



## Lesson from E-government Initiatives in Uttar Pradesh

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### ABSTRACT

*Governments at all the three levels in India- Centre, State and Local bodies, in India are making an effort to adopt Information Communication Technology to deliver efficient and quick services to citizens. In this process numerous projects have been initiated by different state governments in India, like e-seva, Lokmitra, PARAKH, Gyandoot, etc. Some of these have been very successful in achieving their aims while others have been a failure due to various reasons. The state of Uttar Pradesh, unfortunately has a long way to go, as compared to other states, in adoption, diffusion and usage of e-governance. This paper discusses certain e-governance projects initiated by other Indian states and focuses on lessons that can be learnt from them for the success of such kind of initiatives.*

**Keywords:** E-government projects, e-seva, telecom infrastructure, capacity building, people involvement

### 1. Introduction

Information Technology is recognized as a strategic tool that can enhance efficiencies in government very significantly (Margretts, 1999). e-governance offers integrated government services through a single window concept by re-engineering of government processes. E-government has been seen as the intensive use of information technologies for the provision of public services, the improvement of managerial effectiveness and promotion of democratic values and mechanisms Gil-Garcia and Pardo (2005). Governments at all three tiers - the centre, at state and at the level of local bodies like Municipalities and Panchayati Raj Institution, are now leveraging IT for good governance (Abramson, 2003). E-governance brings governments and citizens closer together by eliminating/reducing various levels involved in providing services and information and improving the delivery and quality, besides bringing transparency (Bedi & Srivastava, 2002; Evans, 2003).

In India, e-governance still seems to be in growth stage. Various experiments are being conducted by governments at various levels (centre, state, local level) to implement e-government initiatives. Efforts are made to study the various issues involved in e-readiness, e-adoption and e-deliverance with the help of various case studies (Barry Fulton, 2003). Some states have been very successful in their efforts, while others are still lagging behind. The state of Uttar Pradesh is one such state which still has a long way to go as far as e-governance is concerned.

The democratic system in India makes provision for a central government at the centre that governs the country. India has 28 states, each governed by a state government which is responsible for designing

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policies, programs and administering and implementing various services for people of the state. The state of Uttar Pradesh, in the northern India has so far lagged behind most of the other Indian states in terms of growth and development, including e-governance implementation. This paper discusses e-government initiatives in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Various hurdles which have prevented the state from moving ahead have also been presented. Certain projects implemented by different state governments in an effort to provide effective e-services to citizens have also been discussed in brief. Paper focuses on the lessons that can be learnt from these projects.

## 2. Initiatives in UP

Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in the country accounting for 16.4 per cent of the country's population. It is also the fourth largest state in geographical area covering 9.0 per cent of the country's geographical area. The performance of the state on various social development indicators like medical facilities, teacher-pupil ratio in primary schools, birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate, literacy, per capita income, electrification of villages, per capita power consumption etc. have not been very encouraging. Uttar Pradesh is often seen as a case study of development in a region of India that currently lag behind other parts of the country in terms of a number of important aspects of well being and social progress. It has a low literacy rate of 57.4 % according to 2001 census.

E-Governance projects in UP cover the entire spectrum of interfaces - G2G, G2C, G2B, G2E, G2S. In the year 2006, U.P. took initiatives for implementing and spreading e-governance through capacity building. Under the e-governance plan, the Government planned to enhance transparency in public administration and make the delivery system more effective.

Departments planned to be covered under the e-governance include land record, medical-health, secondary education, foods-civil supplies, labour, social welfare, road transport, property registration, agriculture, treasuries, municipalities, gram panchayat, commercial taxes, police and employment exchanges. Also, Software Technology Parks at Agra and Varanasi have been planned (E-governance to be put on fast track in U.P., 2006).

UP Government and almost all the departments have got their websites from where the information may be accessed by citizens. Following are some of the important projects (Uttar Pradesh- Moving Ahead with ICT, 2006).

- **eSuvidha:** in order create and develop a bridge between the common citizen and the government departments, the Smart City Project unit (e-Suvidha) was constituted and duly registered as a government society. This has been made possible due to public-private partnership.

It is supposed to provide single window service to consumers for depositing their electricity, water, house tax, telephone and mobile bills. The expanse would be increased to cover some other cities and other departments also, like passport office, tourism, Indian railways etc. to increase the convenience of citizens (eSuvidha, 2006).

- **Lokvani rural e-service project:** In this project the government has sought public-private partnership. PriceWaterHouse Coopers has been entrusted to prepare the road map for the project.

Lokvani kiosks were being set up under private participation in rural areas, Sitapur being the first district. This project was widely appreciated at various national and international levels ( E-governance to be put on fast track in U.P. )

- **Treasury Computerization** - one of the few government sector projects to have been **certified by ISO**, the treasury computerization in the state is an example of G2G and G2C interfaces. Benefiting more than six lakh pensioners of the state the software has been implemented in all 73

treasuries of the state, and provides information over IVRS and web.

- **Bhulekh** – the land records computerization in UP started as an application especially for farmers but with concepts such as ‘*Khatauni on Web*’, ‘*RoR Aapke Dwar*’ the project has benefited government, banks, NGOs and all other stakeholders. Implemented in all the 305 tehsils of the state, the project has been instrumental in bridging the digital divide to a great extent.
- **Vahan** – The state has already computerized the major activities (Registration, Tax Collection, Permits, etc) of 19 RTO and ARTO offices. The project will be extended to all the RTOs of the state in the next couple of years.
- **Telemedicine** – UP was among the first in the country to have started the telemedicine project. Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences and IIT Kanpur have successfully implemented the project in rural areas of the state.

There are numerous other projects like Property and Land Registry System, GIS based Planning Atlas, Online Counseling for UP Technical University, Results on Web, Nagar Nigam computerization, File Monitoring System and web based MPR, which are aimed at providing better services to the citizens and MIS for the administrators and policy makers.

### 3. Obstacles

In spite of these efforts, the state having the poorest record in e-governance is Uttar Pradesh, when rated on the ICT policy and vision and their priorities for e-Governance. UP is one of the largest and the most populous state of the country. It requires huge efforts for implementing projects/applications across the state, and supporting them. The applicability and feasibility of e-governance has not yet been fully explored in U.P.

Low literacy rate of the state proves to be a significant obstacle for usage of services by citizens.

The state was found to be a laggard on citizen satisfaction and e-Readiness. Goa emerged as the best e-governed state in the country followed by Karnataka. Assam, Goa, Delhi, Karnataka are the best four regional e-Governed states according to a survey. Even *Corporations* were least satisfied with the e-governance *services* and initiatives taken by UP Government (*Goa best e-governed state in India: IDC, 2007*)

According to Transparency International (2007) one of the reasons may be high corruption level in various departments of Uttar Pradesh government (like police, land records registration, housing, and water supply services in that order). Computerisation of front-end government services, e-governance, citizen charters and social audits have made an impact in controlling corruption involving upper and middle classes but have not helped the poor.

In order to make its legislators more organized and efficient, the government of Uttar Pradesh released an IT budget of Rs 0.15 million per legislator through which a laptop and other computer hardware was given to them. However poor educational background, little or no computer literacy and cynicism towards the use of technology proved to be an insurmountable barrier (Pandey & Kumar, 2006).

E-governance needs to particularly focus on 1) the ease of interaction, 2) availability and 3) quality of services (*Goa best e-governed state in India: IDC, 2007*).

“Concept of e-governance in Uttar Pradesh appears to be in a shoddy state”, due to lack of connectivity between government departments (Lack of integration hinders e-governance in India's Uttar Pradesh state, 2004).

IT companies also need to be lured into the state.

#### 4. Lessons from other States

Many researchers have proposed do and don'ts for success of e-governance but mostly these have been proposed merely as theories. The present study analyses various projects and attempt has been made to extract the reasons behind success of these projects which can actually prove as practical lesson for others. The progression of the activities in an e-services introduction project should be first inside processes then activities in which customers take part (Andrea Di Maio, 2001).

E-government implementation is not just a technological but also organizational change (Beynon-Davies, 2005).

In assessing Lokmitra project in Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh, Singh & Sharma (2004) reported no technological problems, rather found problem in management and training aspects. Other researchers (Ewusi-Mensah & Przasnyski, 1991; Mundi, Kanjo and Mtema, 1999) have reported similar problems. Therefore the government needs to lay emphasis on proper change management, training of officials and general management aspects in order to successfully implement e-governance (Singh & Sharma, 2006).

Experiences from initiating e-grama in Orissa show that motivating local people for use of new service/technology is very essential for the success of Information Communication Technology based project. At the same time training the officials and participatory style may prove to be helpful. Telecom infrastructure is very important which can otherwise lead to connectivity problem as faced in Lokmitra (H.P.)

For successfully implementing a project like Akshaya (in Kerala), following factors were considered to be important, among others (Radhakumari, 2006):

- Involvement of local bodies and local people
- Connectivity (achieved through broadband)
- Decentralisation of the entire process (which empowered panchayats to take decisions)
- Involvement of local educated unemployed youth, which provides sustainability to project.

In e-Grama project in Orissa, members Youth clubs in villages are trained in ICT skill by another body named Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (Under ministry of youth affairs and sports). This body bridges the gap in 'digital divide' (Dash, Patra & Pand, 2006). Similar initiatives of involving local youth may be started in U.P. to increase e-literacy.

Implementation of Information Kerala Mission (IKM) in Kerala, established in the year 1999, for computerizing the local bodies has been one of the most ambitious e-government programmes in India. This project has shown that in the long run, a human centred approach to Information Communication Technology dissemination works well (Unnikrishnan, 2006).

Project PARAKH was started in Madhya Pradesh in the year 2000. Government evolved a proactive mechanism to collect information regarding various amenities from the villages. Officials involved in the process are independent people who were not a part of the system implementing the various services. Feedback of stakeholders is taken from time to time to revise the formats. The key strengths of the system are that it gives opportunity to verify claims of the provider, it is independent from provider and provides information to administration and public both (Rao, Rao & Joshi, 2008).

To incorporate the stakeholders feedback received from time to time and citizen centric schemes, the

project is amended from time to time. The government of Rajasthan has studied the system and is trying to replicate it.

E-governance project at Bellundur is an example of successful ICT intervention and a public-private-local partnership for e-governance. It has shown that any e-governance solution must have a self-generated interest demonstrated by the local community, both socially and commercially. Investments must be made into acclimatizing citizens into the use of computers, and generate interest in the given solution. It is also essential to train users through ICT training and capacity building institutions (Pande and Subramanyam, 2004).

A study on e-seva highlighted the need to keep the costs of services reasonable, to achieve the goal to take services to doorsteps of people. People need to be made more aware regarding functionality and utility of services. Besides, governments need to constantly evaluate its established practices and innovate new policies and practices to continuously adapt itself to the changing needs and demands of citizens (Radhakumari, 2004).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) experts believe the e-governance experiment in Tamilnadu has been slow because the policy makers are busy re-inventing the wheel, moving into investment-centric modes and implementing projects that are top-driven with little public participation (TN's e-Gov experiences spotty, but ongoing, 2008)

Rural e-seva project has shown that in order to gain wider acceptability, active and willing participation of various stakeholders is very essential. They have to be trained not just on the usage of computer but also on the processes which govern the entire project. Continuous skill upgradation programs need to be taken up. Besides back office computerization of various government departments is equally important. Government employees at various levels need sensitization and exposure to the Information Technology needs of their departments and to the project concepts. Regular monitoring and periodic assessment is essential. This can be done through citizen surveys and media perceptions (Prabhu & Sai Baba, 2006).

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The analysis of functioning of various e-governance projects has shown that mere good planning cannot ensure success. It is essential to identify the characteristics of the local people and the region in terms of strengths and weaknesses, in which the project is to be implemented. Thus an elaborate SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of the project is required to be done. The successful projects have involved the local people, particularly the youth. People must be educated regarding the potential benefits of such projects, before actually implementing it. It is essential to have a sound infrastructure and technology to support e-governance programs. Decentralisation has also shown to deliver desirable results. Another pre-requisite is that officials involved in such projects must also be motivated to adopt the changes and must be trained to use computers. The states like Uttar Pradesh which still have to go a long way in implementing e-governance, can learn lessons from projects initiated in other states both in terms of what to do and what not to do.

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