

EFFECTIVENESS OF E-GOVERNANCE AMONG RURAL WOMEN

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Abstract

E-governance or electronic governance refers to the application of Information and Communication Technologies by government agencies for exchange of information, communication, transaction with citizens, businesses or other government departments. It aims at providing public services effectively, efficiently and equitably to the citizens. Good governance is a competent management of a country's resources and affairs in a manner which is transparent, open, accountable, equitable and responsive to people's needs. The Government has launched several programmes for attaining the strategy inclusive growth. These initiatives have brought in some transparency through its advertisements. It becomes more beneficial to its beneficiaries and also raising public consciousness and confidence among public. The system should be transparent through good governance.

Key words: E-Governance, Good Governance, Inclusive Growth, ICT.

Introduction

In the year 2005, UNDP defined as, "e -Governance is the Information and Communication Technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective." India is a nation of villages. The rural mass in the nation comprises the core of Indian society and also represents the real India. According to the Census Data 2011, there are 6, 38,387 villages in India that represent more than 72 per cent of the total population. In a participatory democratic society, ICT can be used for good governance, enhance democratization and citizen empowerment. The digital governance creates better connections between citizens and government and encourages their participation in governance. The processes gives chance to open up the avenues for direct participation of women in government policy making process. It is very significant in rural areas where people deprived of getting benefit of the different integrated development programmes. Inclusive growth is the new strategy that we need to operate on and it is related essentially to equality of opportunity to all for productive and meaningful life with freedom and equality.

The objectives of E-governance in Kerala are (Information Kerala Mission, 2005)

1. To make Kerala a leader among states in India in using ICTs to achieve economic and social development, environmental and cultural promotion, and benefits to its people.
2. To deliver high-quality citizen-focused services.
3. To remove the digital divide among the haves and haven'ts.
4. To generate employment opportunities.
5. To improve overall performance as measured through better policy outcomes.
6. To improve efficiency in revenue mobilization and public expenditure.

Major E-Governance Programmes in Kerala

Programmes	Targeted Service
FRIENDS	Single window schemes for Taxes and other utility projects. It integrated departments like Revenue, Motor vehicles, Civil supplies, Local bodies, Universities, Electricity, Water and Telephones
AKSHAYA	Bridge Digital Divide, Public Delivery Services, Creation of employment, E-literacy
SWAN (Secretariat)	Integration of Secretariat, Vikas Bhavan and Public Office. Paper less Filing.
SWAN (State)	Integration of various District Headquarters with Capital

SPARK	G2E Web based Personal Administration for service, Salary , IT and Account Matters
KISSAN	Agriculture Information System
KPCS.org	Transparent Window for Recruiting Govt. Officials in Kerala
E-nabling Paddy Procurement	Using IT for Procurement, Processing, Marketing and Distribution.
E-Filing of commercial tax returns	Paperless, Error free and Transparent tax collection
ATI	Avail Information about Kerala University at any Time
SWEET	All Information and Services Relating to Kerala University Examination.
e-Law	Digital filing, Speedy Digital Advice
VDCCs	e-Literacy, Digital Inclusion with Social Equity
Sutharyakeralam	Compliant and Grievance Handling directly by the Chief Minister
IDEAS	File Tracking System for Government Offices
MESSAGE	Internet based application for the citizen services
AASTHI	Automated e-Inventory Management of Computers and Related Equipment
SPARSH	Information regarding Fair-value of land, PSC notifications, SPARK salary slip etc
E-Krishi	Enables the farmers with access to information on market demand, prices, good agricultural practices and quality agricultural inputs supported by a technology enabled robust transaction platform that facilitates all their off line activities
YES @ Kerala	Provides soft skills and technical skills training to students from various colleges in the State

Source: Various Publications, Kerala State IT Mission.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know about the various e-governance programme implemented by the government.
2. To acquire knowledge about the effectiveness of the programme among women in rural area.
3. To identify its challenges and its problems.

Methodology

Primary data are collected from 80 respondents who are the beneficiaries of MGNREG programme in Eriyad panchayat of Kodungallur Taluk. All are job card holders through MGNREG Programme. They are also aware about the Janaseva Kendra/Akshaya programme under e-governance.

Socioeconomic Profile of the Beneficiary Households N=80			
Item	Categories	No. of respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	4	5
	Female	76	95
Programmes	Ration card	80	100

	Aadhar	80	100
	Job card	80	100
Age	Below 30	1	1.25
	30-40	17	21.25
	40-50	31	38.75
	50-60	15	18.75
	Above 60	16	20
Standard of living	APL	16	20
	BPL	64	80
Educational qualification	Below SSLC	75	93.75
	SSLC	3	3.75
	Pre-Degree	2	2.50
Membership in Kudumbasree	Yes	78	97.5
	No	2	2.50
Awareness about e-governance through	TV	51	63
	Radio	03	4
	Work-site	22	28
	Neighbours	4	5
Effectiveness(services received)	Marriage registration	58	73
	Telephone bill	64	80
	Educational Purposes (scholarships, entrance exam registration. etc.)	70	88
	Election ID card	12	15
	RSBY-CHIS Health card(Registration and Renewal)	80	100
	Aadhar registration	30	38
	Other purposes(gas connection. job card regn. etc)	70	88

Level of satisfaction	Highly satisfied	2	3
	Satisfied	68	85
	Dissatisfied	10	12
	Highly dissatisfied	nil	

Successful Projects for Inclusive Growth Friends

The aim of the FRIENDS project is to create a single window, enabling the citizens to pay taxes and other utility payments.. The participating departments were given the freedom to maintain payment counters in their office premises as well. The project was then rolled out to other districts. The FRIENDS counter today handles bill payments of seven departments – revenue, motor vehicles, civil supplies, local bodies, universities, electricity, water, and telephones. Close to around a million people have used the FRIENDS service so far and it is growing at about 150% every year. The FRIENDS centers were initially conceived as a multipurpose service center, helping not only bill payment services but also acting as information kiosks on government activities. FRIENDS (Fast Reliable Instant Efficient Network for Disbursement of Services) is a single window 'no queue' integrated remittance centre, where the citizens have the opportunity to pay all taxes and other dues to the Government, under one roof at no extra cost. An on going project of KSITM, FRIENDS is now operational in all 14 districts of Kerala. FRIENDS accept payments of the Kerala University, MG University, Calicut University, Local Bodies, Kerala State Electricity Board, Kerala Water Authority, Revenue, Civil Supplies, Motor Vehicles, Electrical Inspectorate and BSNL. Railway reservations can also be made in the three centres at Wayanad, Pathanamthitta and Malappuram. The computerized counters work from 8.00 am to 7.00 pm, including all Sundays. Pilot at Thiruvananthapuram in June 2000, this centre has now earned the benchmark ISO 9001: 2000 certifications. KSITM joins hands with the IT Department of the Government for the project implementation. A year later, all 14 districts had one centre each. The recently launched enterprise enabled 'any-where any-payment system' titled 'FRIENDS Re-Engineered and Enterprise Enabled Software' (FREES), developed by National Informatics Centre, Kerala is a centralised web enabled system that help the citizens to pay utility bills at any FRIENDS centre. FREES Application has centralised database system with the feature utility payment can be done on any FRIENDS or AKSHAYA all over Kerala with a single user interface. Through this system new services or agency can be added without changing the software. It has online data fetching and up dating from and to the departmental servers- for Vehicle Tax, Water Bill and Property Tax. The FREES facility is available in FRIENDS Janasevanakendram at Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki, Malappuram and Wayanad.

The Akshaya Project

Launched in November 2002, Akshaya is an effort on the part of the IT department to 'bridge the digital divide'. By the end of the 3-year project, organizers hope to have set up a network of 6000 information centers that have the potential to impart basic IT literacy to at least one member in each of the 6.5 million families in Kerala; generate and distribute locally relevant content; improve public delivery of services; and create employment opportunities. The Akshaya project is being implemented through Panchayati Raj Institutions, and involves private enterprise in the development of training institutes and content generation. The project has helped in taking IT to the remotest part of Kerala- Malappuram. Incidentally, Malappuram has become the country's first 100% e-Literate district. People of this district are today conversant with the use of IT and are even savvy with

Internet usage. The project has created over 620 kiosks and generated employment to over 2500 people in the area. "With the success we have derived from Malappuram, the government has decided to replicate the Akshaya model in other districts of Kerala. India's first step in taking ICT to the masses has been rolled-out in Kerala, named as Akshaya the state's first district-wide e-literacy project, one of the largest known Internet Protocol (IP) based wireless networks in the world. This project, evolved into one of the most dynamic interventions in public-private-partnerships in the State. Akshaya was conceived as a landmark ICT project by the Kerala State Information Technology Mission to bring the benefits of this technology to the entire population of the State. Akshaya is acting as an instrument in rural empowerment and economic development. Quality ICT dissemination and service delivery facilities (Akshaya Centres) has been set up within a maximum of 2 kilometers for any household and networked leveraging entrepreneurship.

Objectives of the Project

1. Creating & expanding economic opportunities
2. Awareness about e-learning, e-transaction, e - governance
3. Rural Empowerment of individuals and communities through enhanced access to information
4. Integrating communities through creation of e-networks
5. Creating awareness of ICT tools and usage
6. Generating e-content useful to the common man in local language
7. Generation of service delivery points even in the remotest areas
8. Generating at least 15,000 job opportunities

Secretariat Wide Area Network (SWAN)

A massive automation process of the state Secretariat, which houses 37 departments across six blocks, is in full swing. The project christened SWAN, will link 122 key areas of the Secretariat- the annex, Vikas Bhavan and the Public Office in a phased manner. These implementations will also scale up the current system: Secretariat Internet Communication System (SICS). Meanwhile, the government is also in the process of establishing a State Wide Area Network aimed at linking the various district head quarters with the capital.

Service and Payroll Administrative Repository for Kerala (SPARK)

SPARK is G2E web based Personnel Administration and accounts software for Government of Kerala covering 5.25 lakhs employees. Permanent Employee Number for all employees is allotted through the system. The system addresses all requirements in Service, salary, Income Tax and Accounts matters. Centralised database helps in quick decision-making and applying rules and achieve highest level of transparency in dealing with the employees. Activity driven procedure linked data capture is ensured. All reports are generated in PDF format. Provision is available to send alert messages to employees, when payments are credited. Provision to generate Identity Cards is another facility. SPARK is an attempt to bring the payroll and finance related activities of Kerala State employees within a single application. The system has been developed with a view to cater to the Administration, Payroll and other Accounts activities of Government Establishments. Being a well-integrated system, the changes made through one module reflect in all related areas of activity.

Kerala State has 39 Government Departments, over 122 Field Departments and over 30000 offices spread across the nook and corner of the State. Personnel and Payroll Management System using SPARK-Service and Payroll Administrative Repository for Kerala is to be implemented in all the Government Offices across the state.

Main Features of SPARK

1. Government-to-employee (G2E) web based Personnel Administration and Accounts software for Government Establishments
2. Addresses all requirements in Service and Salary matters
3. Entire Service Book of each employee is digitalized
4. Centralised database helps in quick decision making and applying rules and regulations uniformly to all employees
5. Salary Processing of NGOs
6. All reports in PDF format
7. Provision to generate Identity Cards
8. Interface for individual employees to view their salary, loan, leave, GPF, accounts and personnel details
9. Provision for filing Annual Property Returns for Government Employees and All India Service(AIS) officers
10. Processing of Self Drawing Officer's Salary (SDO's)
11. Increment Sanctioning
12. Leave salary and arrear bills preparation
13. Management of recoveries, advances, loans etc of employees
14. Online Transfer processing
15. LPC Generation
16. Transfer Management module
17. Income tax computation and generation of statutory forms etc
18. All kinds of statistical reports using queries
19. Comprehensive database of Government offices across the state
20. Inbuilt Notice Management Module

Benefits

- A centralized database of the government employees for the whole state
- Unique Permanent Employee Number for all
- Necessary Government Orders issued by Govt. of Kerala
- All reports generated in PDF format
- Offline data entry package for easy data entry

Future Plans

- Electronic submission of bills to treasuries
- Pension data base maintenance
- Forecast the expenses on wages for planning
- "What if analysis" on the expense on wages for different variations on allowances
- Analysis on pensioners for the next 5-10 years
- Fully automated bug reporting and tracking system.
- Initialisation of base tables, bill details, cheque details
- Updating budget allocation for each head of account
- Importing salary related bills into accounting module
- Generation of sanction orders, TDS and periodical reports
- Online queries for monitoring expenses
- TA Bills
- Provident Fund Advances application processing

- Online Leave Application

IDEAS

Information and Data Exchange Advanced System or 'IDEAS' is a web based online File, Petition and Government Order tracking system implemented by Kerala State IT Mission with technical support of National Information Centre (NIC). The system facilitates tracking & monitoring of government documents, serves as a mechanism for reminding the Government departments about the pending status of files and also provides a real-time status of Government files/ petitions. It is developed using open source technology.

This system makes the government more transparent and approachable for the citizens, bringing benefits in its overall governance.

Benefits of IDEAS

- The citizens can obtain online information about the current status of their petitions submitted to the government.
- The officers can obtain online information about the movement of files related to their subject, office, department or ministry under the government.
- The Government obtains an advanced information support system that facilitates more efficient administration.

Kerala State Wide Area Network (KSWAN)

The Government of Kerala has initiated major e-Governance programmes in various Departments, with the efforts showing results in the past few years. However, the actual results of the e-governance activities will gain more visibility and citizen focus only if many of the stand-alone systems created are properly networked and integrated. The Departments will not only have more efficient/transparent delivery mechanisms, but will also have updated information at all levels for monitoring, and more importantly for planning. Kerala State Wide Area Network (KSWAN) is being setup as a backbone of the State Information Infrastructure (SII), connecting Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode, extending to 14 districts and 152 Blocks of the State. The network will also connect 1500 offices of Government Departments through Wireless and a larger number through Leased Lines and LAN. The infrastructure would support integration of a large number of G2G, G2C services in hand with the applications hosted in the State. The total estimated outlay for the project is Rs.78.7 Cr. Later it was revised as per contracted outlay to Rs.63 Crores, in which the DIT share is Rs.45.80 Cr and Rs.17.2 Cr as State Share. An infrastructure like the State Wide Area Network supports integration of a large number of citizen services. For Departments like the Revenue, Registration, Rural Development, Civil Supplies, Police etc., KSWAN provides advantages like high degree of citizen interaction. In Departments like Taxes and Treasury, the revenue augmentation will be enormous. While the advantages of this kind of a mechanism is obvious for Government to Citizen transactions (referred to as G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Government (inter-department; referred to as G2G), serious issues pertaining to resources, technical standards and manageability will surface if individual departments were to implement their own networks.

E-Governance effectively delivers better programming and services in the era of newly emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs), which held new opportunities for rapid social and economic transformation worldwide. The governments at the national and state level seek to harness their potential and create new dimension of economic and social progress through bringing change in traditional governance structure to e-governance system. E -Governance has direct impact on its citizens who derive benefits through direct transactions with the services offered by the

government. It explores new facet of leadership approach, skill and mindset of the citizens of the country. However, the process of e-governance requires sustained commitment, political will, adequate resources which can develop a system of e-governance in order to make the current policies and practices of government more efficient and effective. E-Governance can renovate the relationship between public, private sector and government and enables better policy outcomes, high quality services and greater engagements with the citizens the country.

Challenges to Good Governance in India

While evaluating India's stand amongst other countries of the world, it is revealed that India is compared favorably with many developing countries though it has long way to go to attain the level of developed countries. The criminalization of politics and corruption are two major challenges of good governance in India which need to be addressed on urgent basis. The corruption has virtually spread in almost all aspects of public life. The person lying on the street is left to struggle incessantly with corruption throughout his life. Corruption is relatively inherent in terms of client public puzzle, harassed by opaque rules and procedures, excessive delay in disposal of public matters. It not only averts the benefits of globalization to reach the common men but also denies transparency, accessibility and accountability, confuses rules and procedures, proliferate mindless control and poor commitments at all levels. Hence, there is foremost need to check corruption at all levels through raising public consciousness and strong commitments not to make dishonest compromises which would put down the moral values and ethics of life. India being the largest democratic country in the world is struggling hard to emerge as world class leader in the fields of social and economic development. However, the nexus of crime and politics is so strong that the common citizens of the country have no stand to say or exert their rights. In order to prevent such misuses on May 2, 2002, the Supreme Court of India has given a historic judgment following the public interest litigation(PIL) led by an NGO that, every candidate contesting an election to Parliament, State Legislatures or Municipal Corporations has to give true declarations of candidate's educational qualifications, criminal charges and financial records. Though, many commissions and committees have been framed to bring improvement in the situation, these reformative measures are just a drop in the ocean. So anew beginning is necessary to ameliorate criminalization from politics and the seriousness of matter should be properly worked out. The educated youngster's should be encouraged to enter into Indian politics and these young leaders should be properly nourished by the patriotic commitments and abide by the core principles of democratic governance.

Conclusion

The effective functioning of governance is the prime concern of every citizen of the country. The citizens are ready to pay the price for good services offered by the state, but what is required is transparent, accountable and intelligible governance system absolutely free from bias and prejudices. In the present era when India is progressively moving towards development and prosperity, there is a need to reformulate our national strategy to accord primacy to the Gandhian principle of 'Antodaya' to restore good governance in the country. In such circumstance, when the nation/state machineries become more efficient and accountable, the citizens can enjoy higher per capita income, wide spread literacy, adequate health facilities with longer average life. After all, the good governance in the country can thrive only when every Indian citizen would ignite themselves in the flame of patriotism adhering to truth, peace and non-violence as means to perceive India of our dream. At this movement, every Indian should swear that the moral principles of our life should never be waved out by the money and muscle power. Let our moral strength succeed over material strength. Let's learn from our past Indian heritage. Being responsible citizens of the country it is our foremost duty not to pledge a vote for deviants to ruin our nation rather to vote for the honest and upright citizens who can be good administrators and reformers to bring positive transformations and can lead our nation under their dynamic leadership.

Good governance is characterized by transparency and accountability and the best way to ensure transparency and accountability in governance through increased and informed participation of people. People are biggest stakeholder in governance, they have a critical and crucial role to play .So, it is imperative that people must have the right to know about the activities of the government.

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