Title of the Project: e-Governance: Institutional Capacities and Performance – A Comprehensive Study of India

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Executive Summary

The capacity to govern is one of the ongoing quests of humanity, but that capacity is not equally distributed in space or in time. Some countries in the world can go about the process of governing themselves with little conscious concern about their ability to do so. For the rest of the world governing is a more problematic consideration. Even for those countries that are confident about the capacity to govern, that confidence may in reality be complacency when viewed from a more detached perspective. This is in part because conceptions of "good governance" are culturally and historically contingent and what is functional in one political setting may be in many ways sub-optimal in other settings.

The attempts to reform public administration have been ubiquitous. Even when there have been manifest needs to consolidate democracy and to improve the functioning of the institutions of public participation there also has been a perceived need to put the functioning of the bureaucracy right. This emphasis on administrative reform is well placed given the centrality of administration is implementing programs, and its role as the principal contact between State and society.

The greatest disparity between developed and less developed nations is no longer a matter of natural resources, or even of human capital (increasingly mobile as it is), but is the growing divide in access to organizational capacity and the extent to which this impedes the coordination

and exploitation of informational resources. This organizational capacity is often directly associated with the ability to embody ICT within networked structures that can link government to economic and social development in new ways.

In this context, the present study was carried out to assess the institutional capacities and performance of various electronic governance projects in 13 states of the country with the following objectives:

- To understand the organizational transformation required for e-governance processes
- To study the technology management in administrative systems and technical competency among public officials
- To assess institutional capacities and performance
- To study the success or failure of e-governance programmes from both institutional and public perspectives
- To assess the sustainability of e-governance programmes

Two frameworks were adopted to measure the success or failure of the three components mentioned above – institutional framework and citizens' framework. The sample size of the study is 3,146, which includes administrative staff and citizens. Information was collected mostly from field studies through structured questionnaire, informal discussions and non-observant participation. The other sources include government records, reports, databases, online journals, books and research reports.

The study was carried out between May 2009 and September 2011 in the states of Andhra Pradesh**,** Arunachal Pradesh**,** Gujarat**,** Haryana**,** Himachal Pradesh**,** Karnataka**,** Kerala**,** Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. A total of 28 projects in the categories of citizen services, land records management and e-district were evaluated.

The most significant fact that emerged out in the study is that early successes in e-governance have been sustained in the form of e-Seva, BangaloreOne, FRIENDS, Akshaya, Bhoomi, CARD

and STAR. There is a major mismatch between pilot successes and subsequent failures in the form of Gyandoot, Warana and common service centres in the North-East and majority of the projects rolled out under NeGP could not sustain once central funding was stopped in 2007. Only a few state governments have allotted finances to consolidate e-governance projects. Technology proliferation has resulted in automation of many government agencies/institutions, but they are less enthusiastic in going online. Institutional capacities have also increased substantially, but that does not reflect in their performance regarding delivery of e-governance services.

The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Sugam in Himachal Pradesh and e-city projects in Surat and Ahmedabad, land records management in H.P. are fledging with high standards of e-governance. Punjab is a slow starter. It has done BPR with front-offices (Suwidha centres) at the district and sub-divisional level. However, the most significant complaint against e-governance project is Punjab from citizens is that the user charges are very high.

2. Madhya Pradesh has infrastructure in place, but public staff rarely offer e-governance services to common people

3. Success of major e-governance projects was on account of personal initiatives and consolidated by political support

4. e-Service delivery in our country is fragmented due to multiple entities. E-Governance initiatives in different departments are carried out independent of each other, which dilutes the overall impact. Failure of some projects is also on this account, since a transfer or replacement of a top official or change in political regime impacts adversely on the sustainability of e-governance projects. Gyandoot, Warana, Thiruvarur, CSCs reflect this trend

5. Interoperability is the major issue. Only two states have achieved interoperability. Bhoomi and Kaveri in Karnataka and Akshaya and FRIENDs in Kerala are the success stories

6. Horizontal integration of e-governance has been achieved in many states in the form of SWAN, state portals and specific project websites. However, vertical integration is limited to only a few states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat.

7. Majority of e-governance portals web content is in vernacular language.

8. Many states do not have capacity building programmes in place. Public staff training requirements are very high. Individual departments have different mechanisms of identifying the concerned end users from the same set of citizens. As a result, they are interacting with the same set of users independently multiple times. This is resulting in series of rework loops, duplication of efforts and non-value added works.

9. For a majority of citizen-centric e-governance projects, there is a need for process level reforms with strong backing of automated decision support mechanism. Interactive models have to be broadened to mobile technology so as to expand the outreach of e-governance services.

10. Lack of internet penetration in the country is the major obstacle for expanding the outreach of online services and the central and state governments should frame policies that encourage e-literacy and setting up of Internet kiosks.