

# E- Governance in Rural India

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## Abstract

There has been gradual change and transformation in rural areas with the wider impact of globalization, privatization and economic liberalization. The communication and media accessibility in rural areas has drastically changed the working and life style of villagers. The landline telecom services have been replaced by mobile communication with wider internet connectivity. The outreach and easy access to internet has widened the scope of e-services in rural areas. Government initiatives for e-governance and development of communication infrastructure in rural areas have led to the growth of e-services. The Common Service Centres including E-Suvidha Kendra, Jan Suvidha Kendra, Sahaj Kendra, E-Sewa Kendra and Internet Café are providing e-services pertaining to development programmes and schemes, health, education, rural development, agriculture, and other related services. Internet accessibility has also led to the growth of social media which has widely effected the personal communication, social relations and information seeking behaviour. Against this backdrop, present paper attempts to examine the status of rural e-governance<sup>4</sup> in India.

## Introduction:

The globalization and economic liberalization era's information and communication technology revolution sparked changes in the political, financial, and social systems all over the world. The world's administration has changed as a result of these technologies. Globally, governments are transitioning to electronic governance. In their effort to employ information and communication technology to revolutionize Indian government and governance, imaginative administrators have conducted a wide range of experiments in e-governance over the past ten years in India. In the 1980s and 1990s, both industrialized and developing nations embraced novel methods of public administration and governance in response to significant worldwide developments. Catalytic change, community empowerment, competition, mission-driven, outcome-oriented, customer-driven, entrepreneurial, decentralized, and have market-oriented were some of the guiding concepts and traits of the new public management movement. The achievement of good governance depends on e-governance. It makes it easier for residents to take use of government services. In India, a greater proportion of people are now using the Internet. An ICT application is e-governance. The goal of e-governance is to improve the management of social and economic resources for development while strengthening government administration in the process. India's e-commerce industry has boomed during the past ten years. Numerous causes, such as Indian customers' quick adoption of technology, the significant increase in Internet users, new enabling technologies, creative

business models, and different payment choices provided by e-commerce enterprises, all contribute to this rise. Additionally, e-rapid commerce's expansion is unabated. In the upcoming years, there will likely be a significant growth in revenue for the area. E-commerce has seen a spectacular transformation over the past ten years, opening up previously unimaginable possibilities for international trade. Micro, small, and medium-sized businesses can now access worldwide markets thanks to the Internet.

### **E-governance:**

The globalisation and economic liberalisation era's information and communication technology revolution sparked changes in the political, financial, and social systems all over the world. The world's administration has changed as a result of these technologies. Globally, governments are transitioning to electronic governance. In their effort to employ information and communication technology to revolutionise Indian government and governance, imaginative administrators have conducted a wide range of experiments in e-governance over the past ten years in India. The National e-Governance Plan is an ambitious initiative of the Government of India that aims to make all government services available to the general public in its region, to all common service delivery outlets, and to guarantee effectiveness, reliability, and accessibility to services at reasonable prices. India has become one of the greatest e-governance test beds in the world because to the National E-Governance Plan, which uses experiments at all levels of government to enhance civic services and governance (E & Y , 2012).

Information sharing with the public, encouragement of social and business ventures, transparency in the governance process, and support for decision-making tools for both village institutions and government officials are all hallmarks of good governance. One of the alternatives to "good governance" is actively being considered: electronic service delivery. It has been argued that ICT can help good governance very effectively. These systems have taken the form of e-Governance and e-Governments, which aim to simplify various government and governance procedures in order to encourage development. Any Indian governance system must ensure that its citizens' needs are satisfied by effective and appropriate governmental structures. Different definitions exist for electronic governance, often known as e-government. E-governance refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT), such as providing services to citizens through e-governance, wide area networks, mobile phones, etc., the ability to change relationships with customers, businesses, and others keep it as government weapons. E-governance is about improving the way governments work, sharing information, and delivering services to internal and external customers. In order to improve government service delivery, constituent engagement, and governance, Christopher Baum described e-government as the transformation of internal and external interactions of the public sector through net-enabled operations, information technology, and communication<sup>2</sup>. The use of electronic methods for (1) citizen-government contact, (2) streamlining internal government activities, and (3) improving democratic,

government, and business elements is referred to as "e-governanc<sup>e3</sup>." In order to fully utilise the potential of information and communication technology at various levels of government and the public sector, W'O Okot-Uma remarked that "e-governance wants to move forward with the aim of realising procedures and structures and strengthening good governance (Kumar, Gaurav ,2004)". The use of ICT by government organisations to change interactions with residents and businesses is referred to as "e-government." There are various ways to understand e-governance in numbers (Venkatesh, 2003), and Barthwal, ,2003),. This indicates that there is only strong governance and a flawless link between the government and civil administration. "E" is merely a tool. The goal of e-governance is to improve residents' lives and promote increased usage of information technology. Active citizen involvement is made possible by e-governance, allowing citizens to be informed, represented, and encouraged to vote and participate<sup>7</sup>. To give residents access to citizens through affordable Internet mediums, rural ICT solutions are often provided through Internet portals hosted on a delivery web server. Through intranet / LAN connectivity with the servers of those departments, the information flow between the delivery server and other departments is made possible. Transactions are frequently exchanged manually, and response data is manually entered through nodes on the delivery server because the back-end system is not computerised. It is clear that integrating various agencies results in end-to-end contact between central service providers and citizens after several phases.

Depending on the type of interactions and the agencies involved, e-governance can be categorised under various models. Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Government (G2G), Government to Business (G2B), and Government to NGO (G2N) are among them. In the government-to-citizen (G2C) paradigm, the citizen and the government interact to deliver information and a range of services. Government services information is made available on websites, and citizens can learn about the steps involved in employment generation. Application forms for a range of services, including submitting tax returns and renewing licences, are available for download by citizens. Through online portals, numerous government agencies offer a wide range of amenities and services in one location. Additionally, citizens are able to apply online and pay online. In this context, e-education, e-medicine, e-registration, e-transportation, and others are important examples. E-governance can also be divided into two types based on how policies are created and carried out. The goal of e-governance is to use ICT to improve public service delivery and streamline administrative procedures.

The principles and goals of the new public management, which primarily emphasise lean government (reducing, less bureaucracy, and few regulations) for the provision of customer-friendly services at lower costs as well as the renewal of driving licences or declaring income and paying taxes online, have had a significant impact on this vision of e-governance. E-democracy seeks to use the Internet for more direct individual empowerment. Most individuals believed that using e-governance projects saved them money, time, and effort, and that the system's efficiency was higher than they had anticipated. When compared to the previous system,

service delivery is completed quite quickly. As a result, many of these projects were cited as successful cases that could be repeated. These features therefore make it possible for panchayats and other organisations to establish e-governance projects. Financial terms have been advantageous to them. Additionally, it was suggested that citizen-built e-governance projects with clear deliverables for citizens be used. The government must also offer a variety of services to its residents. The Right to Information and the Rural Employment Guarantee Plan would be a clear example.

Even remote projects are reporting with high ease, and the majority of projects are successful thanks to connectivity and power backup alternatives. However, it's important to stress functionality. The key is penetration; whereas programmes like the Common Citizen Service Center, etc., can significantly improve accessibility, Domain Ministries and local self-government bodies must be digitised. Services for front-end common service centres for delivery should be available at the back end. Spending on e-governance should significantly rise; 2% of plan expenses should go toward IT. Although there are some such rules already, they are not currently being followed. This assumes greater significance in light of the nation's transition to result-based budgeting. Most projects are just a negative number, therefore scaling and replication require a scream. To increase the speed of implementation, another area will be required.

In the 1980s and 1990s, both industrialised and developing nations embraced novel methods of public administration and governance in response to significant worldwide developments. Catalytic change, community empowerment, competition, mission-driven, outcome-oriented, customer-driven, entrepreneurial, decentralised, and market-oriented was some of the guiding concepts and traits of the new public management movement. Throughout the 1990s, these traits evolved into the guiding principles of government reinvestment for many federal agencies, as well as state and municipal governments. Even though governments play a significant part in ensuring sustainable human development and lowering poverty, they cannot accomplish these objectives on their own. Effective governance necessitates collaboration and partnerships with businesses and civil society groups through democratic, open, and participatory mechanisms.

There are four key ways that governments may help achieve sustainable economic and social growth in the twenty-first century. As it serves as the basis for context and everything else, creating institutional capacity is the most crucial job. Implementing regulations that foster an environment that allows for effective involvement in a global economy is the second crucial responsibility. In order to promote socially equitable economic development, the third function focuses on pro-economic measures. In order to foster socially fair economic development, the fourth role highlights the crucial role that the government plays in enhancing public administration capabilities, facilitating participation in the global economy, and eliminating poverty. With the aid of technology, the capacity of the government and civil society to carry out transparency measures has considerably increased during the past ten years. The literature suggests that participation (or public voice),

accountability, and accountability can improve governance on the demand side. 9. The discussion and literature on service delivery are the foundation for participation, transparency, and accountability (Joshi, 2003).

According to the World Development Report (2004), the poor were not served by the "long road" of accountability through elected authorities and political actors. A different "short way," which established direct accountability between users and suppliers, was advocated by the World Bank study (2004). A section of the literature that studied how to strengthen the "short way" to strengthen and provide voice, improve transparency, and boost accountability was born out of these arguments (Sinker & Cosi, 2007). "Any endeavour" to maintain the availability of information or procedures that were previously secret in the public domain for use by citizen organisations, service providers, or decision-makers is referred to as a transparency project (Joshi, 2003). For instance, the Right to Information Act was introduced in more than 60 nations worldwide starting in 1966 with Sweden, and two more recently with Mexico in 2002 and India in 2005.

Campaigners from civil society have welcomed this transparency in the hopes that it will result in accountability in the public eye (Fox, Jonathan, 2007). Through reporting and feedback, unambiguous processes and procedures, and the activities and acts of the decision-making authority, transparency encourages the openness of the democratic process. It provides citizens with easy-to-understand information and transparent standards. Decentralization, which includes political divergence, de-concentration, delegation to non-governmental organisations, and transfer, encourages public administration and good governance to provide an institutional framework for individuals to make decisions and actors and organisations to achieve economic goals in order to forge alliances and work in concert with human development objectives. Decentralization ideas and programmes have so been supported by politicians, development experts, and policymakers over the years. In order to ensure proper responsibility of the state and the commercial sector, civil society organisations are playing a significant role in development and governance. The creation of jobs with higher added value, better incomes, and later state revenues that may be used for social spending is increasingly the duty of the private sector, which serves as the primary driver of economic development. With the increased use of information technology, public administration connections and procedures are changing both internally and externally around the world. The government system's internal and external relationships have changed thanks to e-governance, which has also improved public administration's capabilities.

Because it empowers people and improves their capabilities, enables them to participate effectively in political and economic development, and blends the principles of inclusive governance and democratic institutions, meaningful e-government development has brought value to government operations. The three primary types of participation are: (1) economic, where people have the chance to use their skills and earn money to expand their options; (2) political, where the rule of law is upheld; and (3) social and cultural. The three pillars of e-democracy are e-government, e-democracy, and e-participation. The evolution of the online world will heavily

rely on governments. They must implement and modify technology and techniques that will strengthen participatory democracy. International organisations have proposed (Avila, , et al. 2010), guiding principles to ensure the efficient operation of e-government. Priority of development needs, effectiveness and efficiency, resource availability, organisational culture and skills, coordination, legal framework, ICT infrastructure, political leadership and long-term political commitment, public involvement, development planning, partnership, monitoring and evaluation, perception and values, access and skills, privacy and security, and legal and regulatory framework are a few of these. These principles emphasise the need to increase governance's efficacy and efficiency while also maintaining accountability and openness in the provision of public goods and services to the general public. E-government also places a strong emphasis on the idea of putting people first. As a result, the government can improve relations with its constituents by making it easier for them to access information, increasing government accountability by making its citizens more transparent, and encouraging dialogue that is centred on people in order to fight corruption and give citizens the chance to engage with decision-makers. ICT initiatives, community involvement, and traditional knowledge systems (TKS), together with others using the systems approach, are the three main variables of the framework. Each of these variables is defined. ICT activities can directly or indirectly assist all aspects of rural development (RD). The front-end application of computing, networking, and Internet technology for rural areas is referred to as "direct ICT efforts for rural development." Examples include database systems, online portals, or community service centres at the block or village level to solve neighbourhood difficulties, local governance problems, and land record administration, supply-chain management, improving rural markets or agricultural operations, etc. ICT will be used in the background of indirect ICT projects for the rural sector as a tool for education, weather forecasting, and other things.

### **Decentralization and E-Government Services:**

Governmental transformation is now possible thanks to the development of information and communication technology (ICT). Modernizing government operations and procedures with ICT in order to better serve its constituents is known as e-government. Government systems can become more effective (by lowering transaction and coordination costs) as well as more transparent and answerable to the general public with the use of ICT enabled government or e-government. The study's point of view falls under NPM (Drechsler, Wolfgang, 2005),: New Public Management. It promotes using private sector practises in the public sector and current management ideas. The efficiency, openness, accountability, and effectiveness of government are all things that several E-government initiatives in India work to enhance (Bhatnagar, 2003).

The implementation of ICT infrastructure at all levels of the administrative structure is part of a continual endeavour to enhance governmental operations while creating the ideal environment. The National E-Governance Plan (NeGP) is a comprehensive strategy to give a national road map. A sum of Rs. 3,000,000,000



is anticipated to be invested in such an effort<sup>27</sup>. The ICT, rural development, Internet use, information access, and use of e-services are all included in the e-governance framework.

The way in which authority is used to run a nation is referred to as its "governance"<sup>28</sup>. The idea of accountability is implicit in any discussion of "power" in a modern democracy. All citizens' needs and wants should be taken into account when using the authority. This cannot be guaranteed if the governance is overly centralized and favours a small number of people. Decentralization is therefore a requirement for effective national governance if equity and justice are to be the guiding ideals. Decentralization is also acknowledged to be a development panacea across all political divides<sup>29</sup>, and<sup>30</sup>. Only if they have a political voice can these local identities achieve their aspirations. Decentralization of authority will provide them this political voice.

The governance system in place at this time aspires towards "Good governance." According to the Indian government, "good governance" entails a number of universally recognized characteristics, including the proper use of political authority, the formulation and execution of policies and programmes that are fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, socially sensitive, participatory, and, most importantly, accountable to the general public<sup>31</sup>. People-centered services imply a need for government assistance. To fulfill these objectives, good governance effortlessly combines the many government systems<sup>32</sup>. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of India were written in response to public demand for localised services, and they decentralized power to local self-governments<sup>33</sup>. The idea that ICT-enabled government operations will produce the desired outcome in managing decentralization<sup>34</sup> and<sup>35</sup> is growing. The de-centering of the state is part of "good governance," which is a component of the current governance framework<sup>36</sup>. In order to function effectively in this new setting of a decentralized governance structure, government systems, which are subsets of governance systems, must change. All levels of the government systems must undergo process re-engineering as part of this adaptation process, which establishes the roles that the national, state, district, and local institutions will play in the delivery systems. Therefore, it is necessary to study e-Government systems with decentralization as one of its results.

Common Service Centre scheme approved by the Government of India in September 2006 to set up 100,000+ (one lakh) internet enabled centers in rural areas under Public Private Partnership mode (PPP) under National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) is being implemented. The Common Services Center (CSC) is proposed to be a delivery point for rural citizens of India at their doorstep for government, private and social sector services. The State Governments like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have issued Government Orders / Notifications to the various departmental heads / District Level authorities/ Stakeholders for use of CSC to deliver various G2C Services. The various G2C Services offered are: Agricultural services, RTI Services, NREGA MIS Data Entry service, Postal Products, Land Records, Issuance of Birth and Death Certificates,

Utility Services, Electoral Services, Transport Services, Grievances, e-District Services etc. There were more than 3 lakh Common Service Centres in India as on March ,2017 . About 80 percent village panchayats had the facility of CSCs. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, there were 41675 functional CSCs

A significant change brought about by the constitution's 73rd amendment may have an impact on Panchayati Raj Sansthan's function in self-governance. Rural local governments (also known as panchayats) are granted a wide variety of rights and responsibilities in relation to rural development, carrying out anti-poverty programmes, creating jobs, selling rural products, and soon. Payment gateway for residents, e-sign capability for panchayat officers, and SMS and email alerts are just a few of the ways that panchayats are helping to mobilise housing and other agencies to plan and implement rural development programmes that are more favourable to local needs. State governments have also taken the initiative to build up organisations to speed up development and give citizens simple access to information through e-Panchayats. To provide information about development programmes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, organisational / departmental establishment, developmental policies, and annual reports, states like Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, and Haryana established Panchayat portals. Has notification, a report on how development initiatives have been evaluated, information on how development plans are progressing, and money, among other things. Panchayats, which exist at the point where rural residents and the political system converge, are a powerful tool for fostering a widespread ICT culture at the local level. The Government of India's Ministry of Panchayati Raj developed a plan to enable ICT for all panchayats in the nation using a mission mode approach with this broad perspective in mind.

The e-Panchayat mission mode project's goal is to handle all facets of Panchayat operation, from internal core activities like decentralised planning, budgeting, accounting, implementation, and monitoring to service delivery to Panchayats like certifications, licences, etc. This effort would significantly improve public service delivery through PRI with better results because it serves as the fundamental unit for the development and implementation of many different schemes and services. Exposure visits have been found to be one of the best methods for elected officials of Panchayati Raj institutions. Both officers and representatives of the public can learn how to handle e-resources and operate Gram Panchayats. By methodically creating such demonstrative panchayats as panchayat study centres, where exposure visits by elected officials and panchayat officials can be carried out in a systematic way, there is a large potential to maximise risk visits. This might ultimately become a crucial component of the capacity-building plan to create immersion locations for excellent panchayat functioning and functional performance.

### **Conclusion:**



The three pillars of e-democracy are e-government, e-democracy, and e-participation. The evolution of the online world will heavily rely on governments. They must implement and take on technology and techniques that will boost participatory democracy. International organisations have proposed 15 guiding principles to ensure the efficient operation of e-government. These include the need for development, effectiveness and efficiency, the accessibility of resources, organisational culture and skills, coordination, the legal system, the ICT infrastructure, political leadership and long-term political commitment, public involvement, development planning, partnership, monitoring and evaluation, the prioritisation of perception and values, access and skill, privacy and security, and finally, the need for development. These guidelines emphasise the necessity of enhancing governance's efficacy and efficiency as well as ensuring accountability and transparency in the provision of public goods and services to the general public. E-government also emphasises the idea of putting the needs of the people first. As a result, the government can forge closer ties with its constituents by streamlining service delivery, enhancing transparency among citizens, fostering dialogue focused on the needs of the people to combat corruption, and enabling citizens to engage with policy and decision-makers.

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