reporting high ease: Most of the projects are working well with power backups and connectivity options. The emphasis, however, should remain on functionality.
- Penetration is the key: While initiatives like common Citizen Services Centres etc. can play a major role in increasing accessibility; there is a need of the domain ministries and local self-governance bodies getting computerized. There have to be services at the back end for the front-end common service centers to deliver.
- The spending on e-governance has to go up substantially: Two per cent of the Plan expenditure should be spent on IT. While some such guidelines already exist, it does not seem to be currently followed. This becomes increasingly important in the light of the country's move towards outcome based budgeting.
- Scaling and replication is a crying need: Most of the projects are only a minuscule number. Speed of implementation would be another area requiring improvement.

Administrative Efficiency for Effectiveness

Communication: E-governance can improve the efficiency of government by streamlining administrative procedures (simplification and transparent) for effective communication within and outside government departments. Rationalization and simplification of the vast number of regulations and procedures through computerization, cut-short delays and enhance the quality of service-delivery. E-governance not only reduces paper work, but also facilitates speedy communication

and effective coordination. This ultimately reduces red tape and corruption and helps in providing more and better service at lesser cost (NASSCOM, 2003).

Legal Framework of e-Governance

The Information Technology Act, 2000 was enacted to “provide legal recognition for transactions carried out by means of electronic data interchange and other means of electronic communication, commonly referred to as “electronic commerce”, which involve the use of alternatives to paper-based methods of communication and storage of information, to facilitate electronic filing of documents with the Government agencies and further to amend the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, the Bankers’ Books Evidence Act, 1891 and the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.”

Thus, the focus of this Act is on electronic commerce and electronic records. The Act contains provisions on digital signatures and authentication of electronic records, legal recognition of digital signatures and electronic records, retention of electronic records, attribution, acknowledgement and dispatch of electronic records, security of electronic records, regulation of Certifying Authorities, Cyber Regulation Appellate Tribunal etc. To facilitate the implementation of e-Governance projects at various levels across the country, a more holistic legal framework is required.

This Act, first of all defines “electronic Government” to mean the use by the Government of web-based Internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies, to-

- (A) Enhance the access to and delivery of Government information and services to the public, other agencies, and other Government entities; or
- (B) Bring about improvements in Government operations that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, or transformation.”

By providing a definition for e-government under law, this Act removes at one go the scope for having differing approaches to e-Governance across governments and institutions. Thus, it unequivocally states that e-Governance implies the use of web-based applications and other information technologies ‘by the Government’ either for providing ‘Government information and services’ to the public and government institutions alike, or to bring about ‘improvements in Government operations’ aimed at, but not limited to, achieving efficiency, effectiveness etc. In other words, ‘electronic Government’ has the objective of, inter alia, transforming government operations through what has been called ‘business process re-engineering’. This Act, therefore, separates these two objectives, making them activities capable of being pursued independently apart from establishing them as statutory requirements.

The Act then establishes an Office of Electronic Government, headed by an Administrator appointed by the President, in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). 120 It requires the Administrator to assist the Director and Deputy Director

for Management and work with the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in setting strategic direction for implementing electronic Government under relevant statutes, including the Privacy Act, the Government Paperwork Elimination Act, and the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002. It then places the following responsibilities on the Administrator (Section 3602):

The Administrator shall work with the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and with other offices within the Office of Management and Budget to oversee implementation of electronic Government under this chapter, chapter 35, the E-Government Act of 2002, and other relevant statutes, in a manner consistent with law, relating to -

- (1) Capital planning and investment control for information technology;
- (2) The development of enterprise architectures;
- (3) Information security;
- (4) Privacy;
- (5) Access to, dissemination of, and preservation of Government Information;
- (6) Accessibility of information technology for persons with disabilities; and
- (7) Other areas of electronic Government.

Apart from providing leadership, the Administrator of Office of Electronic Government is required to assist the Director of OMB in establishing policies for setting up the framework for information technology standards for the Federal Government developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, including the standards and guidelines for inter-connectivity and inter-operability and for Federal Government computer system efficiency and security. He has also been given the responsibility of sponsoring a dialogue among Federal, State, local, and tribal government leaders on electronic Government in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as leaders in the private and non-profit sectors, to encourage collaboration and enhance understanding of best practices and innovative approaches in acquiring, using, and managing information resources. Further, the Administrator is required to:

- (8) Sponsor activities to engage the general public in the development and implementation of policies and programs, particularly activities aimed at fulfilling the goal of using the most effective citizen-centered strategies and those activities which engage multiple agencies providing similar or related information and services.
- (9) Oversee the work of the General Service Administration and other agencies in developing the integrated Internet-based system under Section 204 of the E-Government Act of 2002.

- (10) Coordinate with the Administrator for Federal Procurement Policy to ensure effective implementation of electronic procurement initiatives.
- (11) Assist Federal agencies, including the General Services Administration, the Department of Justice, and the United States Access Board in –
 - (A) Implementing accessibility standards under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 USC 794d); and
 - (B) Ensuring compliance with those standards through the budget review process and other means.
- (12) Oversee the development of enterprise architectures within and across agencies.
- (13) Assist the Director and Deputy Director for Management in overseeing any agency efforts to ensure that electronic Government activities incorporate adequate, risk-based, and cost-effective security compatible with business processes.
- (14) Administer the Office of Electronic Government established under this section.
- (15) Assist the Director in preparing the E-Government report established under Section 3606.

National e-Governance Policy

The Finance Minister in his 2006-07 budget speech mentioned about the proposed National e-Governance Policy. As a result, the common man would not require paying bribe to know the status of applications for ration cards, house sites, inclusion of names in voters' list, birth & death certificates, copies of land records and even transfers of teachers. The Government's intention is to bring a number of services online, including the filing of FIR. Twenty-five projects were to be launched in 2006-07. Common service centres were to be set up to cater to below poverty line people, who do not have access to the internet.

e-Governance Innovative

In a major thrust towards e-governance and job creation in rural areas, the Central Government in September 2006 decided to set up one lakh Common Services Centres (CSC) across the country with private-public partnership. These CSCs will provide e-governance services such as payment of electricity, telephone and water bills, and acquiring application forms. The Project is expected to create about four lakh jobs in the rural sector and is likely to be rolled out by March 2008.

Several State Governments have taken various innovative steps to promote e-governance in the delivery of public services. Some of the most significant initiatives include:

- Chief Minister's Information System (e.g. Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan), which monitors a range of activities from developmental programmes to redress of public grievances.

- Andhra Pradesh Development Monitoring System (based on a multipurpose household survey) has a database – with X spatial as well as non-spatial parameters – of the entire population (7.5 million) of the state.
- APSWAN (Andhra Pradesh State Wide Area Network), a state-wide network for voice, data and video communication, which is the basic information highway for improving government-citizen and government-industry interface.
- The Secretariat Knowledge Information Management System (SKIMS) of Andhra Pradesh efficiently manages information in the Secretariat.
- The Disaster Management System in Gujarat maintains communication during natural disasters.
- Computerization of treasuries capturing every transaction at all district and taluk (sub-district) treasuries in Karnataka.
- VIDYUTNET, India's first VSAT-based communication network supports real-time data applications for power generation and distribution in Gujarat.
- RD Net project (Information Kerala Mission) to connect all the 152 block offices in Kerala to transform local bodies into genuine institutions of self-governance.
- Office of Controller of Entrance Examinations in Kerala has been automated to allocate colleges to successful students.
- Connectivity Project has networked 3000 offices in Maharashtra.
- Vikas Darpan (mirror of development) of Rajasthan envisages GIS based planning and decision support system.
- Online registration of property transactions (Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu).
- Registration of vehicles and issue of driving licenses (e.g. Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu),
- Land records (e.g. Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), and
- Single-window/one-stop delivery of public services (e.g. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu).

Integration of e-Governance Projects

Some of the e-Governance Projects like the CARD, LR-MIS and e-Panchayat in Andhra Pradesh were found to be extremely popular. Since various e-governance projects work in watertight compartments, the real benefit does not accrue to the citizens. Hence, integration of various e-Governance projects is necessary to offer uninterrupted services at citizen's doorstep. The survey recommends that e-governance projects should define deliverables for citizens. Further, the government needs to be at the doorstep of the citizen offering a basket of services since the usership of certain projects was found to be low. There is a need to increase spending yet keeping the service delivery affordable.

The National e-Governance Plan

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was launched on 18th May, 2006 with the objective of having a comprehensive e-Governance strategy and programme for India. The NeGP aims to lay the foundation and provide the impetus for long-term growth of e-Governance in India by creating governance and institutional mechanisms and setting up core infrastructure and policies. It targets various areas including the following:

- Political ownership and national vision
- Programme/Project Management
- Public-Private Partnership
- Architecture and Standards
- Core and Support ICT Infrastructure
- Re-engineering
- Change Management

Mission Mode Project and Supporting Initiatives

At the core of the NeGP are a series of Mission Mode Project (MMPs) to create a citizen-centric and business-centric environment. Mission Mode Projects broadly come under three categories:

- Central MMPs, which are aligned with a national ministry or agency.
- State MMPs, which are programmes to be implemented at the state level.
- Integrated MMPs, which aim to create a common infrastructure for e-Governance at all levels of the government.

Each of the MMPs are at various stages of development and implementation and reflect India's priorities in utilizing ICT to transform the government and realize the Vision of NeGP, which is "to make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, throughout common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realize the basic needs of the common man." Supporting these MMPs are three core infrastructure initiatives of NeGP, commonly referred to as its Three Pillar Model:

1. Connectivity: State Wide Area Networks
2. Data centers: National Data Bank, State Data Centres
3. Common Service Centes.

While the MMPs form its core, NeGP also enables the design and implementation of the numerous initiatives of the Central, state and local governments. This has helped to spawn a large number of innovative experiments with ICT solutions to improve government across the country. India has been making significant investments to enable

these e-Governance initiatives. The total cost incurred for NeGP till 2011 is estimated at Rs. 230 billion. The focus of its current investments is on infrastructure. Some of its large infrastructure programmes:

- State Data Centre Scheme with a total outlay of Rs. 16,230 million.
- Capacity-building schemes with an outlay of Rs. 130 million.
- State-wide area networks with an outlay of Rs. 33,340 million.
- Common service centre scheme with an outlay of Rs. 57,420 million.

The e-Municipality Mission Mode Project

One of the large e-Governance projects currently being designed to address the challenge mentioned above is the e-Municipality Mission Mode Project. Supporting the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM), this MMP for municipalities is expected to provide a major fillip to India's urban reform agenda. The vision of the National MMP for e-Governance in municipalities is to leverage ICT opportunities for sustained improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of municipal services to citizens. The MMP intends to achieve the following goals:

- Provide single window services to citizens on an anytime, anywhere basis.
- Increase the efficiency and productivity of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- Develop a single and integrated view of ULB information system across all ULBs.
- Provide timely and reliable management information relating municipal administration for effective decision-making.
- Adopt a standard-based approach to enable integration with other related applications

Some of the areas of interventions will include

- Registration of births and deaths
- Payment of taxes and utility bills
- Approvals for land use and property development
- Procurement and monitoring of projects being implemented by the ULB
- Health programmes and Solid Waste Management
- Accounting System of ULB
- Grievances handling, including the implementation of the Right to Information Act.

A unique feature of e-Municipality solutions will be the significant emphasis on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and augmenting the revenues of municipal

administrations so that they can fund their growth and development to a significant level. Among the many initiatives towards making good governance a reality, the implementation of e-governance by harnessing the immense potential of ICT has captured the centre stage. In view of the improvement in efficiency and effectiveness in delivery of urban services, the Central Government, under the Ministry of Urban Development has launched scheme of e-governance in urban local bodies which demonstrates a holistic approach for strengthening local governments and delivery mechanism for urban services delivery. Mission Mode Project of e-Governance for Municipalities intended to cover 423 ULBs over a period of 5 years with a total outlay of Rs. 787 crores for the period of 2007 to 2012. During the first year i.e. 2007-08, the project was implemented in 35 million plus cities of the country. The urban local bodies were required to prepare detailed project reports. The cost of Mission Mode Project was shared between Central and state government. For the million plus cities, 75 per cent of capital cost and 75 per cent of annual cost for the initial two years was met by the Central Government and the balance was boorned by the state government. The e-governance project was also supported by JNNURM by the Ministry of Urban Development as e-governance was considered as one of the important municipal reforms. Out of 63 JNNURM cities, 13 cities implemented the mandatory reform of e-governance by the end of 2009 to enable on-line services like birth and death certificate, approval of building plans, payments of property tax and water charges etc.

The Governance Black Swan and e-Governance

A Black Swan refers to a large impact rare event beyond the realm of normal expectations. Governance in India is changing, although it is not always apparent. These changes in are being brought about by slow building up of incremental changes across the country due to external influences. We can refer to this phenomenon as the "Governance Black Swan." The India Vision 2020 report predicts the following as the key likely outcome of this transformation:

- Decentralization and people's participation
- Efficiency, transparency and accountability

We are already witness to some of these emerging changes with Information Technology playing a key role in this transformation. Reversing the logic so far applied in this report, we can say that e-Governance is driving transformation in government. We can clearly identify some of the following as IT-induced transformation in governance in India.

- (a) The Right to Information Act, 2005:** The Right to Information Act, 2005 mandates a timely response to citizens' requests for government information. The Act lays down clear mechanisms for tracking citizen requests for the information and timeliness of the response provided. This Act has proved to be one of the key drivers for implementing e-Governance in several government organizations as timely availability of information is imperative for responding to citizens' requests.

- (b) **Electoral Registration and the “Jaago Re” Movement:** The recent parliamentary elections witnessed a new phenomenon – a public awareness campaign to support the government’s electoral registration programme and platform (*www.jaagore.com*) that provides potential voters with all the information and help they need to become part of the electoral process. The movement recognized that a transformation in the quality of governance can only take place with active participation through voting and by electing quality leaders. “Without the increasing reach of the internet and telecommunications technologies, such a movement would not have been possible in India.
- (c) **e-Governance Procurement (e-GP):** According to the Country Procurement Assessment Report (CPAR, 2003) prepared by the World Bank, procurement by ministries, departments, municipal and local bodies, statutory corporation and public undertakings of India amounts to US\$100 billion, representing 13 per cent of the national budget and over 20 per cent of India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). e-GP systems have thus become one of the key levers for the Government of India to improve accountability and transparency in public spending. The shift to e-GP systems has been recommended by the Central Vigilance Commission since 2003. In recent years, various state governments and public sector units have actively implemented these systems. At the national level, the e-GP Mission Mode Project forms one of the key initiatives of NeGP. This is likely to be one of the key agents for transformation of governance in India as it is significantly altering delegation of power within government organizations and is curbing avenues of corruption in public procurement.

Able administrators in India are using e-Governance initiatives as a platform to promote fundamental rethinking on the purpose of various government procedures and greater transparency. A statistical comparison between the Transparency Index (measured by the Corruption Perception Index, 2008 of Transparency International) and the e-Governance Index (reported in the United Nations e-Government Survey 2008) of 181 countries reveals that a strong correlation between transparency and e-Governance. It has also resulted in significant reduction in paperwork, processing timeliness and standardization in government procedures along with organizational re-alignment. The next transformation in governance is likely to come through e-Participation and e-Democracy. Various political parties in India and people’s representatives are increasing their web presence and are exploring avenues for reaching out to citizens through mobile and internet channels. e-Participation is the use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen political participation by enabling citizens to connect with one another and their elected representatives.

The Unique Citizen ID Project

Unique citizen identify is vital for the success of large integrated e-Governance programmes and administration of social benefits, where information on citizens from

multiple sources need to be matched. The time has come for India to consider its citizens' identify on par with its national identity. In the last few years, India has been experimenting with the concept of a multi-purpose national identify card by using smart card technology. Focusing on the states and territories, in the country that have extensive international borders, this was primarily a national security-oriented initiative.

The Unique Citizen Id project is one of the largest technological interventions of the Government of India. By setting up the Unique Identification Authority of India, India has taken the first step forward in its mission to engage every one of its 1.2 billion citizens in the country's administration and ensure quality citizen service. This may be one of the single most important initiatives taken by it to realize the vision of NeGP. It will also be an important contributor to address the vulnerability challenge highlighted by India Vision 2020. By ensuring a unique identify, the programme will help to plug leakages from India's public distribution system, thereby strengthening the country's goal of ensuring food security and helping to ensure that the benefits of programmes such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) reach its legitimate recipients. This will help in achieving the country's Vision 2020 goal of guaranteed employment for all Indians and strengthen its education and vocational training programmes. In addition to the above, the Unique Citizen ID will help the Indian government realize the need for a comprehensive citizen service delivery model by allowing the integration of the diverse portfolio of e-governance solutions deployed by national, state and local agencies. The Unique Citizen ID will therefore be one of the predominant aspects of India's e-Governance initiative in the coming decade.

Impact of e-Governance Projects

Centre for Electronic Governance at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmadabad with the financial support from Asian Foundation, USA has conducted evaluation of 5 e-governance projects to make an assessment of sustainable approaches to e-governance projects. These studies were undertaken during 2004 by the faculty members of IIM, Ahmadabad. A study on e-government at Ahmadabad Municipal Corporation demonstrates that there has been substantial increase in the collection of various kinds of taxes in Ahmadabad Municipal Corporation. The tax compliance and timeliness of payment has also improved drastically. The Corporation has the ability to assess the total number of citizen complaints received on various accounts. The complaints reporting system now provides the Corporation with accurate data and time and nature of complaints and also the department to which the same has been forwarded for corrective action. The Corporation has also gained by having a set of highly motivated and enthusiastic workforce in the operators at the civic centres. Citizens too have benefited significantly from the e-government projects. The citizens now have more access to municipal government services. They can also get access of the rules of tax assessment. The system has eliminated the requirement or opportunity of discreteness to a large extent and established a transparent rule-based working environment. The citizens have benefited greatly with the improved system of grievance redressal and

their complaints are resolved within 24 hours. Overall, the citizens have benefitted immensely as most transactions are now processed within ten minutes. Finally, transparency and better service delivery has brought in overall societal gains. Social capital is likely to be fostered track as trust levels increased and reciprocal behaviour in society becomes more common and frequent (IIM, 2004).

The study on computerization of road transport offices in Andhra Pradesh has also demonstrated that computerization significantly achieved its objectives. Most of the citizens get the work done and they do not avail the services of the agents. However, the infrastructural services like water, canteen, and toilets were found poor in the offices at different locations. The computerization process of the offices has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the offices in their functioning besides timeliness in delivery of services (IIM, 2004). Evaluation study of regional passport office at Ahmadabad also demonstrated that computerization and e-passport system has improved its system of processing and quality of services. However, citizens were not fully aware about the system and the services being offered by the office through visiting the website. Agents are critical of the quality of work after computerization. The study highlighted the need for training of staff, user education and technology tuning (IIM, 2004). A study on Mahiti Shakti of Godhara district of Gujarat concluded that the project champion was dynamic during its computerization stage and network with several contributors like CED – IIMA, RESECO, NIC, etc. Thus, the Mahiti Shakti Portal turned out to be feature rich with most of the useful data populated. However, the employees have weak linkages with the project. Officers in various departments have not shown interest in the computers and computer-based services of Mahiti Shakti. The kiosk of the project has turned out to be just forms vending shops due to lack of operational knowledge. The project has also failed in addressing the social factors such as gender bias and cost equations. The credibility of the project as perceived by the end users has been neglected in the project (IIM, 2004). An evaluation of e-government at road transport office, Ahmadabad indicated that project has successfully offered benefits to its stakeholders and proved to be sustainable. The citizens are satisfied with the improved services. They are happy with the help desk facilities and smart card driving licenses. However, they felt that the process time may be further improved. Agents are not too happy with the computerized system as they feel that loop holes do exist in the system. They feel that RTO is charging more without delivering the benefits to the citizens. The RTO employees feel quite involved but seem to be handicapped by lack of adequate training. The service providers felt that there is plenty of scope for improvement in the services. On the whole, the project seems to have been well conceived, executed and delivered benefits to the stakeholders (IIM, 2004). The journey to e-governance is not easy and full of challenges. It is a continuous process of evolution, of struggle of improvising the systems and is equally associated with financial and political risks. Resistance to change is inevitable due to various factors. Change management needs to be dealt sensibly and tactfully. Capacity building of all stakeholders is another important issue that needs to be addressed on priority basis.

CONCLUSION

The aim of initiative under administrative reforms always remains to provide an efficient, accountable, transparent and citizen-centric administration. Since the traditional form of invisible governance has become obsolete in the phase of globalization and liberalization, there is an all-round demand and emphasis on free access and availability of information to the stakeholders. In India, the Right to Information Act, 2005 has been an important legislation that recognizes the citizens' right to information. It also operationalizes this right by presenting procedures and mechanisms. The reforms agenda underlined in AMRUT aims at strengthening the urban local governments and ensuring the implementation of the principles of urban good governance. However, state policy support and proactive approach of local governments is essential. Moreover, the close coordination of parastatal agencies with urban local bodies is equally important. Government of India is trying its best for bringing transparency and accountability in administration through introducing citizen-centric reforms and improving service delivery mechanism. The wider application of improved technology, e-governance, citizen's charters, service level benchmarking, report card system, etc. have no doubt improved the efficiency and effectiveness in the governance. Besides, reforms in the administrative system have checked the corruption and made the officials accountable and responsive towards their duties. Transparent and participatory e-government: including discussion on improvements to the work process through information technology applications in administrative processes, information sharing and integrated management of information resources; improvements to the public service delivery system through on-line disclosure of all service processes, increased e-services, public portal service, and one-stop e-service for the business sector; higher popular participation online; online disclosure of administrative information adoption of online forums and e-voting systems; and the establishment of privacy protection systems.

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