

Chapter 81

Societal and Economical Impact on Citizens Through Innovations Using Open Government Data: Indian Initiative on Open Government Data

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes the impact that an open data policy can have on the citizens of India. Especially in a scenario where government accountability and transparency has become the buzzword for good governance and further look at whether the availability of open data can become an agent for socio-economic change in India. What kind of change it can bring to India which has its own complexities when it comes to socio economic issues and whether the steps taken by the government are up to the mark to address these complexities through data sharing. In order to understand the changes which may occur for the good or the bad, the chapter looks at specific examples where the open data platform have been utilized in India and what impact they have had on the Indian society and how the citizens have responded to it.

BACKGROUND

A piece of content or data is open if anyone is free to use, reuse, and redistribute it - subject only, at most, to the requirement to attribute and share-alike. (Opendefinition.org)

For a country as diverse as India, the process of governance is a complex one which involves a lot of deliberations with the various stakeholders within and outside the government. Given the significant

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social and economic issues which the government has to deal with in India, it has become more and more imperative that the government's decision making process has to be an informed one to ensure the success of its schemes and initiatives. These schemes and initiatives which are targeted towards the citizens also requires an inbuilt process to ensure accountability and transparency to ensure that these schemes are actually benefitting the needy. Therefore, for an informed decision making and accountable review of the government policies the essential ingredient is the availability of data.

Evidence-based planning of socio-economic development processes rely on quality data. Governments across the globe and particularly in India collect process and generate a large amount of data in its day-to-day functioning, which are lying in silos and are difficult to put in effective use. Asset and value potentials of data are widely recognized at all levels. Data collected or generated through public investments, when made publicly available and maintained over time, their potential value could be more fully realized. It helps building a comprehensive statistical picture of the country and allows maximum use/reuse of data, which has the tremendous potential to benefit the citizens socially and economically through data-driven innovation. However, most of such data, which are non-sensitive in nature, remains inaccessible to citizens buried deep down in the government records and files.

Governments become more transparent by proactively publishing timely, relevant, and comprehensive information and data on the Internet. This is done so that it can be easily accessed, analyzed, reused, and combined with other data by anyone for any purposes free of charge and without any restrictions. Open data provides the foundation to enable citizens to better understand how their government works, how their tax money is spent, and how decisions and laws are made. Better understanding through increased access to information can be beneficial to governments, citizens, and society as a whole, as it: (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration & Development Management, United Nations, 2013)

- Helps citizens to hold their government and administration accountable, which can reduce corruption and mismanagement.
- Helps citizens to better understand why and how decisions are made, which can help restore trust and can lead to better acceptance of policy decisions once enacted.
- Supports and empowers citizens to make informed decisions and engage with the government, thus enabling citizens to have a more-active voice in society.
- Supports decision-makers in government and public administration to make better and fact-based policy decisions and thus to increase government efficiency and effectiveness.
- Supports governments, citizens, academia, and the private sector to work together and collaboratively find new answers to solve societal problems.

The need of the hour is to facilitate sharing and utilization of the large amount of data generated and residing among the entities of the Government of India at all the tiers be it at the central, state, district or even Panchayat level. This is possible if the data is available in open formats and free from licenses to encourage its innovative use, reuse and redistribution. In this backdrop; the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) was formulated with the objective of facilitating access to Government of India owned non-sensitive shareable data in machine readable form through a wide area network all over the country, in a periodically updatable manner.

National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP), gazette notified on 17th March 2012, envisages proactive dissemination of Government owned data through the Open Government Data

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