



E-Democracy and Citizen Empowerment through E-Governance and Other e-Initiatives in India, Nepal and Bangladesh-A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The paper introduces with e-democracy, relates e-democracy and citizen empowerment. Enlightens about the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. Throws light on digital divides between develop and developing society. Discusses e-governance and other e-initiatives in India, Nepal and Bangladesh towards digital or electronic democracy. Concludes with a note that public libraries to act as Community Information Centre to maintain various e-initiatives so that the country can enjoy the best part of e-democracy.

Keywords: E-democracy, knowledge centre, e-procurement, e-post, citizen empowerment

1. Introduction

The term democracy connotes of three aspects of government i) by the people, ii) of the people and iii) for the people. Whereas, E-Democracy refers to the processes and structures that encompasses all forms of electronic interaction between the government (elected) and the citizen (electorate). E-government is a form of e-Business in governance and refers to the processes and structures needed to deliver electronic services to the public (citizens and businesses), collaborate with business partners and to conduct electronic transactions within an organizational entity. E-Governance is defined as the application of electronic means in the interaction between government and citizens and government and businesses, to simplify and improve democratic, government and business aspects of Governance.

E-Democracy is mostly associated with electronic voting, but it is also associated with citizen participation in the processes of policy making, promoting and preserving the democratic values. Successful implementation of Information (E-Democracy, 2007) E-democracy innovations aim to use ICT to engage citizens in the decision-making process. Examples include e-voting, e-consultation, e-representatives, online deliberative polling, e-petitions, e-referendum etc.

2. Relation E-Democracy and Citizen Empowerment

Democratic process incorporates not only voting but also citizen participation and engagement in government. It is this second aspect which most readily offers the opportunity for empowerment by encouraging citizens to care about issues within their community and providing them with a feeling of ownership. When citizens feel that their views are respected and contribute to the decision-making process,

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then it might reasonably be expected to have an impact on voting turnout at elections.

Where technology can contribute is by increasing the opportunity and choice of channels for engagement with Government. This issue of choice is crucial. When using electronic channels such as online discussion forums, email, etc., traditional methods must not be forgotten. An interesting challenge for government in this context is the expectation of immediate response to electronic communication. Offering electronic services, designed round the needs of the citizens, is another way to empower citizens, increasing their control over when and where they transact with the Council. Research in Glasgow and throughout Scotland shows that the telephone remains the preferred means of contacting government and this must be respected even while encouraging the convenience of online transaction. What is particularly important is to build confidence in the security of electronic channels particularly where sharing of confidential data takes place. This applied equally to service transactions and to consultation.

3. International Telecommunication Union, World Summit on Information Society, United Nations and E-Democracy

International Telecommunication Union's Electronic Commerce for Developing Countries (EC-DC) programme, is a shining example of the benefits such partnerships bring to the world's poorest economies. ITU has been playing a leadership role in bridging the digital divide under the four-year strategic Valletta Action Plan (VAP) adopted by the ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in 1998. VAP is a six-point action plan that address the key elements needed to bridge the digital divide: sector reform, access to new technologies, gender issues, rural development and universal service/access, finance and economics, partnerships with the private sector and human resource development. VAP also includes a special programme to take into consideration the needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Under the leadership of the ITU and with the support and participation of other United Nations Agencies, governments and private sector, a World Summit on the Information Society was scheduled for 2003. In addition to its work under the VAP and programmes approved at the 1998 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, ITU is collaborating with the UN and other multilateral organisations, financial institutions, NGOs and other entities involved in poverty eradication in a further effort to bridge the digital divide.

World Summit on Information Society in its declaration has made a common vision of the information society which read as "We declare our common desire and commitment to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life..." (International Telecommunication Union, Report 2007).

So with the vision of United Nations along with other world bodies the countries through out the world are united with various initiated at local level to join hand at national level and finally at international level.

4. E-Initiatives in India, Nepal and Bangladesh

There are various electronic initiatives which are the step towards e-democracy in these countries some of them have been discussed in this section.

4.1 India

The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology has formulated the National e-Governance Plan which aims to bring all government services to the doorstep of each citizen by making the services citizen centric and ensuring that the right people get the benefits. The gap of information amongst various strata of the people (urban and rural, farmers & professionals etc.) can be bridged to a great extent. To further accelerate the drive towards efficient and transparent governance, the Right to Information Act was passed in late 2005.

- a) e-Seva (electronic Seva): The electronic seva (e-Seva) is the improved version of the TWINS project launched in 1999, in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad in Andhra Pradesh.
- b) Bhoomi: The Department of Revenue in Karnataka State has computerized 20 million records of land ownership of 6.7 million farmers in the State. Farmers of the Village Accountant to get a copy of Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crops (RTC) – a document needed for many tasks such as obtaining bank loans,
- c) CARD: The Computer-aided Administration of Registration Department - CARD in Andhra Pradesh is designed to eliminate the maladies affecting the conventional registration system by introducing electronic delivery of all registration services. CARD was initiated to meet objectives to demystify the registration process, bring speed, efficiency, consistency and reliability, substantially improve the citizen interface etc.
- d) FRIENDS: Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services is part of the Kerala State IT Mission. FRIENDS counters handle 1,000 types of payment bills originating out of various PSUs. The payments that citizens can make include utility payments for electricity and water, revenue taxes, license fees, motor vehicle taxes, university fees, etc.
- e) LOK MITRA: Lok Mitra is the first of its own kind of Electronic service in the state of Rajasthan. It aims to deploy Information Technology for the benefit of the masses. It is a, citizen friendly computerized centre located in the heart of the city at Government Hostel, Jaipur. It has facility of making payments through Internet using Credit Card.
- f) SETU- A bridge for facilitation between Citizen & Government: The Integrated Citizen Facilitation Centres (SETU) is an approach in this direction. At present there are multiple points of interaction between the citizen and individual departments spread over so many different Government offices. The aim is to lay the foundation for e-governance, create visible impact of the intention of the Government in this direction, and facilitate the interaction of the citizens with the Government to make it more transparent, pleasant and satisfying.
- g) Jan Mitra: Jan Mitra is an Integrated e-platform through which rural population of Rajasthan can get desired information and avail services related to various government departments at kiosks near their doorsteps. To achieve this end, a system has been integrated using IT tools.
- h) Drishtee's software platform enables e-governance and provides information about and access to education and health services, market-related information, and private information exchanges and transactions. It aims to be the 'window to the world' for Indian villagers.. Drishtee kiosks provide viable employment opportunities for unemployed rural youths and help stem rural-urban migration. Drishtee is capable of enabling the creation of approximately 50,000 Information Kiosks all over India within a span of six years. This communication backbone has been supplemented by a string of rural services for example, Avedan, Land Records, Gram Daak (mailing software), Gram Haat (virtual market place), Vaivahiki (Matrimonial), Shikayat (online grievance redressal), Mandi.
- i) WebCITI: An e-Governance project for building citizen-IT interface for services offered by district administration at Fatehgarh Sahib in Punjab and also provides complete workflow automation in District Commissioner's office. WebCITI provides web based interface to citizens seeking services from district administration which includes issuance of certificates such as death/birth, caste, rural area etc; licenses such as arms license, permission for conferences/rallies etc and benefits from socio-economic schemes.
- j) Aarakshi is an Intranet based system that has been developed and implemented for Jaipur City Police. This innovative system enables the city police officers to carry out on-line sharing of crime & criminal data bases, carry out communication and perform monitoring activities.
- k) FAST: The 'Fully Automated Services of Transport' an e-governance, implemented in the cities of Andhra Pradesh. It is to provide on-line services to the public covering all gamut of services of Transport Department like Issue of Driving Licenses, Registration of Motor Vehicles, Issue

Permits, Collection of Motor Vehicle Taxes, etc. All the offices in the state would have inter-connectivity through APSWAN.

- l) VOICE: It is made to deliver municipal services such as building approvals, and birth and death certificates, to the people of Vijayawada. It also handles the collection of property, water and sewerage taxes. The VOICE system uses five kiosks located close to the citizens.
- m) MUDRA (MUNicipal corporation towards Digital Revenue Administration): The system is for the Holding owners, Tax collectors, officials at headquarter levels and Circle levels. It is designed to computerize the over all functions of tax collection system of Patna Municipal Corporation. Revenue management is the key to economic stability and development of urban infrastructure.
- n) KHAJANE: The online treasury project, KHAJANE, computerises all the 216 treasury offices in Karnataka and is connected to a central server at the State Secretariat through VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal). It provides regular updates regarding the State expenditure and receipts to the central server. KHAJANE aims to bring about a more transparent and accountable system of financial transactions and also discipline in operations and management, resulting in efficiency and cost savings for the government.
- o) eCops (e-Computerised Operations for Police Services): This project was launched as part of the VISION 2020, the state's focus on modernization of police administration takes the shape of eCOPS. It helps police stations reduce paperwork and automate the maintenance of registers, report generation, data analysis, planning and co-ordination, enable the speedy detection of crime and monitor prosecutions. For citizens, the project will lead to online interaction with the police department over the Internet.
- p) OLTP (OnLine Transaction Processing): The project connects 16 government departments in Andhra Pradesh on a single network. The project seeks to serve the Government department users and citizens in ten villages of Shadnagar mandal, one village each in Bijnepally and Jadcherla Mandals, Mahaboobnagar District. Citizens in these pilot locales will be able to conduct government department service transactions efficiently through specially designed internet-enabled kiosks. These transactions can be carried out in English as well as Telugu interfaces. These services include access to information such as income verification and income certificates of citizens, land cultivation details, agriculture marketing, tele-veterinary services, registration of small farmers, birth and death records, house numbering, first information reports, occupation details of residents, drinking water details and irrigation sources, etc.
- q) TARAhaat: This project, named "TARAhaat" after the all-purpose haat (meaning a village bazaar), comprises a commercially viable model for bringing relevant information, products and services via the Internet to the unserved rural market of India from which an estimated 50% of the national income is derived. TARAhaat combines a mother portal, TARAhaat.com, supported by franchised networks of village cybercafes and delivery systems to provide a full range of services its clients, which includes, TARAdhaba, TARAbazaar, TARAdak, TARAguru, TARAscouts/TARAreporter, TARAvendor, and TARAcad.
- r) Mahiti Shakti: The portal operates with a single window through which the citizens can access information related to all aspects of the government's functioning, various benefit schemes and services ranging from obtaining ration cards to getting sanction for old age pension.
- s) Warana Wired Villages: The Warana Wired Village provides agricultural, medical, and educational information in the local language to villages around Warana Nagar in the Kolhapur and Sangli Districts of Maharashtra.
- t) Community Information Center: The Prime Minister of India dedicated to the people of the eight North-Eastern states a new structure of localised governance called Community Information Centres. Basic services to be provided by CICs include Internet access and e-mail, printing, data entry and word processing and training for the local populace.
- u) Gramsampark: This is a flagship ICT product of the state of Madhya Pradesh. A complete database of available resources, basic amenities, beneficiaries of government programmes and

public grievances in all the 51,000 villages of Madhya Pradesh can be obtained by accessing the website. Gramsampark has three sections-Gram Paridrashya (village scenario), Samasya Nivaran (grievance redress) and Gram Prahari (village sentinel), which includes untouchability-eradication, women's empowerment, water conservation and campaigns for sanitation.

- v) **Bharat Nirman Plan:** The Govt. of India has launched a massive rural infrastructure development programme, called 'Bharat Nirman Plan' which is designed to provide a new deal to Rural India in the areas of irrigation, roads, communication, healthcare, education, markets etc. Under the Bharat Nirman Plan the Department of Telecommunications has the responsibility of providing telecom connectivity to 66, 822 villages (out of total 6,38,365 villages in India), which are uncovered by Village Public Telephones (VPTs), will be covered by November 2007. The mission further works towards establishment of knowledge centres that will cater to each and every panchayat, village and hamlet.. This will bridge the divide between urban India and rural Bharat.
- w) **Village Knowledge Centre:** Village Knowledge Centre (Village knowledge Centres, 2007) is the out come of World Summit on Information Society under the Mission 2007 in India. Under this India Mission 2007 by August 2007 all village in India will have knowledge centre. In this regard The Honorable President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam states that "India has approximately 2.3 lakh Village Panchayats. I visualize establishment of village knowledge centers in these Panchayats to empower the villagers with the knowledge and to act as a nodal center for knowledge connectivity for the villagers."

Village Knowledge Centre should have a computer terminal, wireless (Wi-Max) connections or fibre broadband or satellite connectivity with the nodal knowledge centres at the district level, and equipped with peripherals to function as a self sustained knowledge centre. The knowledge centre should have facility for reading the text with an audio output so that people, who are unable to read, can also benefit. The knowledge center can also be used for collection, digital storage and dissemination of village specific information pertaining to agriculture, craftsmanship, arts, artisan techniques, informal judicial system practiced in village based on values, local remedies for simple ailments, village stories with moral values, village history, village folk songs, village cultural traditions, traditional medicinal practices followed in villages and village marketing information and methods. In nutshell, all good side of village life should be available in the knowledge centre. Such information presently is being transmitted through word of mouth and with changing generation, it is being lost. Apart from providing tele-education and tele-medicine facilities, commercial transactions and administrative issues can also be integrated.

The elections have concluded in six states in India. For the first time voting was entirely electronic and carried out on India made machines. No yard long-ballots stuffed in boxes to be manually counted. People everywhere took to it with ease and are convinced 'poll riggers' would soon be extinct. Results were announced within three hours of beginning the software driven 'counting'.

Over and above, the National Knowledge Commission (National Knowledge Commission, Report, 2007) has been made, a high level advisory body to the Prime Minister of India, with the objective of transforming India into a knowledge society. It covers sectors ranging from education to e-governance in the five focus areas of the knowledge paradigm namely i) access (easy access to knowledge), ii) concepts (all levels & forms of education) iii) creation (effective creation of knowledge), iv) applications (applications of knowledge systems) and v) services (services like e-governance). The knowledge commission has recommended to strengthen existing library and Information Centres (LIC) and to open new LICs in village areas.

4.2 Nepal

The Information Technology Policy of Nepal, 2000, aims to build a knowledge-based society and establish knowledge-based industries. The plan is to make ICTs accessible to the general public and to provide employment in the ICT sector. The government has developed a strategy and action plan that includes

private sector participation, infrastructure development, provision of technology to rural areas and the creation of an enabling environment for private sector investment in ICT-related service industries, such as e-commerce, e-education and e-health.

- a. **Bharatpur Municipality:** Bharatpur Municipality has tried to introduce the concept of urban e-governance by utilizing available resources. All 14 wards of the municipality are equipped with computers and trained staff. People will be provided with computerized services for taxation, employment exchange, building permits, property valuation and other transactions. Services, which used to be available only at the main municipality office, now be delegated to the ward level. The people may request for information via e-mail. The website of the municipality provides information on the city profile, land use, the Local Governance Act, regulations, important decisions of the municipality, population, land records, tourist information, registration of complaints etc. (Bharatpur municipality e-governance portal, 2007). The municipality orient its efforts towards e-governance as the first step, promote the use of computers and expand computerized services in the second step, and utilize electronic means for governance to the full extent in the third step. The vision of e-governance in Bharatpur Municipality may be a catalyst to initiate e-governance in the Kingdom of Nepal at the local levels.
- b. **DoCSI:** Department of Cottage and Small Scale Industry is an e-governance projects started in July 2005. The services available are permission and registration of CSI (Cottage and Small Scale Industry), renewal, amendment, technical administrative consultancy, skill and entrepreneurship development, etc. The main objective of DoCSI is to cater the need of grass-root level entrepreneurs to reach to local, national and international market (Department of Cottage and Small Scale Industry, Nepal, 2007).
- c. **E-procurement (Bolpatra):** Bolpatra is the central source for public procurement opportunities within Nepal. The site provides easy-to-use Internet access to all publicly available bidding opportunities with a facility to submit electronic responses online. The site also provides details of His Majesty's Government and Public Corporations awarded contracts for goods, services and works. Bolpatra is designed to help you to find information on government and public sector procurement by providing links and a search engine that can be used to search for notices issued by public bodies across Nepal. (E-procurement, Bolpatra, Nepal, 2007).
- d. **Inland Revenue Department:** Inland Revenue Department has all the facilities through its portal to make it free from corruption. The citizens are accessing for e-value added tax system, for filing any application (e-Filing) module, permanent account number (e-PAN), and Tax Deducting at Source (e-TDS). This department has expanded to all its offices phase-wise.
- e. **Nepali e-Haat Bazaar:** Nepali e-Haat Bazaar is the National Business to Business (B2B) e-Commerce Market Place as a single electronic gateway to promote the market linkages within the country and with the international markets. The B2B e-Commerce web site is implemented with the objective of using ICTs to reduce poverty in the country. This is a joint initiation of Rural Urban Partnership Programme (MLD/UNDP) and High Level Commission for Information Technology and Agro Enterprise Center/Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce & Industries (Nepal e-Market prices, www.b2b.com.np, 2007)
- f. **E-Post:** The department of post has its electronic service to the citizen such as e-delivery, tracking of mail, electronic money order etc. It has intra departmental module to monitor and maintain staff and administrative set up. E-post is functioning since 2005.
- g. **Women Empowerment through ICT:** Having identified the root cause of social crime as poverty and lack of education, the group Advancing Girls and Women in Nepal (AGWN) initiated this project with the belief that by working with women as learners the family will ultimately benefit. In the first phase the goal was to achieve 10,000 computer literate women in Nepal. After one week of computer training, self-help groups were established to enhance the women's learning with the hope they might design instructional materials or set up their own businesses (Women empowerment through ICT, 2007).

- h. **Digital Broadcast Initiative:** An international non-governmental organization (NGO), is working in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a comprehensive initiative to provide critical information on a range of development issues important to the people of Nepal. Out of this, the Digital Broadcast Initiative (DBI) was created. It is a broad partnership of several groups working with the continuing support of government through three project teams: Content Development, Outreach and Assessment. The teams work collaboratively on determining the information needs of underserved communities; writing and producing relevant and engaging audio and multimedia programmes to address these needs; broadcasting these programmes directly to communities via satellite and FM rebroadcast; integrating broadcast programming into existing outreach work being done by partner community organizations; collecting ongoing feedback and input directly from communities and including it in programming; and monitoring and assessing the overall impact and effectiveness of the initiative (Digital Broadcast Initiative, 2007).

4.3 Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the ICT and its inception has taken some time than the countries in South East Asia. The government has passed its IT policy in 2001 with emphasis on all the sectors for digital inclusion. Here some of initiatives have been discussed.

- a. **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. The system also doubles as an immunization management system. Once registered, the system also generates an immunization schedule for every child. The system generated ID is also used to get admission in the public schools of the city (E-Governance, Bangladesh, 2007).
- b. **Financial Management System:** 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.
- c. **Government Forms Online:** Accessing government forms online is made possible by the Prime Minister'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.
- d. **Hajj Web Site:** The Ministry of Religious Affairs, Government of Bangladesh 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 an 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.
- e. **MIS for Project Management and Transparency:** Department of Roads and Highways, Ministry of Communication, Government of Bangladesh, developed this MIS as a component of a World Bank funded project for the institutional development of RHD. The e-Governance 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.
- f. **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.
- g. **Personnel Database:** The Personnel Management system (more of a database with some analytical reporting) of the Ministry of Establishment is probably the oldest e-government initiative that is still in use and in demand. The database is 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.
- h. GHAT: Rural ICT Centre (RIC) Digital Equity Network (DEN) runs the RICs with support from KATALYST, a multi-donor consortium working in Bangladesh. Three RICs were launched in 2006. The RICs each have basic ICT facilities (phone, computers, printer, scanner, internet connectivity, digital camera etc.). The RIC mission is to develop and promote ICT services to meet the needs of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in rural Bangladesh. D.Net and MART, India conducted market research for this project. As a result, content based information service received attention. RICs disseminate business information for the local businesses in selected sectors (e.g., poultry, fisheries, potato etc) dominant in the localities of each centre. The centres are also a source of various social, health, education, and government information.
 - i. Agro-Ecological Zone (AEZ): AEZ a national database was successfully developed in Bangladesh. The database contains information on the country's land resources including physiography, soils, climate, hydrology, cropping systems, and crop suitability. The database is housed in the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) computer center at Dhaka, Bangladesh, and has been used to generate readily accessible information on the physical land resources of the country for use by researchers, extension workers, and decision makers in land and agricultural resources management as well as agricultural development planning. The AEZ database constitutes the foundation for a new effort to develop a comprehensive multi-scale GIS-based Land Resources Information System (LRIS). This updated system is designed to better deal with the intricacies of land resource planning under the complex environmental conditions that prevail in large parts of Bangladesh. The LRIS includes additional databases and procedures, in particular data on socioeconomic and demographic factors influencing agricultural production. The system is being implemented by BARC with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and technical support from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The technology being used to establish the LRIS includes ArcView GIS; the ArcView Spatial Analyst and Dialog Designer extensions; and Avenue, ArcView GIS software's programming language; as well as multi criteria analysis tools.
 - j. GrameenPhone Community Information Centres: GrameenPhone is rolling out Community Information Centers (GPCIC) across rural Bangladesh, giving up to 20 million people the chance to use the Internet and email for the first time. GrameenPhone has already set up with local entrepreneurs more than 500 centers in communities throughout the country by the end of 2006. The GPCICs are designed to be run independently as small businesses by local entrepreneurs. The GPCICs are set up on shared premises in select rural areas around the country. The computers in the 16 centers of the pilot phase were used by an average of 30 people a day, who pay a small fee to access email or Web pages. Currently there are 80 CICs operating in as many upazilas of the country. GrameenPhone trains the entrepreneurs so that they become aware of the full potential of business through GPCIC. Community Information Centers also provide local people with other GrameenPhone services, such as payphones (again using GrameenPhone's mobile network) and electronic recharges for prepaid mobile accounts. Market prices of agricultural produce are also available through the website of the Agricultural Extension Department. The GPCICs are also of help to students and professionals. Health and medical information will also be made available through the GPCICs soon. In addition, other useful content will also be added gradually. The ranges of services that are available at GPCICs are i) Internet surfing and e-mailing, ii) Chatting with Voice, Picture, iii) Video conferencing, iv) Computer Composing, v) Scanning, Printing, vi) Commercial Mobile Call, vi) E-governance services, vii) GP value added services such as FlexiLoad, Ring tones downloading etc., viii) Fax, ix) CD Writing, x) Telemedicine services, xi) Content on health, agriculture etc., xii) Multimedia education for children (GrameenPhone Community Information Centres, 2007).

5. Key issues of E-governance in India, Nepal and Bangladesh

The various e-initiatives are emerging in these countries but these initiatives are yet to reach all levels in society. The problem related to e-initiatives in these countries are many however, some key issues are Lack of Integrated Services: Most of the e-Governance Services being offered are not integrated. This can mainly be attributed to *Lack of Communication between different Departments*. So the information that resides with one department has no or very little meaning to some other department of Government. Lack of Key Persons: e-governance projects lack key persons, not only from technological aspect, but from other aspects as well. Population: This is probably the biggest challenge. Apart from being an asset to the country it offers some unique issues, an important one being Establishing Person Identities. There is no unique identity of a person in India. Apart from this, measuring the population, keeping the database of all Indian nationals (& keeping it updated) are some other related challenges. Different Languages: A challenge due to the diversity of the country. It enforces need to do governance, in local languages. Ensuring e-Governance in local language is a big task to achieve. In addition, the rural electricity is also one of the vital factor for the success of e-initiatives in these countries. Information illiteracy is another cause for the failure of e-governance in India, Nepal and Bangladesh.

6. Concluding Remarks

The various initiatives right from the grass-root to the level of higher education the e-democracy is to be inculcate to reap the benefit of new inventions of Information Communication Technology. These initiatives will empower the citizen, creating an environment where others are equipped and encouraged to make decisions in autonomous ways and to feel that they are in control of the outcomes for which they have accepted responsibility. However, empowering leaders invite an atmosphere of inclusion across all levels of the organization by making sure that everyone has a voice and that their voice is heard. This is in contrast to those leaders who include in the decision-making process only people who are like themselves and exclude those who are different. While the disempowering leader fears dissent, empowering leaders see it as a source of objectivity and innovation. Such leaders resist the urge to exercise their positional authority to "resolve" tensions created by conflicting ideas. For them, power is not a tool to be used upon others; rather, it is understood as "reciprocal forces within a tension-filled network of relations". In reference again to that higher principle, these leaders believe that the process itself will eventually resolve the tension but with a solution far superior to one that could have been declared through the use of positional power. Citizen empowerment in true sense with e-democracy in a developing society like India, Nepal and Bangladesh is possible when people are information literate. In these countries where, the general and functional literacy is in developing stage, 65% literacy in India, 53% literacy in Nepal and 54% in Bangladesh. To compensate with such condition the simple literacy is not sufficient. Information literacy needs to be replaced with literacy. Information literacy itself makes oneself self-sufficient and self reliable. Further, for economic development, the empowerment through e-governance and other knowledge centres can mobilize the self-help efforts of the poor, rather than providing them with social welfare. To strengthen and propagate e-democracy in India, Nepal Bangladesh the community information centres (CICs) should be entrusted the responsibilities of handling e-governance projects, Village Knowledge Centres etc. These CICs are public/rural libraries. According to IFLA's (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) (IFLA, 2007) recommendations in order to make informed citizen there should be one library per one thousand people, according to this, in India, there should be more than 3,30,000, however, right now there are only 60000 public libraries out of which Raja Rammohan Library Foundation has covered only 31,365 libraries. In Nepal there are very few public libraries and in Bangladesh there are only 1671 public libraries which are below the norms. First and foremost public/rural libraries are need to be set up with proper infrastructure so that they can handle E-governance and other such initiatives with proper aims and objectives. Secondly, information literacy needs to be launched at all levels of education putting them into across the curricula. Information literacy at community level for general awareness should be made on regular interval to strengthen the e-governance which will lead to better use of electronic information

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