

E-Government: Services Offered by State of Punjab

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Abstract- E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies such as Wide Area Network, the Internet and Mobile Computing that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other arms of government. Government of India initiated NeGP (National e-Governance Plan) to implement e-governance projects in the whole nation. Punjab government is also making efforts to execute the E-Government projects successfully in the state. The prime aim of Punjab state government is to improve the decision making process of citizens and to enhance the communication skills between government and citizens of the state. This research paper sheds light upon the projects initiated by the Punjab government to offer e-government services in the state.

Keywords- E-government, DoIT, SUWIDHA, SARATHI, CSCs.

- 1. E-Government-** E-Government is a multidisciplinary term for web based services from agencies of local, state and federal governments. (Palvia & Sharma, 2007) E-Government is the use of Information and Communication technologies, predominantly the Internet and World Wide Web, to enhance the efficiency, cost and quality of government information

and services provided to its stakeholders such as citizens, businesses, employees and other government agencies. Although the adoption of e-government has the capability to accommodate better services to citizens at lower costs, it has acceptance problems. One of the most challenging issues in IT research is to understand why people accept or reject new information technology. (Adawi-AI, Yousafza, & Pallister, September,2005) World Bank (www.worldbank.org) definition: "E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies such as Wide Area Network, 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 reduction." (Palvia & Sharma, 2007)

2. E-government in Punjab- The e-government projects are implemented by government of India in a very efficient manner. As per the e-readiness reports of DoIT (Department of Information Technology) of India, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi, and Chandigarh & Tamil Nadu are positioned as the leaders in the use of ICTs. Therefore, it can be said that, Punjab is one of the dominant state of India in ICT advancement. DoIT has been established in the state of Punjab. DoIT takes initiatives for the successful implementation of e-government projects in the state. The projects initiated by the state government & DoIT are SUWIDHA, CSCs, e-Districts, VAHAN, SAARTHI (Mittal P. D., 2013). E-government is one of the best ways to solve the social and economical problems that exists in state of Punjab. According to Deepak Ghaisas, former Chairman NASSCOM product forum and CEO India operations estimate “23 percent of government spending goes on defense and 46 percent on governance. It will actually boost the domestic tech industry, if a small fragment is spent on technology to streamline the process. (Dwivedi & Bharti)

3. Status of E-government in Punjab- E-Government will able to provide the government services to the common man in a worthwhile manner. Following are the some successful stories of e-government in Punjab-

1. PAWAN (Punjab State Wide Area Network)- PAWAN is the basic component for supporting E-government initiatives in Punjab. PAWAN is responsible as the backbone network for data, voice and video communication throughout the state. PAWAN lessens the communication cost and utilizes the services in a cost effective manner. It ensures that every citizen of the state has access to government

services and information from anywhere and everywhere whenever they need it. (Mittal & Kaur, E-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab, 2013) (Singla & Aggarwal, April 2012)

2. SUWIDHA (Single User-friendly Window Disposal Helpline for Applicants)- This project was subsidized by GoP (Government of Punjab) and DOIT (Department of Information Technology), invented in August 2002 at Fatehgarh Sahib. This project is being implemented in all Deputy Commissioner’s offices. SUWIDHA provides a user friendly, faster, cost-effective and adequate interface between the government and public. SUWIDHA has also provided the facility of native language i.e. Punjabi. By this project, citizen can capture the input at a single point, define a specified delivery date depending upon the type of services, accept the cash at the counter itself and delivers the required service at the same counter. SUWIDHA provides the following services-

- i. Issuance of Birth Certificate.
- ii. Issuance of Death Certificate.
- iii. Issuance of Affidavits.
- iv. Issuance of Permissions.
- v. Issuance of Indemnity Bonds.
- vi. Issuance of Surety Bonds.
- vii. Issuance of Bus Passes.
- viii. Issuance of Dependent Certificate.
- ix. Issuance of Licenses.
- x. Issuance of Nationality Certificates.
- xi. Issuance of Copy of a Document/ Inspection of record and misc services.
- xii. Issuance of ID card.
- xiii. Issuance of Marriage certificate.
- xiv. Issuance of Un-married Certificate.

- xv. Issuance of No objection Certificate.
- xvi. Arm Licenses related services.
- xvii. Services to Pensioners.
- xviii. Character Verification.
- xix. Endorsement of SPA/GPA.
- xx. Appointment of Namberdar.
- xxi. Driving License related services.
- xxii. Registration of Vehicle related services.
- xxiii. Submission of Passport Applications.
- xxiv. Counter Signing of documents. (Mittal & Kaur, E-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab, 2013)

3. CSC (Common Service Centre) – It is a community service centre for rural citizens at panchayat level covering six villages. CSC offer services as per the requirements of all the communities in its surroundings five-six villages. As these centers are trying to offer every government department's service at one place. Therefore, each CSC is provided with computer, multifunctional printer, digital camera, internet connection and other related facilities. Through this CSCs have reduced the technical differences between rural and urban areas. (Mittal & Kaur, E-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab, 2013)

4. VAHAN and SARATHI- To offer citizen centric services, Punjab State Transport Department is the initiator in using Information Technology. Ten years ago, computerization of department started the implementation of VAHAN and SARATHI software. All the services related to transport are being

computerized and data is made available through internet or SMS for access by the public.

- i. VAHAN- This software is developed by NIC Headquarters Delhi. It is used for register Vehicle, tax collection, issuing various certificates and permits and recording the fitness of vehicles.
- ii. SARATHI- This software is also developed by NIC Headquarters Delhi. It is used by RLA (Registering and Licensing Authority). Services provided by SARATHI include learner license, permanent driving license, conductor's license and driving school license. (Mittal & Kaur, E-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab, 2013)

5. e-Districts- Districts are the actual front-end of government where most government-to-citizen interactions take place. To improve this interaction and to enhance the efficiency of various departments at District level, the e-Districts project is initiated by Punjab Govt. This project ensures to provide the smooth delivery of services. This project is executed under NeGP (National e-Governance Plan). As per the guidelines, this project offers the following services:

- i. Certificates.
- ii. Social Security.
- iii. Police.
- iv. Education.
- v. Health.
- vi. Transport.
- vii. Agriculture.
- viii. Urban Development.
- ix. RTI services.
- x. Public Distribution System.

- xi. Government dues and recovery.
- xii. Revenue Court. (Mittal & Kaur, E-Governance initiatives in the State of Punjab, 2013)

6. PRISM (Property Registration Information System Module) - To facilitate the land owners of the state, Revenue Department initiated the computerization of land records. This project simplifies the land registration process with high speed and efficiency at sub registrar offices across the state. The services offered by this project includes on the spot valuation of property, on the spot stamp & registration fees calculations, online photo capturing of parties and witness along with Sub-Registrar and saving in data base, printing of photographs of parties in concern in the backside of stamp paper. Besides, user interface is available in native language i.e. Punjabi and English. (Singla & Aggarwal, April 2012)

7. ITISP (Integrated Treasuries Information System Of Punjab) – In 2001, Government of Punjab developed ITISP for the computerization of Treasuries. Under this project, 18 district treasuries and 53 sub treasuries have been computerized. It is an online system for automation of treasuries and is accountable for verification of messenger by photo and signature. This project has lessened the time involved in calculation and enhances the accuracy and reliability of financial reports. (Singla & Aggarwal, April 2012)

8. PSEGS (Punjab State E-Governance Society)- The prime aim of this project is to regulate the implementation of e-governance projects for the overall welfare of the citizens. PSEGS 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 this project to provide the information and services to the citizens. (Singla & Aggarwal, April 2012)

Conclusion- The government of Punjab and DoIT (Department of Information Technology) has been making numerous efforts to execute the e-government projects in the state. The services such as SUWIDHA, VAHAN, and SARATHI offer services to the citizens in a short span of time and in a cost effective manner. But there is lack of projects which offers these kinds of services of the rural people. Most of the projects are providing e-government services in the urban areas. CSC is the only project which is formulated to offer the services to rural people. To conclude this paper, we can say that Punjab government has to take some appropriate measures to upgrade the e-government projects in rural areas as well so that rural citizens may also utilize the benefits of e-government services in an easy and efficient manner.

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