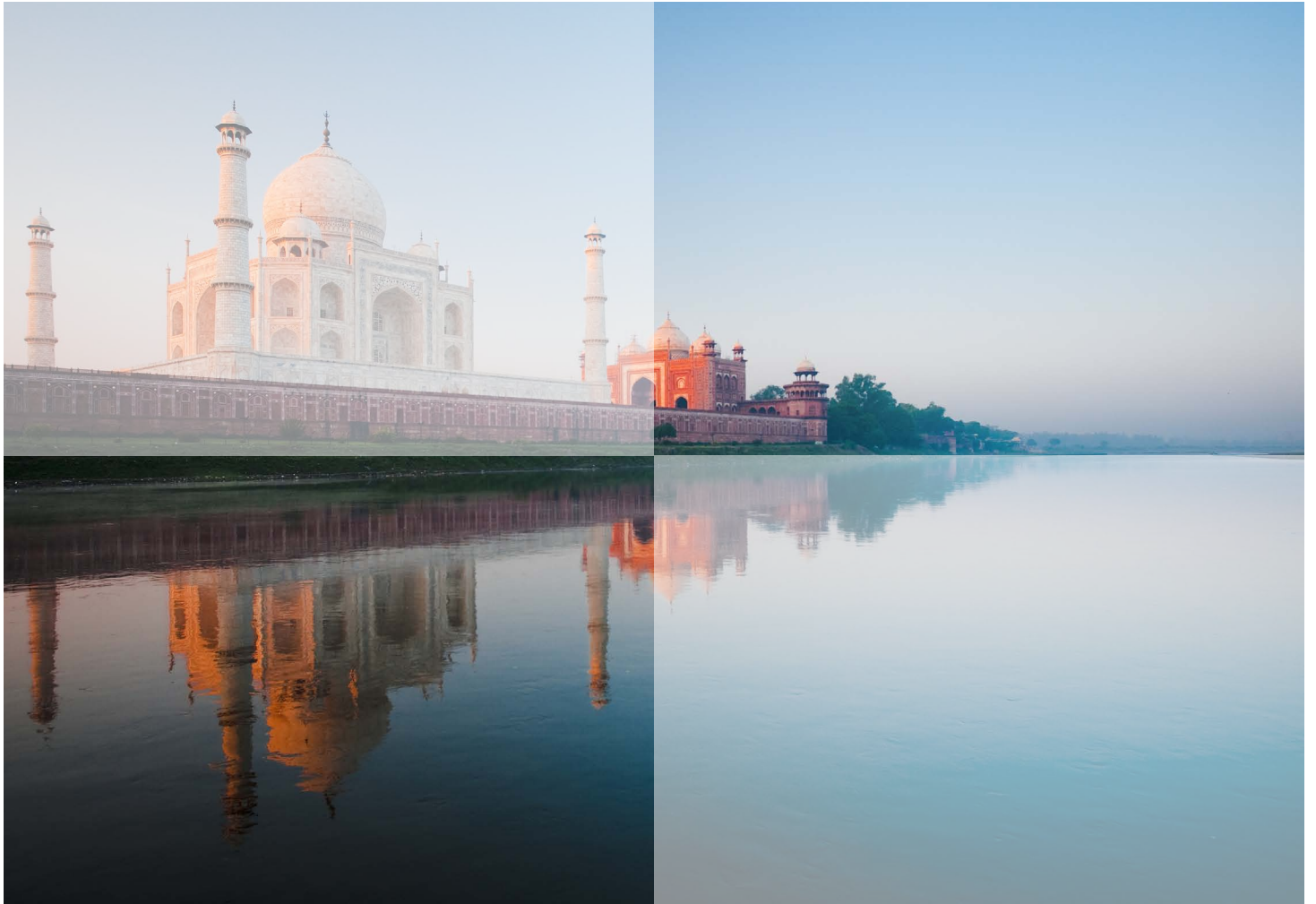


In collaboration with PwC

Transparency for Inclusive Governance

An assessment of India

Prepared by the Global Agenda Council on India, World Economic Forum



About the author



Pranjal Sharma

Pranjal is a Media Leader and a member of Global Agenda Council on India at the World Economic Forum.

In his over 21-year career in economic media, Pranjal Sharma has been involved with print, web and television news. Pranjal has spent about ten years in print media and over ten years in news TV.

He is currently a Consulting Editor with BusinessWorld magazine and an independent Editorial Advisor.

He is also visiting faculty at post graduate colleges and teaches information society and media subjects.

Pranjal's career began in 1991 when the Indian economy was opened. He has since tracked the country's economic development and engagement with the world.

He has previously worked with leading Indian publications like Indian Express and India Today. For these publications he wrote extensively on India's economic reforms.

When domestic private TV news was permitted, Pranjal joined the growing segment. He began his TV journey with CNBC-TV18.

At TV Today Network, he led a team that created pioneering work in offering business news in Hindi. It was the first such effort in any hindi news channel. He received the New Television Award for Best Anchor in 2007.

Pranjal then went on to help launch and manage Bloomberg UTV in India. At Bloomberg UTV, he hosted a weeknight news show and also a weekend interview show featuring Indian policy makers including Cabinet Ministers and Chief Ministers.

Pranjal holds a Bachelors degree in economics from Kirori Mal College, Delhi University and a Post Graduate diploma in media from the Times Centre for Media Studies, Delhi. As a Chevening Scholar he has also taken a mid-career course in media from the University of Westminster, London.

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Preface



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“India -the seventh largest country by area, the largest democracy, the second fastest growing economy...” words we often hear, and yet the euphoria of India as a regional power has been dented with talk of systemic corruption [India ranks a lowly 95 on Transparency International’s global Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of perceived public sector corruption], poor public services, nagging problems of unemployment, illiteracy and poverty and demographic challenges such as significant population growth- factors that can exacerbate perceived lethargy and lack of transparency in governance processes.

Perceptions have changed, from the India shining story to questions like “Is India BRIC’s fallen angel?”. A fair quantum of well-intentioned legislation and policy have been welcomed as a move in the right direction, and yet, the larger challenge remains— that of establishing a strong sense of credibility of the government and its functioning. Development of adequate capacity and sustained support for enforcement must also be addressed to ensure the success of India’s efforts.

New initiatives in collective action and local networks of organizations who espouse principles of trust and transparency will also build trust and a stronger culture of accountability between business and government, leveling the playing field and supporting stronger growth and competitiveness.

The work of the Global Agenda Council on India highlights that there is tangible progress on improving transparency and inclusiveness, but more work remains. Together with the Forum’s Partnering Against Corruption Initiative (PACI) and other key initiatives, we can develop a road map to a more transparent, inclusive and accountable environment in which all are proud to live and work.

Foreword



Deepak Kapoor
Chairman
PwC India

A Constitution by the people, for the people; the conscious word play of our preamble demonstrates inclusive governance was as relevant in a nascent India, as it is today.

What has changed with time is our perception of inclusiveness from elected representatives to a desire for direct involvement. The people of India are increasingly assertive of our right to monitor and hold accountable our Government, and to actively participate in formulating the future of our nation. Being a country of diverse geographic and demographic features, bound by legacy legislation and processes, our course has often been ridden with challenges. Yet, an increasingly proactive populace and a bureaucracy catalysed by advances in technology are steadily building transparency and inclusiveness in governance into the realm of possibility.

For a nation that prides itself as an information technology powerhouse, we have been late to harness technology as an enabler of transparency and inclusiveness. Nonetheless, we have realised the distance to be travelled. Awareness levels have to be created around all aspects of governance. The success of a governance initiative has to be de-linked from pure play implementation, to a dynamic gauge, reflective of the responsiveness of the populace.

While it is evident that effort has been made over the past few decades in terms of legislation and policy, many such initiatives have been lost at the altar of implementation. Two prominent reasons are the dilution of well-intentioned policy and self-defined measurements of ‘success’ for the programmes, by implementation agencies.

There is some iteration on curtailing the ambit of the Right to Information Act on account of frivolous applications. But common wisdom says that effort must be made to instead augment the powers of information commissions while improving the efficacy of implementation. The next logical change is to make available all information relating to a public authority on a public forum, without requiring a citizen to file an application.

When implementing any decision, state instruments need to follow a pure ‘first-in-first-out’ system in order to ensure equality and fair play for the masses, accompanied with coherent and easily accessible reasoning.

While effort is being made to ease the interface of G2C and G2B services, instead of offering select services and information to citizens, a participative way must emerge, allowing citizens the right to elect services.

The Government’s credibility will further be built upon by taking the deep-rooted problem of corruption head on, and by bringing private sector entities within the ambit of legislation akin to the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The context has changed over the years, and after 65 years of independence, so has the meaning of swaraj for our country. I hope you would appreciate by the end of this report that there is a lot that has been achieved and yet, a lot more to be done.



Introduction

Never has corruption been written about as much as in the last year. There has also been a growing sense of despondency among a section of the population that the GDP growth rate in India is less than the expected levels.

In this context, the Regional Agenda Council on India deliberated on the challenges facing the country and how India can pro-actively engage with the wider world.

This report seeks to outline some of the initiatives that have been taken to make governance more transparent and inclusive in recent years.

India is not flawless. Instead, our view is that despite all the negativism surrounding the India story, there are silver linings.

For instance, on the legislative front, landmark laws such as the Right to Information Act have been passed.

Several new bills have been introduced that can help make the Government more transparent and accountable. The much debated Lok Pal Bill has been introduced in Parliament and has been passed by the Lok Sabha. It awaits passage by the Rajya Sabha. The Government has made a significant commitment of resources to put in place a national Unique Identification Authority, which is an important attempt to improve targeting of Government programmes and reduce leakage. These are just some examples.

There is more room to make Government decision making more transparent and there is scope to include a wider set of stakeholders in formulating and deciding policy. India can greatly benefit from more inclusive policy formulation that takes cognisance of implementation realities. It is also true that more transparent governance at the national,

state and local levels can dramatically impact growth on the broader human development indicators.

The Indian federal structure gives important powers to state and local Governments. Several states have initiated useful measures that can promote greater transparency. The emergence of a stronger civil society has also pushed the transparency agenda forward.

It is expected that this report will document at least some of the important initiatives that we have seen in recent years. This is by no means comprehensive, but is designed to send a message to all of us that there is a silent, positive side to the India story that much of us seem to have missed in all the gloom surrounding us. We hope that this report will leave all of us more energised to act, and do even more to promote 'transparency for inclusive governance.'

Inclusion

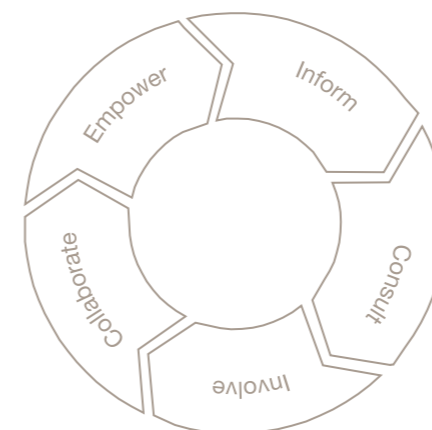


A participative way of 'Governance' wherein citizens and other stakeholders have a say in the decision making process of the Government



The 73rd & 74th amendments by giving constitutional status to panchayats and Urban Local Bodies have been the single-most substantial countrywide initiative that seeks to improve inclusion and facilitates devolution of powers. People could take part in the issues that affected them directly thereby having a say in the decision-making. There exists much scope of improvement as the benefit and adoption of the framework is yet to achieve their intended potential. The reluctance of government officials, an inadequate framework of financial independence and a general lack of awareness among citizens are the oft-quoted reasons for hampering effective participation of civil society in planning and decision-making.

Inclusion in decision-making has evolved in a fundamental way. The new-age definition of inclusion is a direct interaction between the Government and society, no more limited solely through elected representatives. This is a deep change that can be seen in sporadic attempts to hold town-hall meetings on policy issues. Here is a brief of some prominent efforts undertaken by the government.



Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)

Fundamental to the concept of inclusion is civil society's participation in the creation and implementation of policy measures. Even the basic effort by the Government to seek the opinion of society is a welcome act of inclusion. The Government body may or may not accept the views of the social group. But that is another matter. Elected representatives have always had a formal say in decision-making processes. State legislatures and Parliament were the only constitutional framework until the onset of Panchayats, which have afforded inclusiveness at the grass-root level.

The 73rd amendment effecting a directive principle of state policy, devolved power to villages, tehsils and districts. It allowed each village to participate in local governance through an elected Panchayat conferred with constitutional recognition. As per a report of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj titled a Report of Working Group on Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Governance, elected representatives are close to 2.8 million, comprising over 30% women, 19% schedule castes, 12% schedule tribes and also other backward classes in proportion to the population in most states. A further 50% reservation for women increased the egalitarian nature of the PRIs. As is evident, from the first-ever Panchayat elections at Jharkhand where 58% of the seats were bagged by women candidates, women's reservation has met with good success.

The initiatives and steps to improve the capability of elected representatives require more sustained efforts across both central and state government levels. The Government has been trying to implement capacity-building programmes for elected representatives so as to ensure awareness, literacy and capacity for understanding local issues and implementing Government schemes and programmes in the most effective manner.

This is complicated by the fact that the devolution of the 3Fs of governance (i.e. funds, functionaries and functions) relevant to Panchayats has not been uniform and is yet to be implemented completely across the country and all states.

States such as Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh started initiatives for their rural community more than a decade ago. E.g., the Janma Bhoomi programme in Andhra Pradesh had three broad objectives: Prajala Vaddaku Palana (PVP) (administration at the doorsteps of the people), Shramadanam (donation of labour) and micro-level planning. PVP was intended to bridge the gap between the common man and the state administration through a two-way process of state officials understanding the problems of the people through direct contact and the common people getting an opportunity to represent their problems and grievances directly to the officials. Shramadanam, considered the logical outcome of PVP, gave people the opportunity to participate through the contribution of labour and donations in the execution of works identified by them. The third objective of Janma Bhoomi micro-level planning was mainly intended to acknowledge the people to identify and prioritise their problems through gram sabhas (village electorates).

The Government of Madhya Pradesh legislated a series of reforms, designed to improve the power of the gram sabha and the accountability of the gram panchayat.

Another example of successful implementation of Panchayati Raj is the Soda village (www.soda-india.in/sarpanch) where a number of public welfare initiatives have been undertaken with the help of Panchayats including water reservoir, small-scale industries, computerisation, etc.

Social audit

The idea of a social audit was floated in order to improve checks and balances within the Panchayati Raj Institutions framework. In 2005, social audits were made statutory through National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), allowing people to directly question elected representatives on a continual basis. There has been concern on news related with social audits being manipulated and existing only on paper. Social audit is a very powerful tool for citizens for participation in governance and where the social audit has been genuine and effectively conducted; for e.g., in the case of Andhra Pradesh, as per a report, state-wide social audits found fraud of large amounts resulting in administrative or criminal charges against about 7,000 officials.

Urban local bodies

Another important step towards including society in decisions affecting their daily lives was the creation of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). These bodies were meant to allow local communities to decide on the usage and charges for basic utilities. However, there is an impression that State Governments continue to dictate matters such as rates of user charges, property tax, octroi, role of parastatals (Government owned organisations) in water supply and sanitation services, etc., with little reference to the ULBs affected by these decisions. Factors such as reduced avenues for revenue generation and dependency on State Governments for funding are undermining the principle of self-governance.

Despite the gloom, some states have managed to crack the code and emerge successful; some of the examples are as follows:

- Kerala is a fair example of democratic decentralisation where the participation of representatives and members of all sections of society was enabled in the execution of local development plans along with an increased participation by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups.
- Maharashtra has implemented the Maharashtra Suvarna Jayanti Nagarothan Mahabhiyan to address a gamut of issues like slum management, traffic management, pollution control, waste management both solid as well as liquids, administration and governance at the local level by supporting municipal bodies which are not covered under the central Government's Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) scheme.

- Gujarat has taken a number of innovative measures such as the formation of City Manager's Association Gujarat (CMAG), a forum of urban local bodies of the state, to provide support to the city Governments in solving the complex problems of growth by building in-house capacity and expertise and in articulating their concerns to the higher levels of Government. The area-based property tax assessment system has resulted in easy calculations and a higher yield from property tax.

- Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation was the first ULB to access the capital markets in January 1998.

Limited success with regards to the implementation of provisions of the 74th amendment which mandated the formation of the District Planning Commission has impacted the efforts of democratic decentralisation of governance at the local level. The executive powers remain vested with the municipal commissioner, appointed by the state Government.

The urban service levels in many cities e.g., water supply, sewerage, solid waste disposal, city-wide roads, and street lighting, continue to be unsatisfactory and inadequate for the rapidly growing population.

The responsibility of urban services rests with the ULBs who have limited financial independence. This is a cause for concern. The gap in required funds for urban infrastructure projects has been discussed in the five-year plans. The 10th Five-Year plan notes, "Urban infrastructure cannot be funded by budgetary support alone."

Resident welfare associations (RWAs) and Bhagidari

There have been state-specific incentives to incorporate the views of society or to devolve the decision-making power for basic civic functions. These initiatives have been applauded for their implementation and intent of engaging common citizens.

The Bhagidari (participation) scheme of the Delhi Government directly involves citizens through RWAs in monthly meetings in order to take responsibility for their areas. These RWAs are also the first point of contact for state utilities while planning changes. In one of the biggest citizen involvements, it recently conducted a large town-hall meeting which involved the participation of more than 3,500 RWAs who met and interacted with the cabinet ministers. This was a huge surge in numbers from July, 2011 when 600 RWAs had participated. Bhagidari has tremendous potential and with sustained efforts from the Government and involved RWA members, this can be one of the most effective tools of local self governance in urban areas.

In another instance, the representatives of the Ghaziabad RWA went house-to-house and asked residents to hand over their house tax cheques drawn in favour of the Municipal Corporation, Ghaziabad. The RWA discovered that many residents had not paid their house taxes for several years.

The Citizens Monitoring Hub was launched by the Odisha Government in 2011, though its roll-out has been limited.

Kerala initiated the People's Plan Campaign to take the people's view for the preparation of development plans under the 9th Plan. In the beginning of the 9th Plan, the Government of Kerala took a bold decision to devolve 35% of the state development budget down from a centralised bureaucracy to local Governments where local people could determine and implement their own development priorities under the People's Plan Campaign (PPC).

Social media

The civic and metropolitan authorities have started using social media in order to interact with the public. Much of it is to disseminate utilitarian information such as the traffic situation. In some cases, feedback from the public is sought for minor changes in localities. Delhi and Bangalore have taken the lead in such efforts. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi, now trifurcated, seeks citizens' reactions through its website. The Delhi and Bangalore Police are active on Twitter and Facebook. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's Facebook page accumulated more than 1500 complaints, most of which were resolved on priority.

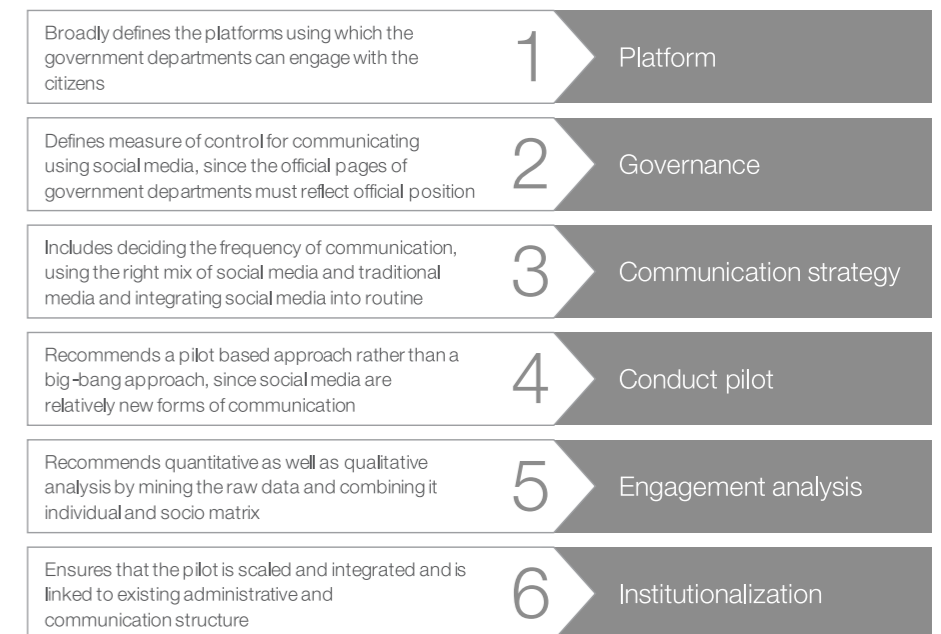
The authorities also use these sites to post the names of violators. At the central level, the Planning Commission also seeks inputs from citizens.

Yet, there is little demonstrable impact of such feedback and discussion. Government bodies have not been able to close that loop. Citizens want to know whether their feedback was utilised or

even considered. The current Government systems are not mature enough to deal with this need for information. As a result, most citizens remain cynical about online feedback forums which is coupled by the fact that the majority population of India has no or limited access to social media.

The central Government has recently devised guidelines for using social media. The objective is to encourage Government departments to engage with citizens. These guidelines are pioneering in many ways. They formally allow and encourage Government bodies to create and adopt citizen engagement. Thus far, a few departments had done without clear guidelines and departmental initiatives were driven by the efforts of select and technologically aware departmental officers. They also codified the rules, making it easier for officials and citizens to know what to expect out of the engagement. As with any new initiative, it will take a while to evolve and mature.

The guidelines have been defined around six key elements briefly explained here:



Transparency

The most critical aspect of the guidelines is to ensure that the engagement is analysed and fed into the system that is forming and implementing the policy.

[The Right to Fair Compensation, Resettlement, Rehabilitation and Transparency in Land Acquisition Bill](#)

Previously identified as the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, the bill is an important aspect of inclusion and proposes fresh moves on the land acquisition process. The new laws make people's approval in the sale of land mandatory. A Group of Ministers (GoM) cleared the long delayed bill, and is predicted to be introduced in the winter session of Parliament. It is currently proposed that consent of at least two-thirds of the project-affected families will be obtained before acquiring the land for public-private-partnership or private projects.

Under the law, the land acquirer has to provide 25 additional services to families affected by the land acquisition. These services include schools, health centres, roads, safe drinking water and child support services, places of worship, burial and cremation grounds, post offices, fair price shops, and storage facilities. The bill is currently in a fluid state with a debate on its provisions, we shall have to wait and watch to see the final form it evolves into.

“

Refers to the level of openness and access to information and/or data; also to include key initiatives taken towards promoting transparency in the Government functioning

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As a concept, transparency is relatively new to Government functioning in India. While inclusion has been an underlying theme since independence, transparency was assumed, but not enshrined.

The biggest step to change this has been the Right to Information Act which enabled monitoring and accountability for every citizen as a right.

But apart from this law, several other efforts at improving transparency have been initiated at several levels of the Government.



The Right to Information (RTI) Act

The seeds for the Act were sown decades ago at national and state level. The National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) campaigned for a national RTI law in 1996. In 1997, the Rajasthan Government announced that every citizen shall have the right to obtain copies of departmental documents related to local development works. In 2000, the precursor to RTI was tabled in the form of the Freedom of Information Act. It was passed in 2002 but was not bought into force. It took years before the RTI Act, in its current form, could be introduced and was finally brought into effect 2005.

In the last seven years, RTI itself has evolved in scope and interpretation. While it had a benign beginning, the established struck back with efforts to mitigate its sweep.

Even as the Act grew in popularity with citizens, it began to be shunned by Government agencies and officials. Though the broad framework is the same, section 27 of the Act empowers states to make rules to carry out the provisions of the Act. E.g., earlier this year, the Maharashtra Government proposed to limit each RTI application to one subject and 150 words. The notification has been challenged in the Bombay HC and the matter is currently sub-judice.

The RTI Act is working at limited effectiveness because of several structural reasons. Many of these reasons were highlighted in an evaluation done by the central Government's Department of Personnel and Training.

Offices meant to service information claims have not been adequately staffed. The Central Information Commissioner is appointed by the Government and in recent years there has been an increasing trend of retired public servants occupying these posts which clearly negates the object of appointing persons of eminence from diverse fields leading to claims of compromising the position. Roughly 30% of the posts for information commissioners in states are lying vacant.

Besides, state information commissions of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh have not uploaded any of their annual reports on their websites. About 59% of the state information commissions do not display cause lists on their websites.

There is continued failure to consistently disclose information pro-actively on the internet relevant to the implementation of the Act, as is evident from the fact that the Central Information Commission (CIC) and the State Information Commissions of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar are the only information commissions to have uploaded all annual reports for the period 2006-2011.

Further, the RTI Act mandates for these annual reports to be tabled before Parliament and respective state legislatures. However, there is no information available in the public domain regarding such discussions in Parliament or state legislatures, till date.

The National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP)

The National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy received cabinet approval in February, 2012. It aims to empower citizens to access information owned by the Government in both human- as well as machine-readable forms through a countrywide network in a proactive and periodically updatable manner, within the framework of various related policies, acts and rules of the Government, thereby permitting wider accessibility and use of public data and information keeping in view the broad guidelines delineated in the RTI Act, 2005. The policy is applicable to all sharable non-sensitive data available either in digital or analog forms but generated using public funds by ministries, departments, subordinate offices, organisations and agencies of the Government of India.

The NDSAP will increase accessibility and easier sharing of non-sensitive data among registered users for their scientific, economic and social developmental purposes. All the data holding organisations will reclassify their data and prepare a negative list of sensitive data within six months of notification of the policy.



The Whistleblowers Bill

In 2004, in response to a petition filed after the murder of Satyendra Dubey, the Supreme Court directed a mechanism to be put in place for acting on complaints from whistleblowers till a law is enacted. The Government notified a resolution and the Whistleblower Protection Bill was tabled in Parliament in 2011.

The bill envisages a mechanism to register complaints on allegations of wrongdoing, corruption, wilful misuse of power with the intent to protect someone who exposes alleged wrongdoing by a public servant. The bill empowered the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) to act on complaints from whistleblowers.

This bill covers all ministries and departments of the central Government, any central public sector undertaking and any company in which the Government has a stake of more than 50%.

Pending the fate of the Whistleblowers Bill, the CIC in July this year directed public authorities to disclose information requested under pending applications of an allegedly murdered activist Ravinder Balwani further to a resolution made in 2011. The decision, albeit unconventional as it does not strictly fit under the CIC's domain, is noteworthy action by the authority as it defeats the motive behind the murder of activists.

Public Procurement Bill

The draft Bill seeks to establish the procedure for bid process in a consolidated place. The Bill has codified the basic tenets of public procurement and places statutory obligations on procuring entities and bidders to comply with these norms. Currently, the public procurement process ails from inadequate and severely fragmented administrative rules which lack legal force. The codification of the process laying down broad principles to be adhered to is in itself the most significant plus point of the Bill.

The intent of the bill is as follows:

- Ensure efficient and transparent process
- Increase competition
- Reduce corruption
- Ensure fair and equitable treatment to participants
- Ensure consistency between quality and the bid price

The Bill also proposes different degrees of penalties per the severity of an offence such as taking gratification in respect of procurement, interference with the process, making vexatious, frivolous or malicious complaints and abetment of offences.

It excludes from its ambit procurements which are less than INR 5 million, procurements for the purport of national security and emergency procurements made for disaster management

Governance

“ Refers to the changes in governance models and the impact of technology on governance ”

The efforts of inclusion and transparency leads to improved governance. Effective governance needs a foundation for simpler processes and the deployment of technology. In India, the Government has been actively deploying and adopting technology in order to improve governance coupled with re-engineering of bureaucratic processes. However, much more can be done in terms of re-engineering of legacy processes in order to make governance more effective and efficient. The time taken for clearance, licences and other Government certificates and approvals remain cumbersome.

The deployment of technology has improved the quality of some services. Changes have also been made in the last few years to improve the governance capability. There have been great successes but mostly, a mixed bag. The Government system is yet to adopt performance linked incentives programmes (common and successful in the private sector) that can play a crucial role in inculcating the urge to change, improve and adapt in most officials. However, positive initiatives undertaken by the Government in this regard include the performance management division.

The Performance Management Division

The Cabinet Secretariat of the central Government started this division to track and incentivise improved outcomes of ministerial decisions. The new system lays down clear guidelines for officials in all ministries for tracking performance based on results. The system has been put in place in order to ensure that officials get recognised for taking steps that bring a policy closer to decision.

The tendency to delay decision-making needs to be curbed leading to faster resolution. This will help every decision to reach its logical conclusion much faster. The effort has also been adopted by central ministries, while many states also warm up to it. But it is too early to say whether it has made any significant difference to governance. Nonetheless, it is a welcome effort that could have positive long-term consequences. But the effectiveness of the policy is yet to be established. Also, it is important to have accountability provisions with necessary penalties along with performance-based incentives in Government.

Such themes are increasingly being adopted across states in programmes like the mandated or Guaranteed Services Delivery Act wherein any delay in service delivery by a Government official beyond the specified time limit is penalised. This is similar to the provision in the RTI Act and has been adopted in states like Delhi, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

The Railway Reservation System

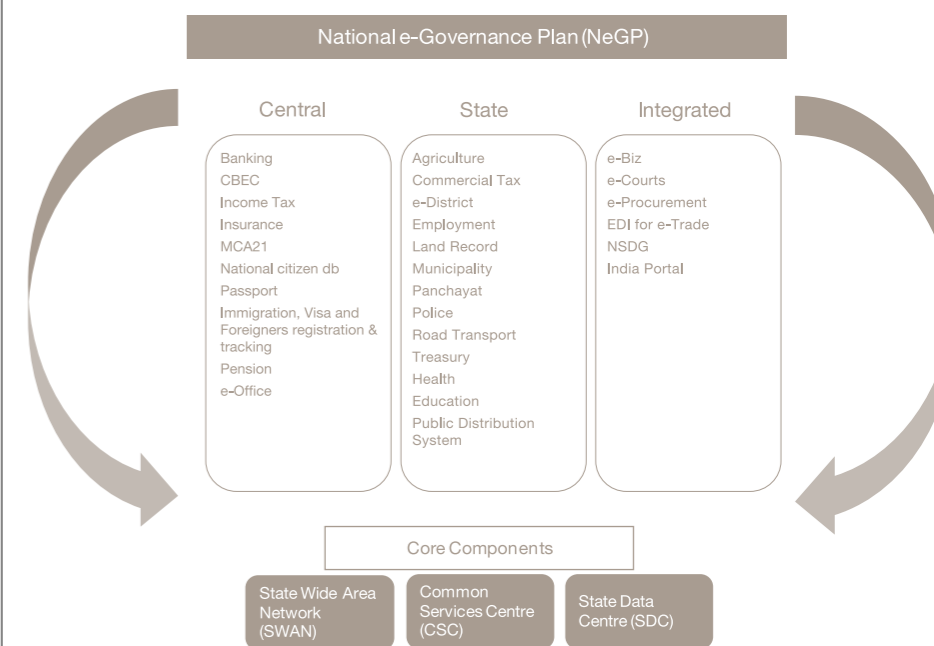
Technology began to be deployed in Government services from 1996. In many ways, the railways led the use of technology. Online reservation was launched in 2002.

The introduction of the Tatkal scheme in the late 90s was the first paradigm shift to deliver services and earn extra revenues for the Government. This was made more effective with the advent of technology as the online reservation system, despite operational glitches, provided for a transparent, efficient and easy-to-use medium for common citizens.

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)

The objective is to make all Government services available to citizens through online access. The programme encourages all Government departments and ministries to manage their internal process electronically. Effectively, this means creating almost paperless departments. It is still work-in-progress but a lack of a firm deadline means that every department is proceeding at its own pace. Since effective co-ordination is lacking, even the departments that adopt electronic processes cannot be fully efficient until other related departments reach the same level.

However, there are a few success stories including the MCA21 mission mode project (MCA21) which addressed the challenges faced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in providing services to corporate entities, e-filing of income tax returns and land record management systems. For example, the success of e-filing of income tax returns can be gauged by the significant year-on-year increase in the number of citizens and users who have adopted the system as depicted below.



Quick highlights of e-filing in F.Y. 2011-12 (Upto 31st March 12)

Comparative growth of e-filing

Form wise receipt of e-returns up to 31 March 2012

	Form Name	F.Y. 2010-11	F.Y. 2011-12	Percentage growth in FY 2011-12
1	ITR-1	1,983,618	4,439,001	123.78%
2	ITR-2	1,040,281	1,773,659	70.50%
3	ITR-3	327,409	522,579	59.61%
4	ITR 4 & 4S	4,552,028	8,340,343	83.22%
5	ITR-5	616,007	765,054	24.20%
6	ITR-6	530,899	593,047	11.71%
	Total	9,050,242	16,433,683	81.58%

The Electronic Delivery of Services (EDS) Bill

The EDS Bill aims to create a law that will enable departments to offer facilities to citizens in an electronic format, barring a few exceptions where physical delivery is essential.

The deadline for all departments is five years from the enactment of the Bill.

The draft EDS Bill draws certain similarities to the RTI in terms of the penalty mechanism to be imposed on erring officials. If successful, the EDS Bill will pave the way for smoother access to information as it will force all Government departments to digitise processes. While there are no pilot projects yet, many states have taken up the idea. Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi and Rajasthan have adopted the state-level rules for mandatory delivery of Government services within a specified timeframe. The EDS bill has been pending for a year and once enacted, it is expected to significantly contribute to transparency and improved governance. The Bill has been tabled in Parliament. A Standing Committee has also submitted its comments on the Bill. The Bill effectively proposes better delivery of services with minimal human interface, and by cutting human interface would cause reduced opportunity for corruption.

Conclusion

There are indeed a number of initiatives that have been taken to promote 'transparency for inclusive governance.' While these are all necessary stepping stones for better governance, there is more that can be done and at a faster pace.

Naturally, there has been a lot of focus on what the Government of India has been doing, and needs to do. But to miss the action in the states would be to leave out a big part of the change that India is ushering in. There is innovation and as can be expected, unevenness in the way states are addressing these challenges.

It is becoming increasingly evident that technology is an important enabler for effecting Governance. In addition, the power of the rapidly growing traditional and social media has transformed how citizens access and share information. The growth in the number of young, educated people in India augurs well for promoting a new set of ideas that might have appeared impossible or inconceivable even a few years ago.

However we need to acknowledge that the Government alone cannot address this challenge and legislation in isolation is not a panacea of all that ails us. Stakeholders across the spectrum have an important role to play in ensuring that the benefits of better governance reach all citizens. The full potential of these and other measures of the Government can be realised only with the active engagement of all stakeholders.

If we have felt that we have hit crisis point, we must also know that India has been effective in rising to greater heights when it responds. Given the opportunities that are presenting themselves before us, there is no doubt that we are at the cusp of seeing a new age of greater transparency for inclusive governance that will benefit all citizens.





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IMPROVING THE STATE
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