EUROPEAN
ACADEMIC
RESEARCH

The Situation of e-Governance in Bangladesh: An Assessment

SEFAT ARA NADIRA[1]
School of Public Administration, China University of Geosciences
Wuhan, China
TARIQUE AL KADIR
School of Accounting, Department of Business Studies
Bangladesh National University, Gazipur, Bangladesh
MD. ENAMUL HAQUE
School of Social Sciences, Department of Anthropology
Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh
XING CHEN
School of Public Administration, China University of Geosciences
Wuhan, China

Abstract:

This is the era of Information Technology (IT). IT plays a vital role in daily life. To make transparent and effective the government works, to increase government efficiency, accountability and to improve the service delivery and participating the public in all aspects of government activities e-Governance is obligatory. Bangladesh government took the initiative to implement e-governance in 2001, but the implementation of e-Governance in Bangladesh is not up to the mark and the government is not getting the full benefits of e-Governance yet for many reasons. This research paper is focused on some current constraints of e-governance after surveying in the different sectors of Bangladesh and provided some possible suggestions to overcome those problems.

Key words: Government-to-Citizen (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B), Government-to-Government (G2G), Information Technology

---

[1] Corresponding author: shifatcug@yahoo.com

(IT), Information and communication technologies (ICT), Local Area Networks(LANs), Support to ICT Task Force (SICT)

1. INTRODUCTION:

With the onset information revolution, many developing countries have looked at IT as a possible new tool to solve age-old problems of poverty, bad governance, and sluggish economic growth, while the developed countries have been able to benefit greatly from the wide use of IT. Many developing countries are still grasping to make sense of how IT fits into their problems. The trend is true in the case of e-Governance also. In Bangladesh, e-Governance has been talked about a lot, some government offices have even taken innovative steps towards certain e-Government projects. Since this is a new concept for Government officials who are used to familiar methods of work, the growth of e –Governance is met with resistance and fear, among other infrastructural problems. But the good news in that the government is talking e-Governance very seriously. The national ICT Task Force and headed by the Honorable Prime Minister herself has put great emphasis on identifying challenges in the implementation of nation-wide e-Governance and on initiating pilot projects in various sectors of the government through a project called the support to ICT Task

Force (SICT).It is being implemented under the Ministry of Planning. Also, the Government of Bangladesh is also getting substantial foreign cooperation in terms of financial assistance and technical collaboration for realization of e-Governance at a national scale.

2. E-GOVERNMENT DEFINITIONS:

E-government is a generic term for web-based services from agencies of local, state and federal governments. In e-government, the government uses information technology and particularly the Internet to support government operations, engage citizens, and provide government services. The interaction may be in the form of obtaining information, filings, or making payments and a host of other activities via the World Wide Web (Sharma & Gupta, 2003, Sharma, 2004, Sharma 2006).

- E-government is defined by other sources as follows:

World Bank definition (AOEMA report):
"E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient

government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions."

United Nations definition (AOEMA report):
"E-government is defined as utilizing the Internet and the world-wide-web for delivering government information and services to citizens." E-governance is defined as the, "application of electronic means in

> (1) the interaction between government and citizens and government and businesses, as well as
> (2) in internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of Governance." (Backus, 2001).

According to Kettl (2002), "Governance" is a way of describing the links between government and its broader environment - political, social, and administrative." The application of electronic links means the interaction between government and citizens and government and businesses, as well as in internal government operations to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of Governance (Kettl, 2002).

Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce - GBDe definition (AOEMA report):
"Electronic government (hereafter e-Government) refers to a situation in which administrative, legislative and judicial agencies (including both central and local governments)digitize their internal and external operations and utilize networked systems efficiently to realize better quality in the provision of public services."

Gartner Group's definition:
"The continuous optimization of service delivery, constituency participation, and governance by transforming internal and

external relationships through technology, the Internet and new media."

Definition of the Working Group on E-government in the Developing World:
"E- government is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens. E-government might involve delivering services via the Internet, telephone, community centers (self-service or facilitated by others), wireless devices or other communications systems."

3. TYPE OF E-GOVERNANCE:

Image- no.1
1.G2E
2.G2C
3.G2G
4.G2B
 5.G2E

1. (Government 2 employee):
 G2E is transaction between government and Employee. It Includes, Online conference for employee. Online training.

Employee information Example: The example of Government to Employee is that Ex. e-Training for Employees

2. G2C (Government to Citizen):

This deals with interaction between individual citizens with the government. Examples of G2C are payment of utility bills or applying for passports through relevant website of the e-Governance system. Good governance always stresses on participatory and democracy concepts. Citizen should not be isolated from the government. Using appropriate website of the system citizen can also be interactive in different development processes of the government.

3. G2B (Government-to-Business):

It involves interaction of the business establishments with the government. These business establishments may be corporate, NGOs or other professional bodies. The example of G2B is submission of tax assessment by any business establishment to the department of Taxation of the government through the Internet.
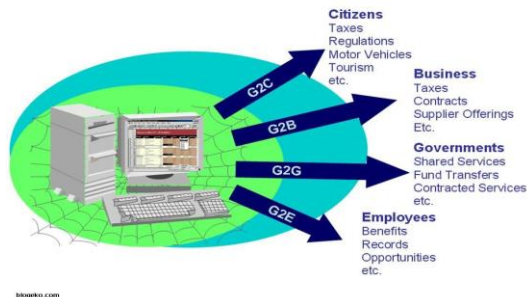

Image no-2

4.G2G (Government-to-Government):

It involves interaction among government officials, whether within a government office or within different organs of the government. The example pf G2G may be a request of allocation

of budget by any department of the government Ultimate objective of e-Governance is to establish a good governance.

Image no 3. Government (Bangladesh) to Government (India) Conference

4. SITUATION OF E-GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH:

E-Governance in Bangladesh Honorable Prime Minister herself has put great emphasis on identifying challenges in the implementation of nation-wide E-Governance and on initiating pilot projects in various sectors of the government through a project called the Support to ITC Task Force (SICT). Ministry of Finance has customized software for budget planning, sensitivity analysis, impact analysis, financial projections and various reports. E-Governance in Bangladesh National Board of Revenue is computerizing the revenue budget procedure. Both Dhaka and Chittagong Stock Exchange are highly computerized and networked, allowing citizens to trade with much more ease than before. Ministry of Science and ICT creating web-sites containing information about various ministries. Ministry of Communication provides online searchable database of contractor's tenders and created a Project Monitoring System for tracking progress of the projects.

5. STATE POLICY AND ACTION:

E-Government at the Policy Level e-Government in Bangladesh has only begun to be discussed at the policy level. The National ICT Policy of 2002 gives due importance to the issue of e-Government, declaring that "the Government shall use ICT systems within the public administration to improve efficiency, reduce Wastage of resources, enhance planning and raise the quality of services." The policy further provides that "the Government shall implement ICT systems to provide nation-wide coverage and access by any citizen to the government databases and administrative systems which can be used to extend public services to the remotest corner." To realize the goals set forth by the ICT Policy, an ICT Task Force has been formed, with the Prime Minister as Chairperson and the Secretary of Ministry of Planning as Member-Secretary. In 2003, the Ministry of Planning launched a "Support to ICT Task Force (SICT)" program, with the mandate of providing administrative and secretarial support to the ICT Task Force in realizing various ICT projects, particularly e- Government. The primary objective of the SICT program is "to ensure access to information by every citizen to facilitate empowerment of people and enhanced democratic values and norms for sustainable economic development by using the infrastructure for human resources development, e-governance, public utility services and all sorts of on-line ICT enabled services."

6. AIM OF RESEARCH:

This paper has identified a number of challenges faced at both government and citizens' level. This study predicts that the actual implementation of e-Governance is a complex and lengthy task that may proceed well beyond the government's target of 2021.

Why I choose this topic:

Bangladesh is facing a lot of challenges to work on implementing the E-governance system. That's why I choose this topic.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The Secondary data have been used for the study, data have been collected from the published sources like books, journals, research reports, online search, different relevant laws etc.

8. OBJECTIVES OF E-GOVERNANCE:

- Study the present scenario of the government in respect of e- governance.
- Introduce the steps to implement e-governance or to create environment.
- Identify the advance and leg behind organizations in respect of e- governance.
- According to that they should be encouraged and take measured to advance respectively.
- Identify the level of advancement and how should it be accelerated if necessary.
- Determine steps to achieve the goal and measure their acceptability.
- Identify is the standard level of expectation they are trying to fill up.
- Identify a supervisory authority or central committee who will centrally maintain standard rules for total infrastructure.
- Determine the benefits which general people getting or expected in the future.
- Determine are the major obstacles and methods for resolving the issues.

Identify the government external and internal obstacles clearly

9. THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SICT PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- *Video-conferencing:*

Establish an alternate communication network, which will provide optimal reliability and security of communication and enhance the speed and efficiency of decision-making and follow-up actions.

Image no. 4: Prime Minister (Bangladesh) and Journalist video conferencing

- *Police:*

Facilitate improved communication between citizens and police and empower police departments to better monitor and supervise police functions.
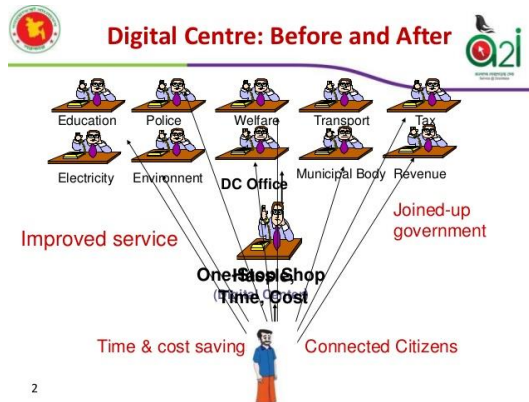
Picture no 5. - Digital Police department

- *Digital Divisional Town:*

Provide electronic delivery of major citizen services, empower local officials, introduce electronic services, and build cyber-kiosks to enhance citizen access to government services.

Picture no 6. - Digital divisional Town Map in bangladesh

- *Web Portals:*

Help citizens to improve their employment and income-generating potential. Access to information -- a fundamental right in the present-day world can be ensured for each citizen.

Image no.7 : Communication

10. GOOD GOVERNANCE ATTRIBUTES:

Lack of access to information creates digital gap among different social segments. This breeds lack of equity and social injustice. A non-discriminatory access to information can go a long way towards minimising class distance between different groups in the society. Local information communication technology (ICT) companies do need to pay attention to hold seminars, workshops etc., to popularise e-governance. More ministries should adopt the system of e-Governance even for their internal use. Interactive websites can disseminate information to public. The scope for people's active interest to interact will then be widened. Such websites should also be updated regularly. Otherwise, the public will be misled with backdated information. All government organisations should be interconnected under e-governance network. Exchange of information between different departments without any manual intervention will then become easier.

The attributes of the good governance can be identified as follows:
a. Honesty
b. Efficiency and Effectiveness (in terms of time space and money)

c. Justice

d. Reliability

e. Participatory and Democracy

f. Accountability

g. Accessibility and Transparency

h. equity

i. visionary in decision making.

All of these attributes can be achieved through proper implementation of e-governance using the state of the art technologies. It has been proved that the corruption levels in the public sector have dramatically fallen in the countries where e-Governance has been initiated.

11. LITERATURE REVIEW OF E-GOVERNANCE:

There is no standard definition of this term. Different institute, governments and non-government organizations define this term according to their own aims and objectives. Sometimes, the term 'e-government' is also used instead of 'e-Governance'. Some widely used definitions are listed below:

- **According to the World Bank:**
  "E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions."

Thus, the stress here is on use of information technologies in improving citizen-government interactions, cost-cutting and generation of revenue and transparency.

- **UNESCO defines e-Governance as:**

"Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-Governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities." This definition visualizes the use of the electronic medium in the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs along with articulation of citizens' interests leading to greater transparency and efficiency.

12. SUCCESSFUL E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES:

Mixed with failed or not so successful e-governance initiatives are a few truly successful initiatives that demand special mention here (in alphabetic order).

Automation of Internal Processes:
Bangladesh Bank began to computerize its functions almost at the same time most government offices started investing in automation. However, the Bank is only among the handfuls that have been successful in integrating ICT into the core business processes of the institute. Today it is one of the most fully computerized public institutions in the country. The current system actually automates most of the Banks operational processes and some of the most important strategic

processes including monitoring of commercial bank transactions.

Electronic Birth Registration System:

Electronic Birth Registration System was introduced by The Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and the Local Government Division of the Ministry of Local Government with technical and financial support from UNICEF. This is probably the best local level e-governance example of Bangladesh where a local government body, in their own initiatives and leadership and with support from a development partner took such a bold step forward. The system also doubles as an immunization management system. Once registered, the system also generates an immunization schedule for every child. To system generated ID is also used to get admission in the public schools of the city.

Image no.8: Electronic Birth certificate

Financial Management System:

On the backdrop of not to successful project such as reforms in the Budgeting and Expenditure Control (RIBEC 1 and RIBEC 2) and somewhat successful RIBEC 2A and then RIBEC 2B, Ministry of Finance has gradually and surely the ministry of Finance now have developed a quality MIS system that is successfully used for budget planning, sensitivity analysis, impact analysis, financial projections and other core processes of the ministry.

Government Forms Online:

Accessing government forms online is made possible by the Prime Minster's Office of Bangladesh though a project funded by UNDP Bangladesh. This not only saves time but also the cost and hassles associated with the travelling to the government offices located at a distance.

Hajj Web Site:

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, GoB introduced the Hajj Web Site in 2002 to service ten and thousands of pilgrims who go to Mecca to perform holy Hajj. During the Hajj, the website also acts as a important information portal for the family members of the pilgrims and other interested persons and organizations. One of the best examples of a Public-Private Partnership project, the site provides timely and reliable information to a large segment of the population.

MIS for Project Management and Transparency:

Department of Roads and Highways, Ministry of Communication, GoB, developed this MIS as a component of a World Bank funded project for the institutional development of RHD. The eGovernment initiative of RHD involved the launch of a website that provides a variety of information, data and notices to users. Website users include the private sector, related government offices, ordinary citizens, and donor agencies.

National Board of Revenue:

Several development projects like Asian Development Bank funded 'Customs Administration Modernization Project', International Development Agency funded 'Excise, Taxes & Customs (ETAC) Data Computerization Project', World Bank funded 'Modernization and Automation Project' etc. much of the core processes of NBR and some of its citizen services has already been computerized and implemented successfully.

Personnel Database:

The Personnel Management system (more of a database with some analytical reporting) of the Ministry of Establishment is probably the oldest egovernment initiative that is still is in use and in demand. The database in maintained by the technical personnel with in the ministry and maintains the personal information card for each government employ of the 'Administration' cadre including their respective annual confidential reports.

Railway Ticketing:

Technically, Railway ticketing might not be a simpler e-government project but from people's convenience perspective, this is one of the important one. Bangladesh Railway outsourced the job to a local IT vendor. With a few technical hiccups the system was put to operation in 1996. The vendor owned operated and maintained the system till early 2002. The system was than transferred to Bangladesh Railway, who later decided to outsource its operation to another private vendor.


Image no. 9: Digital Railway ticket Syestem

13. CHALLENGES OF E-GOVERNANCE:

- Limited time to plan
- Lengthy process for Legal Framework to support

- E-Governance Insufficient telecom infrastructure to support
- E-Governance Unaffordable Internet services for private sector & Citizens
- Limited ICT human capacity to support
- Resistance to re- engineering of Departmental processes.
- Lack of Incentive Structure for Government Officials
- Awareness of Government Officials
- Lack of Adequate Training Programs
- Lack of ownership of IT systems
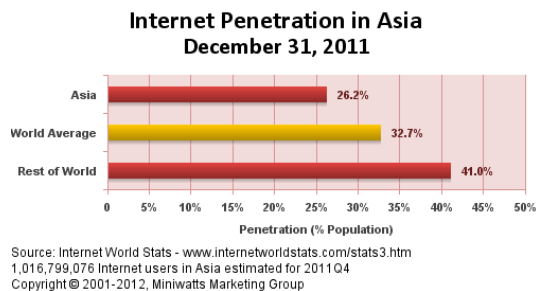
Image no.10

- Attitude of Government Departments
- Lack of reliable maintenance
- Supply of electricity across the nation
- Disaster Recovery
- Performance and Scalability
- Repoting and Intelligence

14. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations provided by the citizens to face the challenges of implementing e-governance in Bangladesh are summarized below:

a) Provide Website, E-Mail and Phone based Government Services: Different countries around the world provide the services through websites and telephones. The successful story in SSC and HSC result in Bangladesh are remarkable initiative in this section. Now anyone can get his/her SSC or HSC result through SMS.

b) Must have strong road map: There will be a long-term project to implement e-governance. Short-term projects will be implemented as small modules of long-term projects. Small projects will be synchronized so that government can save money and time.

c) Reduce internet and local bandwidth costs: The Internet bandwidth costs are almost ten times higher in Bangladesh than that of our neighbour country India. All sorts of network bandwidth costs must be drastically reduced. This will also help to reduce the network access and bandwidth costs for businesses and general citizens.

d) Every organization should have strong IT division: Real IT professionals of IT division should maintain IT related tasks. If the organization is very large then there will be more than one IT division. And central IT division will control other divisions.

e) Must have structured IT posts with handsome salary: There will be no block post. While an employee works he will try his best to improve his works as because he knows he will get promotion for his good performance. IT professionals will have good salary structure.

f) Provide information through Village Info Centers: Access to information is very much limited in our society. The situation in the villages is worse than that in the city. Village information centers can be a solution to provide necthan that in the city. Village information centers can be a solution to provide necessary information.

g) Establish online Mobile Phone based complaint centre: Use of Internet is no more a dream in Bangladesh – it

is a reality. In the recent time the usage of mobile phone is increasing day by day. So mobile phone can be used as a strong tool to provide service to the mass people.

h) Arrange more TV programs on Social and Economic Development issues:
Television is the most popular media of transmitting information in Bangladesh. Television should be used to increase awareness and disseminate information dissemination. Rural people watch BTV as it is the only terrestrial channel in Bangladesh, so the programs should focus more on the different development programs like agricultural program, health care, education, gender issue etc.

i) Provide Weather Forecast through Mobile Phone:
Mobile phone is used widely among the citizens. It can be used to broadcast weather forecast in times of national emergency.

j) Submission of Utility Bills through SMS: Payment of utility bill is a hassle and time consuming for general people. It wastes important working hours. Broader ICT delivery channels, like SMS, web etc can be used to pay the utility bills.

k) Internet which could decrease the Educational Expense: Internet can be used to deliver education to every corner of the country. Distance learning should be strengthened as our infrastructure for formal education is still lacking in resources.

l) Make Disability-Friendly software with steps from the Government: Disability issue is still underestimated in our country. Government should take some steps so that other organization can be influenced from this. In this regard, Government can develop read out software to teach the blind people.

m) Technical infrastructures should be flexible: In order to compete in this new era, governments at all levels must be able to react quickly to challenges - constantly innovating their processes to stay relevant in meeting public service expectations and priorities. To accomplish this, it is becoming

imperative for government organizations to build technical infrastructures flexible enough to absorb new technologies quickly, and rapidly to alter the scope and function of applications to support changes in the government business model.

15. CONCLUSION:

"It's always easier to set up a vision than its completion". The current government has resurrected that vision and made it ready for the 21st century highly globalize world and names it Digital Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh has its own limitations in resources, capacity and knowledge, the country's potential in human resources can be tapped through appropriate use of ICT tools. With lack of Power supply and Corruption in public sector, in my study 63% of respondents are quite pessimistic about their digital Bangladesh by 2021; but the taken projects say Government is committed towards reaching the goal of a knowledge based and middle income country by 2021. With an actionable ICT Policy 2009, Right to Information Act and ICT Act that provide the enabling environment for citizens' information access and e-commerce, a network of proactive and ready change agents in the Ministries, districts and upazilas, a number of initiatives that demonstrate the true concept and benefits of Digital Bangladesh, a technology.

REFERENCES:

1. E- Governance and Best Practices
2. http://www.nisg.org
3. E –Governance: Framework http//arc.gov.in/11th rep/ARC-11th-report htm Chap-

4. Introducing E-Government in Bangladesh: Problems and Prospects journal   article by Sadik Hasan, International Social science Review,Vol.78,2003

5. SICT's STEPS TOWARDS GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH ICTs, September 2005.

6. ICT policy related   concept paper, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance (2010)

7. E-governance in India: its impacts on relations among citizens, politicians and public servants M. Shamsul Haque

8. Journey Towards A Digital Bangladesh, June.2011, Finance division, Ministry of Finance.

9. e-government initiative in Bangladesh A sample Survey 2008,support to ICT Task Force Program Project(2008)

10. E-Governance: Bangladesh Perspective, K.A.M Morshed

11. Vision 2021: Digital Bangladesh, Tarique Mosaddique Barkatullah

12. http://bangladeshictpolicy.byesforall net/01/04/2007

13. Bangladesh Telecom sector challenges &opportunities, November 2010 by ifty Islam, Asian Tiger Capital Research

14. E-Governance Initiatives in Bangladesh ,An Analysis of strategy formulation for re-inventing Good Governance Department of Business Administration ,Jahangirnagar University.

15. www.unesco.org

16. www.ehow.com

17. www.slideshare.com

18. www.publicadministrationbd.blogspot.com

19. www.gbde.org vi. www.pacificcouncil.org

20. www.unpan.org