

COMMON SERVICE CENTERS (MAHA E-SEVA KENDRAS): E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE IN MAHARASHTRA UNDER DIGITAL INDIA

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Abstract

E-governance is an essential part of our dream of digital India. It emphasizes that the first step towards e-governance is understanding governance. E-governance is said to be pill of all ills of governance. The more technology we infuse in governance, the better it is for India. In today's time the development of any country depends on the uses of e-Governance and also their penetration. It has ushered in transparency in the governing process; saving of time due to provision of services through single window; reduction in corruption, convenience and empowerment. This paper looks into the various services offered by government of India at the state level. The present paper highlights the successful implementation of CSC in the State of Maharashtra and the contribution it has made to, the suppliers and government directly, and the society, indirectly. This paper throws some light on key challenges and advantages of e-governance.

Key words: e-governance, Digital India, Common service center, challenges.

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Objectives:

- To explore and understand the concept of e-governance with special reference to e-governance models, key challenges, strategies and advantages.
- To highlight the functioning of Common Service centers (Maha E-seva Kendras) project in the State of Maharashtra.
- To know about various e-Governance services offered by Government of India at state Level.

Research Methodology:

This paper reviews the literature on the basis of secondary data collected from various references which already exist in published form such as articles, books, newspaper, national/ international journal, magazine, annual reports, government publication and non government publication and company official websites, etc.

Introduction:

The idea of Digital India is to bring abroad commitments to invest towards this initiative and investments would be utilized towards making internet devices and smart phones at an affordable price in India which would help generate jobs , reduce the time and cost of importing them from abroad. There are 9 Key points of Digital India Programme which are as follows:

- Broadband Highways
- Universal Access to Phones
- Public Internet Access Programme
- Reforming government through Technology-E-Governance.
- Electronic delivery of services- E-Kranti.
- Information for All
- Electronics Manufacturing
- IT for Jobs
- Early Harvest Programme

How is E- Government important to the context of India? The answer may be found in the following lines quoted by Dr APJ Abdul Kalam the former President of India, “Delivery of services to citizens is considered a primary function of the government. In a democratic nation of over one billion people like India, e-Governance should enable seamless access to information and seamless flow of information across the state and central government in the federal set up. No country has so far implemented an e-Governance system for one billion people. It is a big challenge for us”.

E-governance is defined as the application of information technology to the

government processes to bring Simple, Moral, and Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) governance. The concept of e-government has wide connotations ranging from the “the use of information technology to free movement of information to overcome the physical bonds of traditional paper and physical based system” to “the use of technology to enhance the access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners and employees.” Thus, it is an application of information technology to the functioning of the government so as to make government information and services accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in a way that is focused on the needs of the citizens. It relies heavily on the effective use of internet and other emerging technologies to receive and deliver information and services easily, quickly, efficiently and inexpensively.

It is public sector’s endeavor aimed at improved information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. It involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services. Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of the country’s affairs, including citizen’s articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-Governance is the performance of this governance via electronic medium for disseminating information to the public and for performing government administration activities. Thus, e-government is all about transforming government to be accountable and citizen centric. It might involve delivering services via the internet, telephone, community centers (self service or facilitated by others), wireless devices or other communication systems. Usage of technology is not an end, but a tool in governance effort.

The objective of E-Governance involves access to government information and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a way that is focused on the needs of the citizens. E-Governance relies heavily on the effective use of Internet and other emerging technologies to receive and deliver information and services easily, quickly, efficiently and inexpensively. E-Governance helps simplify processes and makes access to government information easier. The other anticipated benefits of e-governance include efficiency in services, improvement in services delivery, standardization of services, better accessibility of services, and more transparency and accountability. It is convenient and cost effective for the Government also in terms of data storage and access to the stored data. The government benefits from reduced duplication of work. In addition, the processes of data collection, analysis and audit are simplified, and become less tedious. Another cherished goal of e-governance is greater citizen participation in the governance of the country.

The strategic objective of e-governance is to support and simplify governance for all parties - government, citizens and businesses. The use of ICTs can connect all three parties and support processes and activities. In other words, in e-governance uses electronic means to support and stimulate good governance. Therefore the objectives of e-governance are similar to the objectives of good governance. Good governance can be seen as an exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to better manage affairs of a country at all levels, national and local.

There are four pillars of e-governance:

1. Connectivity: Connectivity is required to connect the people to the services of the government. There should be a strong connectivity for an effective e-governance.
2. Knowledge: - Here knowledge refers to IT knowledge. Government should employ skill full engineers who can handle the e-governance in an efficient way. These engineers also handle all kind of fault that may occur during the working of e-governance.
3. Data Content: - To share any kind of knowledge or information over the internet, there should be its database. This database should have the data content which is related to government services.
4. Capital:-Capital can be on public or private partnership. It refers to money used by government to provide their services or to that sector of the economy based on its operation

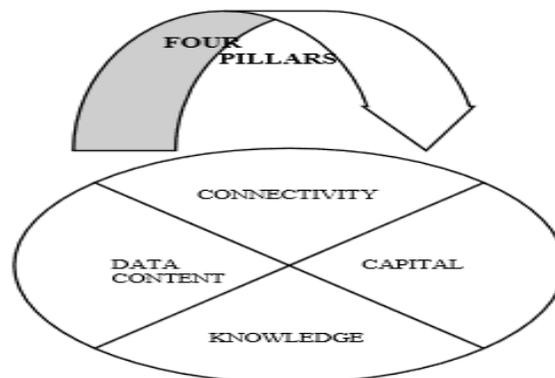


Fig 1: pillars of e-governance

E-governance Models:

E-governance services can be shared between citizens, businessman, government and employees. These four models of e-governance are as:-

1. Government to citizens (G2C)
2. Government to government (G2G)
3. Government to employees (G2E)
4. Government to businessman (G2B)

Government to citizens (G2C):-This model of e-governance refers to the government services which are shared by citizens. Here, citizens visit to the link of services that they want to use. This models strong the bond between government and its citizen. Type of services which are provided by this model includes:-

- Payment of online bills such as electricity, water, telephone bills etc.
- Online registration of applications.
- Copies of land-record.
- Online filling of complaints.

- Availability of any kind of online information.

Government to government (G2G):-This model refers to the services which are shared between the governments. There is lots of information that need to be shared between various government agencies, department and organizations. These types of services or information are as:-

- Sharing of information between police department of various state.
- Government document exchange which includes preparation, approval, distribution, and storage of all governmental documents is also done through e-governance.
- Most of the finance and budget work are also done through e-governance.

Government to businessmen (G2B):-Through this model, bond between private sector and government increase and businessmen use to communicate. They share information through this model like:-

- Collection of taxes.
- Rejection and approval of patent is also done by this model.
- Payment of all kind of bills and penalty.
- Sharing of all kind of information, rules and data.
- Complaints or any kind of dissatisfaction can be shown by this.

Government to employees (G2E):-This model increases the transparency between government and its employee. Here, employee can keeps a check on the functioning and working of government and government can keeps on its employees. Information that can be shared by this model:-

- All kind of data submission (attendance record, employee record etc) from various government offices is done by this model
- Employee can file all kinds of complaints and dissatisfaction by this model.
- All kind of rule- regulation and information for employees can be shared by this.
- Employees can check their payment and working record.
- Employees can register all kind of working forms online.

Some E-governance Initiatives by various State Governments:

State/Union Territory: Initiatives covering departmental automation, user charge collection, delivery of policy/programme information and delivery of entitlements

Andhra Pradesh: E-Seva, CARD, VOICE, MPHS, FAST, e-Cops, AP online—One-stopshop on the Internet, Saukaryam, Online Transaction processing

Bihar: Sales Tax Administration Management Information

Chhattisgarh: Chhattisgarh InfoTech Promotion Society, Treasury office, e-linking project

Delhi: Automatic Vehicle Tracking System, Computerization of website of RCS office, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education etc

Goa: Dharani Project

Gujarat: Mahiti Shakti, request for Government documents online, Form book online, G R book online, census online, tender notice.

Haryana: Nai Disha

Himachal Pradesh: Lok Mitra

Karnataka: Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri

Kerala: e-Srinkhala, RDNet, Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services (FRIENDS)

Madhya Pradesh: Gyandoot, Gram Sampark, Smart Card in Transport Department, Computerization MP State Agricultural Marketing Board (Mandi Board) etc

Maharashtra: Maha E-Seva, SETU, Online Complaint Management System—Mumbai

Rajasthan: Jan Mitra, RajSWIFT, Lokmitra, RajNIDHI

Tamil Nadu: Rasi Maiyams–Kanchipuram; Application forms related to public utility, tender notices and display

North-Eastern States:

Arunachal Pradesh: Community Information Center. Forms available on **Manipur, Meghalaya:** the Meghalaya website under schemes related to

Mizoram & Nagaland: social welfare, food civil supplies and consumer affairs, housing transport etc.

Strategies for e-governance in India:

To build technical infrastructure across India lacks a full fledged ICT framework for implementation of e-governance. Complete implementation of E-governance in India will include building technical Hardware and Software infrastructure. It will also include better and faster connectivity options. Newer connectivity options will include faster Broadband connections and faster wireless networks such as 3G and 4G. The infrastructure must be built by Government, Private Sector as well as individuals. Infrastructure will also include promotion of Internet Cafes, Information and Interactive Kiosks. However while building technical infrastructure, disabled persons must also be considered. The technology implemented, shall incorporate the disabled persons. To build institutional capacity Apart from building technical infrastructure, the Government needs to build its institutional capacity. This will include training of Government employees, appointment of experts. Along with the Government has also to create an Expert database for better utilization of intellectual resources with it.

Apart from this, the Government has to equip the departments with hi-technology and has also to setup special investigating agency. To build legal infrastructure for better implementation of e-governance, the Government will need to frame laws which will fully incorporate the established as well as emerging technology. Changing technology has changed many pre-established notions; similarly the technology is growing and changing rapidly. It is important, that the Government makes laws which incorporate the current technology and has enough space to incorporate the changing future technology. These IT laws need to be flexible to adjust with the rapidly changing technology. Currently India has only the IT Act, 2000 which is mainly E-Commerce legislation. India has also modified many laws to include electronic

technology; however it is not sufficient to cover e-governance completely.

To build judicial infrastructure overall technological awareness in current Judges is very low. The judiciary as a whole needs to be trained in new technology, its benefits and drawbacks and the various usages. The judiciary may alternatively appoint new judges with new judges and setup special Courts to deal with the matters relating to ICT. The Government can also setup special tribunals to deal with matters relating with ICT. To make all information available online The Government has to publish all the information online through websites. This can be facilitated through centralized storage of information, localization of content and content management.

The information of government International Journal of Computing & Business Research ISSN (Online): 2229-6166 Proceedings of 'I-Society 2012' at GKU, Talwandi Sabo Bathinda (Punjab) is public information; therefore the citizens are entitled to know every piece of information of the Government, because the Government is of the People, by the People and for the People. To popularize E-governance Literacy percentage in India is alarming. The whole world is moving towards e-governance, but India still lacks in the literacy department. The people need to be educated and made e-literate for e-governance to flourish. There are very few eliterate people in India is very low. The Government needs to campaign for e-governance, increase people's awareness towards e-governance. Government can only encourage people to go online if it can make people feel comfortable with e-governance. This can be done through educating the people about the advantages of e-governance over physical governance. This can also be done through raising awareness of the leaders who can motivate the people to go online.

Centre-State Partnership Indian setup is quasi-federal. Therefore Centre-State and interstate cooperation is necessary for smooth functioning of the democratic process. This cooperation is also necessary for successful implementation of e-governance. This cooperation shall extend to Centre-state, inter-state and inter-department relationships. For the same the Government can setup a Central Hub like the current Government of India portal, for accessing the information of all the organs of the central government and also all the state government. The states can cooperate with the Centre to create a National Citizen Database.

E-governance key challenges:

The Government of India has embraced e-governance as a trigger and means to redefine and streamline outdated, inefficient processes and procedures while simultaneously exploiting the full power of modern ICT. The aim is to provide citizens with easier and faster access to government services. India has recognized the benefits of e-governance and through it, ushered in a paradigm of citizen-centric service delivery. E-governance is reforming the way government manages and shares information with external and internal clients. Specifically, it harnesses information and communications technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) to transform relations with citizens, businesses and amongst various arms of government.

There are however, numerous challenges. Some of the key areas needing attention are:

- **Clarity in objective setting:** Project approval and funding of projects through multiple departmental budgets lead to wide variations in the approach to project objective setting, without a clear focus on outcomes or on building sustainable services. The service needs of citizens/ businesses and those of other departments are often either overlooked or accorded lower priority in relation to internal needs. Very often, objective setting is purely in ICT terms such as computers, networks and so on which are specified in great detail, while government business process outcomes are either not defined or are defined in vague terms that do not lend themselves to measurement post implementation.
- **Ensuring service delivery:** E-governance projects have primarily focused on internal process automation and generally are hardware and infrastructure driven (sometimes even vendor driven) with little focus on citizen service delivery or outcomes.
- **Leveraging Private Capital:** Experience of successful e-governance initiatives indicates that well structured service-oriented projects can attract private capital linked to explicit service linked revenues from users or from government. The current system of project formulation i.e. based on budgetary allocation / grants places little or no pressure on departments to develop project structures that can attract private capital, a goal that necessitates additional rigor and complexity at the project formulation and development stage.
- **Need for Government Process Reengineering:** Computerization of inefficient processes can lead to higher rather than lower levels of inefficiency and spiraling cost. Hence, it is essential to undertake process re-engineering as an integral part of e-governance project implementation in order to ensure increased efficiency and reduced costs.
- **Standardization:** Departmental approach and absence of a national framework for common standards has resulted in adoption of different technical standards and varied architectures. This has significant implications for designing effective integrated applications and also entails long-term costs and sub-optimal results.
- **Independent Impact Assessment:** In the current system, there is no requirement or institutional mechanism for an independent assessment of projects post-implementation to determine whether they have achieved the set objectives, except in purely financial terms. Further, very few projects have formal performance metrics defined at the start of the project to measure outcomes.
- **Localization:** ICT solutions were mostly developed with an English Language interface. However, in India a vast majority (95%) of the citizens does not know English and use the local language. The fact is that India has 22 official languages; for success of e-Governance, this reality needs to be reflected in the implementation strategy.
- **Internal Capacity/Project Management Expertise:** Departments/ states have limited access to any institutional mechanisms for building capacities in the areas of e-governance project development and design, bid process management, professional project management, development of Contractual Frameworks, Service Level Agreements, etc. They also have no means of accessing external (outside Government) competencies that are difficult to procure within the governmental framework.

Advantages of e-governance

Speed: Technology makes communication speedier. Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication. **Cost Reduction:** Most of the Government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationary. Paper-based communication needs lots of stationary, printers, computers, etc. which calls for continuous heavy expenditure. Internet and Phones makes communication cheaper saving valuable money for the Government. **Transparency:** Use of ICT makes governing process transparent. All the information of the Government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want to see. But this is only possible when every piece of information of the Government is uploaded on the internet and is available for the public to peruse. Current governing process leaves many ways to conceal the information from all the people. ICT helps make the information available online eliminating all the possibilities of concealing of information. **Accountability:** Once the governing process is made transparent the Government is automatically made accountable. Accountability is answerability of the Government to the people. It is the answerability for the deeds of the Government. An accountable Government is a responsible Government. **Convenience:** E-Government brings public services to citizens on their schedule and their venue. **Improved Customer Service:** E-Government allows redeploying resources from back-end processing to the front line of customer service. **Increased access to information:** E-Government improves the accessibility of government information to citizens allowing it become an important resource in the making the decisions that affect daily life and so it helps in empowerment of citizens.

Common Service Centers (Maha e-seva Kendra):

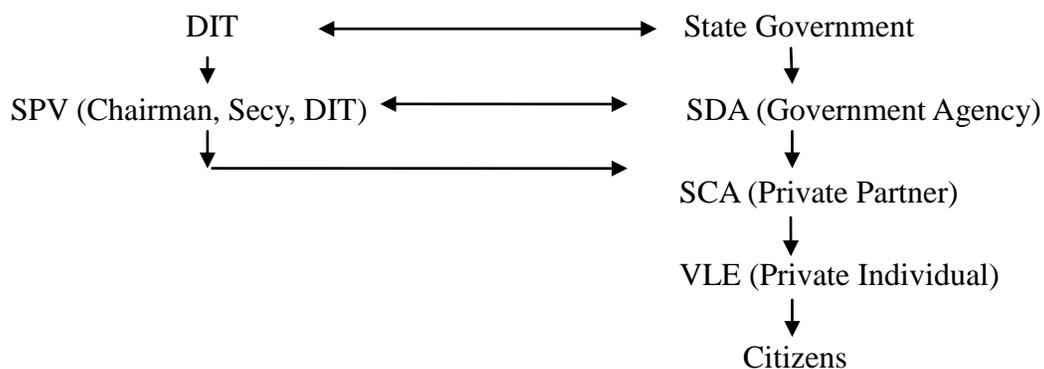
The Maharashtra Government launched the CSC scheme named Maha e-Seva Kendra. The government has signed service agreements with four companies to set up CSC's in four revenue divisions of the state through PPP model. Chief Minister was very optimistic of the scheme, said —this development will not only empower rural youth, but also change the landscape of Maharashtra. Our ultimate aim is to establish a digital Maharashtra. Maharashtra has become the eighth state with SWAN connectivity with the state government departments and improving the delivery of services to citizens. The vertical connectivity would facilitate seamless integration of all government machinery in the state from the top to taluka level. The state has planned to start total 11,000 IT kiosks across the state, out of that 10,483 in rural and 1,336 in urban area Maha e-Seva Kendras will serve citizens. These Kendras will provide 43 type of services such as Age Nationality & Domicile Certificate, Income Certificate, Residence Certificate, Senior Citizen Certificate, Heir ship Certificate as well as provides certain additional services such as Aadhar Card, All types of Recharges such as D2h, Mobile and Data Card, Utility Bill Payments like light bills, mobile bills, Air/Bus/Train Bookings, Money Transfer Services, RTI Services, Pan card Services, Passport Services, RTO Services etc. Record of Rights (RoR) i.e.-7/12 will be available through Maha e-Seva Kendra. RoR is supposed to be as most

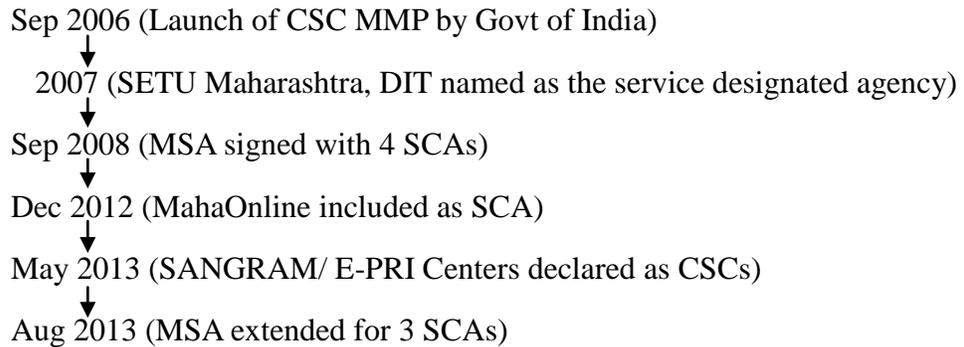
important & high in demand G2C services in the state. GOM has issued GR on 27/04/2010 towards acceptance of RoR as original document. The onus of checking authenticity of the RoR will lie on the authority requesting the document to verify through website. It is expected that mechanism of service delivery through Maha e-Seva Kendra will make system more transparent and easy for the citizens. It will be responsibility of district officials to ensure that website is updated regularly.

The Government of Maharashtra has implemented a National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) to provide government services, such as getting Income Certificates, or Domicile Certificates, to the citizens at their doorstep and at an affordable cost. With an aim to bring transparency into the system and establish citizen centric governance, their plan is to set up 11,819 Common Service Centres (CSC) under the NeGP. The Government of Maharashtra has launched a CSC scheme called 'Maha e-Seva Kendra'. Altogether 10,483 centres in rural areas, and 1,336 centres or 'Kendras' in urban areas are to be set up in the six revenue divisions of the state through a public-private partnership.

The basic idea behind the Maha e-Seva Kendras is to set up a link between the district administration and the citizen for a smoother electronic delivery of services. The individuals who run these Centres are known as 'Village Level Entrepreneurs' or VLEs. While some VLEs are individuals, some Centres are run by trusts as well. Common Service Centres (CSCs) is one of the integrated projects envisioned in NeGP. The CSCs provide assisted community access points – a necessity in a country with relatively low levels of literacy and ICT penetration in rural areas. These centers are very effective in providing multiple services provided by different departments at a single location. For a common citizen, it is often confusing and time-consuming to have to visit different departments and identify the right official or office to avail of some service. This one stop shop is also helpful in increasing accessibility, enabling faster service delivery, curbing corruption and reducing difficulties faced by vulnerable and marginalized groups. Under this program, it is aimed to establish 100,000 CSCs predominantly in the rural areas to serve the needs of the traditionally underserved areas.

CSC – Stakeholders:



Maharashtra-Model Timelines:**Benefits of CSC**

- Over 4, 00,000 new employment opportunities in rural India.
- Timely delivery of critical information and services.
- Closer links between government and citizen.
- Higher administrative efficiency and reduced red tape.
- Cost-effective access to government services.
- Structured system to manage issue of health, education, etc.

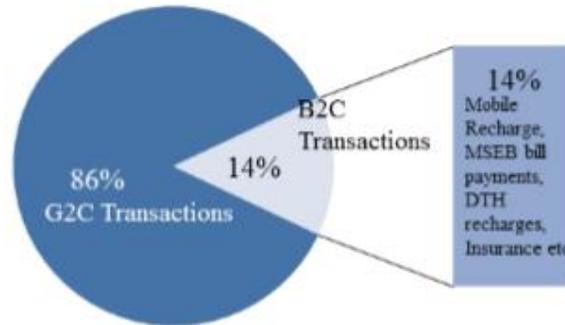
Division Wise CSC-Rolled Out:

Sr. No	SCA	Division	Target CSCs			Rolled out CSCs			% Rolled out			Total % Roll out
			Rural CSCs	Urban CSCs	Total CSCs Mandated	Rural CSCs	Urban CSCs	Total CSCs Rolled out	Rural CSCs	Urban CSCs	Total CSCs Rolled out	
1.	CMS	Amravati	1,837	183	2,020	920	217	1,137	50%	119%	56%	79%
		Aurangabad	2,129	267	2,396	1,914	431	2,345	90%	161%	98%	
2.	Basix	Nashik	1,223	138	1,361	788	154	942	64%	112%	69%	69%
3.	Spanco	Konkan	1,489	315	1,804	544	244	788	37%	77%	44%	53%
		Pune	1,677	210	1,887	853	318	1,171	51%	151%	62%	
4.	Reliance	Nagpur	2,132	222	2,354	1,635	162	1,797	77%	73%	76%	76%
Total			10,487	1,335	11,822	6,654	1,526	8,180	63%	114%	69%	69%

*As on 31st July 2013

Source: Directorate of Information Technology (DIT), Government of Maharashtra.

Percentage Breakup of G2C & G2B Transactions provided by CSCs



Source: Directorate of Information Technology (DIT), Government of Maharashtra

Present Status:

In Maharashtra around 50+ G2C services provided under CSCs and selection of B2C services from SCA, Mahaonline and CSC CPV. The requirement of affidavit for most certificates has been waived and related to G2C services like University services, MPSC services and police recruitment. In the last year Maharashtra government [3] to expand the reach of e-governance services to people, with the objective of the government of Maharashtra is “minimum government, maximum governance”. Through this ‘Digital India, initiatives on the way of digital India platform the government has been working on a number of e-governance activities like: Increasing space in state data center, following all the project through ‘e-tendering’ process, initiating ‘CSMSSY’ scheme across Maharashtra with CSC and local administration, initiating ‘Maha-RERA’ online registration process for all construction and builders unit under one roof, strengthening CSC,s by providing G2C services, specially at GP level, implementing one CSC per one GP as under CSC 2.0 scheme and E-panchayat. While implementing the online services into the system Maharashtra faced few challenges such as adoption of change management technique at different level of government and another challenge is related to security of legal documents online. GOM is committed to a citizen gracious experience as accessing various G2C and B2C services through CSC across the state. As on date 32,317 CSCs established know as Maha E-Seva Kendra, are functioning in 36 districts of Maharashtra. Away from this, 22578 Aple sarkar seva Kendra CSCs established by rural development at panchayat level has also included under CSC schemes. In Maharashtra every year more than 4 core citizens get benefited through CSCs. In India, Maharashtra becomes the first state in providing online services prescribed under Maharashtra right to public services act. A lot of services available to citizens through this act under ‘Aple sarkar web portal’. PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta) is one of the rising schemes in the state of Maharashtra and it gives new hopes to rural citizens. For this schemes CSC teams working personally with the local administration especially in backward districts like Beed, Raigad, Gadchiroli, Nanded, Nandurbar and Sindhurg to digitally empower citizens. In Maharashtra, 483,957 citizens have been registered under this

scheme, 482,997 trained successfully.

Conclusion:

Since e-governance have potential in term of creating equal opportunities, comfort and convenience to the lives of citizens through kiosk. Electronic service delivery is changing from government centric to citizen centric. The implementation of citizen centric e-governance project can be made very successful and effective by adopting some of the frameworks, which address the major concerns. Therefore we can say that e-Governance is the key to the “Good Governance” for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens.

In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all the other reasons India has number of award winning e-governance projects. A long term and a short term strategy for E-Governance implementation is the need of the hour. For successful implementation Standards, Infrastructure, Legislations, Strategy all needs to be in place. Expert's states that it is better to first create strong administration, to bring all government employees under confidence, only then we can think to bring e- governance, to connect each & every person to E- Governed world and to provide basic facilities to the citizens while sitting at home. With the implementation of common service centers, the vision of e-governance has reached to the doorstep of citizens. Illiteracy is severe gap which need to be addressed.

The common service centers (Maha e-seva Kendras) project has successfully showcased a paradigm that can be incorporated by other administrative organizations. It has also proved that a low literacy rate and financial constraints is not a barrier for implementing a successful e-Governance project. Common service centers has brought about, a well appreciated transparency to the workings of the administration. People were unaware of their rights as well the possible support provided by the government under various schemes. Widespread awareness as well as a stronger formulated public opinion can go a long way in the fight against corruption. The success of any project is gauged by the extent of which it achieves its pre-defined goals. It has not only met the expectations but surpassed them in every imaginable way. In short, for e-governance to succeed, 'e-readiness' must also be built.

Effective promotion schemes by the Indian government will also be a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizens which means there is huge potential for the development of e-governance in various sectors. E-Governance enhances the relationships between G2G, G2C, G2B, C2G and B2G using ICT. Thus, e-Governance not only provides information about various activities of a Government but also involves citizens to participate in government's decision making process. During the last few years, many initiatives have been taken by different state governments in India for using IT as a tool in the functioning of Government so as to provide better services to citizens. Therefore we can say that e-Governance is the key to the Good Governance for the developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provides efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens.

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