Chapter 5

Citizen–Centric Service Dimensions of Indian Rural E–Governance Systems:
An Evaluation

Harekrishna Misra
Institute of Rural Management Anand, India

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

E-governance systems in India have witnessed prolific advancement over the years. India has strategically adopted e-governance as a part of its policy. In recent times each state has its own e-governance plan to deliver services as planned. National policy also aims to provide formalized services across the nation while recognizing the importance of state specific services. This approach includes various mission mode projects under national e-governance plan (NeGP). Manifestation of such approach has resulted in 100,000 common service centers (CSC) in rural areas. It is expected that rural citizens would find them useful and it may contribute for effective governance. In this chapter it is argued that such an initiative would be successful if rural citizens find these CSCs useful for their livelihood security. Various dimensions of this phenomenon are also examined through some cases in this chapter to understand their contributions to successful CSCs in India.

BACKGROUND

E-governance initiatives, despite acceptance to an extent in the form of e-government systems, have so far remained hype in many parts of the world. Failure stories abundantly reflect that such initiatives with development perspectives have not yielded encouraging results. Estimates indicate that 35 per cent are total failures, 50 per cent are partial failures, and 15 per cent are successes in developing and transitional countries. It is argued that e-governance initiatives are often on project mode and each project forms island for deliveries creating an overwhelming gap between project design and on-the-ground reality (known as design-reality gaps). This gap contributes to failures (Heeks 2003). Despite such discouraging outcomes, e-government initiatives in developing countries have evolved to a level of acceptance among government agencies and backend service provisioning organisations. Most countries are now in the phase of assessing the "impact" on issues related to "efficiency," "effectiveness," and "equity" since they have gone beyond the initial phases of addressing primary challenges of "digital divide," "setting up infrastructure," and "spreading awareness" for ICT use and delivering citizen-centric e-governance services. Most of the countries are now able to showcase their e-governance services and declare the "availability" of these services uninterrupted crossing the spatial challenges (Figure 1). E-governance systems in many countries have evolved to the level of maturity. However, usage of such services has been a challenge. E-governance systems have so far remained supply-driven in most countries and their actual use largely depends on the type of services rendered. E-government services

Figure 1. Changing e-government issues over time
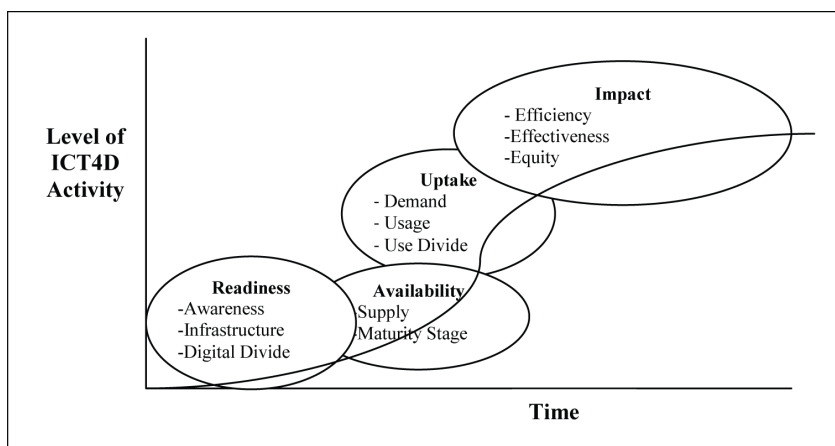
Adopted from (Heeks, 2006; Heeks & Molla, 2009)

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