e-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab

Dr . Pardeep Mittal, Amandeep Kaur
Professor, Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, India.
M. Phil. (Research Scholar), Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, India.
pardeep_mittal@yahoo.com amandeep_shl88@yahoo.com

Abstract

e-Governance refers to the delivery of services provided by the government through the means of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies). The NeGP (National e-Governance Plan) is initiated by the Government of India which executes the projects to implement e-Governance in the whole nation. Government of Punjab has also been taking participation in the implementation of e-Governance in the state. The implementation of e-Governance has the objective to improve the citizens’ participation in the decision making for effective and good governance. This research paper highlights the different initiatives taken by the Government of Punjab and the services provided by these initiated projects.

Keywords: CSCs, DOIT, e-Readiness, e-Governance, SUWIDHA.

Introduction

The government’s use of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) to provide services to its citizens and organizations with more convenient access is termed as e-Governance. The government of India is implementing e-Governance projects very effectively. According to the e-Readiness Reports of DIT (Department of Information Technology) of India, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh, and Tamil Nadu are stated as the leaders in the use of ICTs (Information and Communication technologies). Hence, we can say that Punjab is one of the leading states of India in all kinds of advancement. DOIT (Department of Information Technology) has been established in the state of Punjab which coordinates the Government of Punjab to take initiatives for the effective implementation of e-Governance projects in the state. The projects initiated by the state government and DOIT (Department of Information Technology) include SUWIDHA (Single User-friendly Window Disposal Helpline for Applicants), CSCs (Common Service Centres), e-District, VAHAN and SARATHI etc. The government of Punjab is providing e-Services in the department of transport, department of revenue, PSBTE (Punjab State Board of Technical Education) etc. very efficiently and effectively. The projects initiated in Punjab are helping in good governance and improving the participation of common citizen in governance and strengthens the democracy.

e-Governance Initiatives in the State of Punjab

The DOIT (Department of Information Technology) has been set up in the state of Punjab to co-ordinate with the state government for the better and effective implementation of e-Governance. The main initiatives taken by DOIT (Department of Information Technology) and state government are following:

A. PAWAN (Punjab State Wide Area Network)

PAWAN has been identified as the basic element for supporting e-Governance initiatives in Punjab. PAWAN is responsible as the backbone network for data, voice and video communication throughout the state. PAWAN reduces the communication cost and avails the services in a cost-efficient manner. It makes sure that every citizen of the state has access to government services and information whenever and wherever they need it.
B. SUWIDHA (Single User-friendly Window Disposal Helpline for Applicants)

This project was initiated in August 2002 at Fatehgarh Sahib and was funded by GoP (Government of Punjab) and DOIT (Department of Information Technology). As of now, the project is being executed in all Deputy Commissioner’s offices. This project facilitates the citizens by capturing the input at a single point, defining a specified delivery date depending upon the type of service, accepting cash at the counter itself and delivers the required service at the same counter. It provides a friendly, faster, cost-effective and efficient interface between the government and public. SUWIDHA software has provided the facility of local language (Punjabi) as well. The services provided at SUWIDHA centres are following:

(i) Arm Licences related Services
(ii) Services to Pensioners
(iii) Counter Signing of Documents
(iv) Character Verification
(v) Issuances of Bus Passes
(vi) Issuance of Dependent Certificate
(vii) Issuance of Unmarried Certificate
(viii) Issuance of Licenses
(ix) Endorsement of SPA/GPA
(x) Issuance of Nationality Certificate
(xi) Issuance of Copy of a Document/Inspection of Record & Misc Services
(xii) Issuance of Marriage Certificate
(xiii) Issuance of ID-Card
(xiv) Appointment of Namberdar
(xv) Driving License related Services
(xvi) Registration of Vehicle related Services
(xvii) Issuance of Birth Certificate
(xviii) Issuance of Death Certificate
(xix) Issuance of Affidavits
(xx) Issuance of Permissions
(xxi) Issuance of Indemnity Bods
(xxii) Issuance of Surety Bonds
(xxiii) Submission of Passport Applications
(xxiv) Issuances of No Objection Certificates

C. CSC (Common Service Centre)

It is a community service centre for rural citizens at Panchayat level covering 6 villages. Common Service Centres provide services according to the needs of all the communities in its surrounding 5-6 villages. Each CSC is equipped with computer, multi-function printer, digital camera, internet connection and other network facilities. CSCs have minimized the technological differences between the rural and urban area as these centres are trying to provide every government department’s service at one place.

D. VAHAN and SARATHI

Punjab State Transport Department is the initiator in using Information Technology for providing citizen-centric services. The computerization of transport department started 10 years ago with the implementation of VAHAN and SARATHI software. All the processes of the transport department are being computerized and the data is made available through internet or SMS for access by the citizens.

1) VAHAN: This software is developed by NIC Headquarters Delhi. It is used to:

(i) Register vehicle
(ii) Collect tax
(iii) Issues various certificates and permits
(iv) Record the fitness of vehicles.

2) SARATHI: This software is developed by NIC Headquarters Delhi. It is used by RLA (Registering and Licensing Authority) for:

(i) Learner licence
(ii) Permanent driving licence
(iii) Conductor’s licence
(iv) Driving school licence

E. Web based Counselling for PSBTE (Punjab State Board of Technical Education)

PSBTE is an autonomous statutory authority for regulating and controlling academic standards in Institutions of Technical Education and for making admissions and conducting examinations in Polytechnic and Industrial Training Institutes. The web based counselling...
for PSBTE is the first of its kind in the state of Punjab. It is a web-based off campus counselling for the admission in Engineering and lateral Entry (LEET) to Engineering and Pharmacy Streams in 70 institutes across the state. It is the most transparent system of admitting students to various academic streams. As the candidates do not have to visit the venue of the counselling, hence it saves their time and cost.

F. e-District
Districts are the actual front-end of government where most Government-to-Citizen interactions take place. The e-District project is initiated by Punjab Government to improve this interaction and to increase the efficiency of the various departments at district-level so that they may continue smooth delivery of their services. This project is implemented under NeGP (National e-Governance Plan). According to the guidelines of this project, the following services are included in it:

(i) Certificates  
(ii) Social Security  
(iii) Revenue Court  
(iv) Government Dues and Recovery  
(v) Public Distribution System  
(vi) RTI Services  
(vii) Police  
(viii) Education  
(ix) Health  
(x) Transport  
(xi) Urban Development  
(xii) Agriculture

G. PRISM (Property Registration Information System Module)
The computerization of land records is one of the most important initiatives undertaken by the Revenue Department to facilitate the land owners of the state. This project facilitates the process of registration of land at a high speed and efficiency at the Sub Registrar Offices across the state. It provides the facility of on the spot valuation of property, on the spot stamp & registration fee calculations, online photo capturing of parties and witness along with Sub Registrar and saving in database, printing of photographs of concerned parties on the backside of the stamp paper. In addition to this, user interface is available in local language i.e. Punjabi and English. This system is working with various shortcomings both in the software as well as the security point of view.

H. ITISP (Integrated Treasuries Information System of Punjab)
ITISP was developed by GoP (Government of Punjab) in 2001 for the computerization of treasuries. 18 district treasuries and 53 sub-treasuries have been computerized. It is an online system for automation of treasuries and is responsible for the verification of messenger by photograph and signature, computerized cheque printing, tight security etc. This project has reduced the time involved in calculation and increased the accuracy and reliability of financial reports.

I. PSEGS (Punjab State E-Governance Society)
The main objective of the PSEGS is to administer the implementation of e-Governance projects for the overall benefit of the citizens. This society is responsible for setting up the necessary administrative, financial, legal and technical framework, implementation mechanism and resources in the state of Punjab. Sukhmani Societies are established under PSEGS to provide services to citizens through service centres where citizens can get desired information and services.

I. Conclusion
The DOIT (Department of Information Technology) and Punjab Government has taken a number of effective initiatives for providing e-Governance services to its citizens. The projects like SUWIDHA and VAHAN & SARATHI are providing services to the citizens at a very low cost and in less time. But only a few projects like CSCs are implemented in accordance to the facilities provided to the rural people. Rural people have to suffer from the lack of e-Governance services as these services are mainly available in the urban areas. Although Punjab Government is taking very effective steps to promote e-Governance projects, it should now concentrate on promoting e-Governance in rural areas as well so that every citizen either urban or rural can take the benefits from these services.

References
1. Dr. Vikram Singh, Subhash Chander, Amit Kumar, “E-Governance in Development of Rural Economy”, International Journal of Computer
5. http://www.doipunjab.gov.in/
11. http://punjabrevenue.nic.in/ftodo.htm