Chapter XII
Implementation of E–Governance:
Some Technical Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This chapter introduces the term e-governance and puts on view that e-governance is not merely the computerization of government processes but a government process reengineering (GPR). E-governance is not only about implementing technologies and supplying services but that it provides solutions. The initiatives taken in this regard should not only remain limited to informational and transactional level but also reach complete transformational level. Some success stories of e governance initiatives have been reported with positive impact and value addition in citizen's services. However, low percentage of successful e-governance projects compels to identify and address the various issues accountable for it. It is argued that technical issues are equally imperative to be addressed along with socio-economic and political issues for implementing interoperable e governance solutions. An attempt has been done to identify such technical issues and provide solution so as to go for successful ICT strategy.

INTRODUCTION

The World Bank, in 2000, organized a forum called 'Voices of the Poor', which got feedback from 60,000 people in 60 countries and concluded that people wanted access to knowledge and opportunities instead of charity to fight conditions leading to poverty[1] (Nath, 2001).

The need to have access to information and knowledge by the citizen about the governmental programmes has been comprehended worldwide. In India, the government realized that the citizens must have right to information regarding government affairs towards development programmes and put forward the Freedom of Information Bill—December, 2002 which stood up for:

To provide freedom to every citizen to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, consistent with public interest, in order to promote openness, transparency, and accountability in administration and in relation to matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

The above bill was enacted as *Right to Information* act from October 12, 2005 (The Gazette of India, 2005). The Information Technology Act was already enacted from October 18, 2000 that facilitated legal validity of transactions on the Internet and paved the way for the citizens to conduct business with the Government online rather than to be in line.

The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in governance has been envisaged as a tool to accelerate the flow of information between different nodes and to cut down the time lag and reduce the probability of information loss and distortion; to widen the domain of information recipients and providers, leading to greater diffusion of information; to create information exchange interfaces that cuts across the traditional and organizational barriers to information flow such as hierarchy and bureaucracy (Baharul Islam, 2003). The transformation of government processes and services that make the use of most innovative information and communication technologies, particularly Web-based Internet applications, is termed as electronic governance or e-governance (Fang, 2002).

The European Commission (Alabau, 2005), defined electronic governance as "the use of information and communication technologies in public administrations combined with organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes and strengthen support to public policies."

Bill Gates wrote in his book "Business @ The speed of Thought"—E-governance is a method by which governments are empowering citizens to act for themselves without having to go through bureaucracy (Gates & Hemingway, 1999). Government, perhaps more than any other organization, can benefit from the efficiencies and improved services that stem from digital processes.

Electronic governance (e-governance) is not merely the computerization of government processes (Kumar, 2005) but also refer to the government process re-engineering (GPR), which has an innovative, technical, and managerial role. It refers to the use of technology to transform (not to translate) and enhance the access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners, and employees (Torre, 2003).

This chapter deals with some technical issues and challenges in implementing e-governance at the national level. It also discusses different stages of implementations of e-governance system and recommends on developing successful ICT strategies incorporating comprehensive e-governance action plans.

STAGES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF E-GOVERNANCE

World Wide Web, shortly known as Web is the most ubiquitous and least expensive service of Internet and a medium for disseminating informa-

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