



AN ASSESSMENT OF ROLE OF E- GOVERNANCE IN ENHANCING PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHOOMI PROJECT IN KARNATAKA.

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Abstract

The advent of the 21st century has witnessed the convergence of information technology and digital communication technology, which, in turn, has resulted in a paradigm shift in the people's expectation from government. Citizens' expectations from government are very high and their dependence on government is increasing for variety of services. It is in this context that e-governance can play an important role in providing access to government services for citizens and making the delivery of government services speedier, more efficient and transparent. The present article makes an attempt in understanding e-governance and service delivery with special reference to Bhoomi Project in Karnataka. The primary aim of this study is to understand how Bhoomi project has brought about thorough change in service delivery.

Key Words: E-Governance, Public Service Delivery, Bhoomi Project.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is not only ubiquitous but it is also playing a major role in bringing about a radical change in our life. In modern times, administration is very near to techno-friendly aiming at smart governance and e-governance which lead to a new era of good governance. Through e-governance, the government services are made available to the citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. E-governance has reduced the distance between the government and the common man by making the former eminently accessible to the latter. The Government of Karnataka through its e-governance initiative has introduced 'Bhoomi', a project that has enabled the common man to avail of most of the government services without much hurdles and harassment. Through this 'Bhoomi' Project, the Government of Karnataka has brought about a sea change in the maintenance of land records and in the administration of the state.

E-governance is a much talked about form of governance in the twenty-first century. E-governance or electronic governance is basically the application of ICT to the processes of government functioning in order to bring about 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) governance. In other words, it can be defined as interaction between government and citizens and internal government operations to provide effective implementation of government policies with the use of ICT. It is a major weapon wielded to curtail corruption to make public delivery system clutter-free. E-governance is a journey and not a destination. It is defined as the delivery of services and information to the public by using electronic means.

GOALS OF BHOOMI PROJECT

"Bhoomi" is an innovative concept, which is an e-governance initiative, that has ensured good governance. Especially, the rural land governance system has been greatly benefited by "Bhoomi", the e-governance project. One of the major drawbacks of the manual land management system is the opaque, slow moving and corruption-ridden methodology of maintaining land records. So, to solve many problems that affect the rural, poor and disadvantaged population, computerized land record system has been introduced which uses ICTs. Computerization of land record system aims at implementing e-governance at the grassroots level within the domain of

land management in India. Through the computerization of land records programme that the government is expected to reach out to the rural population specifically and provide better service in terms of efficiency, time, transparency and reduction in corruption. Rural land records contain multiple data such as ownership, tenancy, nature of title, loans, crops grown, irrigation details etc. In addition to providing the proof of title to the land, this land records are used by the farmer for a variety of purposes. Minimizing the possibility of disputes and litigation was the target and the land records have achieved that by giving the landholders the fullest security of tenure. It enables them to obtain credit more easily and to transact the land more safely. In traditional system, land records were not open for public scrutiny resulting in manipulating and favoritism, low visibility, harassment, tamper-prone, dated records and cumbersome procedures. The process for applying for transfer of title itself was time-consuming, cumbersome and prone to harassment. There were instances of government land being illegally transferred in the name of influential persons. But computerization of land records had brought in transparency, easy access, made the records secured and up-to-date and the process was citizen friendly.

The Bhoomi project was a breakthrough in the computerization of land records launched on 6th February 2001 by the former Honorable Chief Minister of Karnataka Shri. S.M. Krishna. Bhoomi is very comprehensive software designed by NIC, Bangalore. This software provides for printing of land records as and when required. A senior IAS officer Rajeev Chawla, widely credited as the father of Bhoomi project or Project Champion. Bhoomi, the software mechanism which is designed to control changes in land registration in the state of Karnataka which is developed and implemented by National Informatics Centre. The new system has brought about a sea change in the way land records are maintained and administered in the state. The system has not only simplified the process of record keeping but also provided many collateral benefits.

The RTC certificate, which stands for Record of Rights, Tenancy and crop inspection register (form 16), is a document that validates the farmers claim to the land and provides details about the land size, owner's details, soil type, location, number of divisions and details about the crops cultivated on it. It also records loans taken against the land. This certificate is not a title deed, but is a record of cultivation, ownership and tenancy. The RTC certificate is used for securing loans from banks and other financial institutions, as a survey in courts, for obtaining government grants and aid, for selling crops to government agencies, for obtaining the irrigation allocation, for paying land and water taxes and as a document to check proof of ownership. If a farmer wishes to change the information on the certificate, because the property has been sold or divided amongst family members, then an application for a process known as 'mutation' has to be entered. This too may be filed in the Bhoomi system. In the Bhoomi project, a printed copy of the RTC can be obtained online by providing the name of the owner or plot number. The Government of Karnataka is clamping the following benefits of the computerized land records system for the farmers: (i) They at once get all necessary records whenever they need them without having to wait for weeks. (ii) These records are free from human arbitration. (iii) Updating becomes easy as their records can be updated by applying at RTC information Kiosk and their request is directly registered in the land records database. (iv) These computerized records make farmers free from harassment by government officials, touts, middlemen, village-level leaders, etc. (v) Farmers have direct access to all information about their property. (vi) Farmers are able to query and get all types of necessary information about their land.

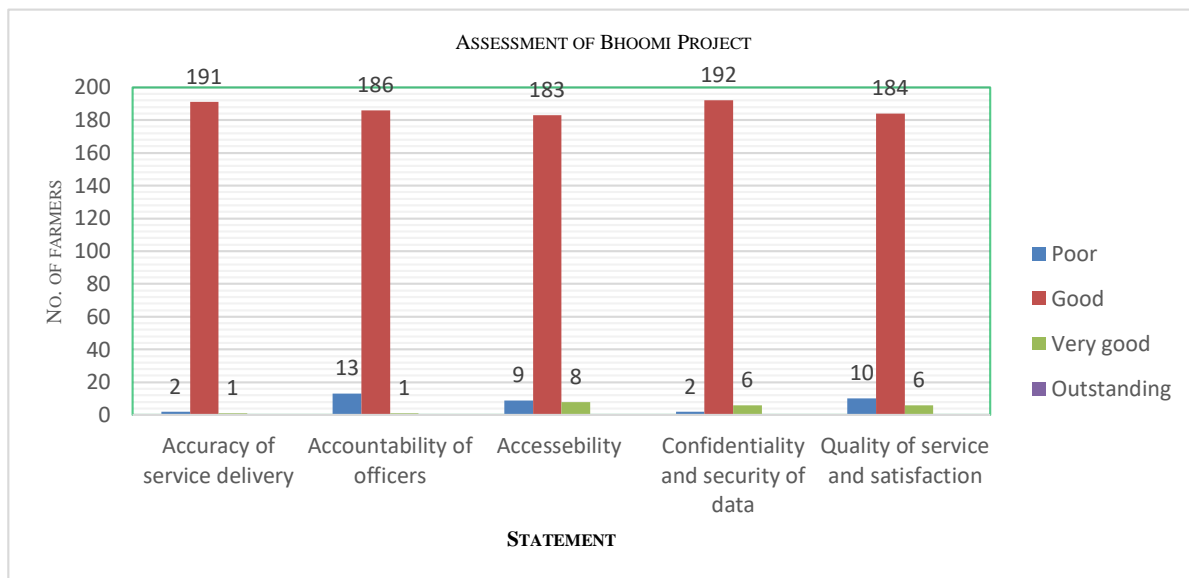
The present article is an attempt to study the 'Bhoomi' Project or computerized land record system as an e-governance project. The study has focused two taluks of Mysore District and has made an in-depth analysis of the land-related services to the rural farmers of the taluks.

METHODS

Simple random sampling method is adopted to select the participants. The sample constituted 200 respondents belonging to various villages of Mysuru district. The present study relies on both primary and secondary sources. The sociological methods of interview, observation, discussion, a structured questionnaire is used to gather information. The statistical and analytical methods are used to analyze the collected data in the light of answer given by the respondents. The descriptive method has been used to describe the findings of the data.

E-Governance in enhancing Public Service Delivery with special reference to Bhoomi Project

Assessment of Bhoomi Project					
Sl.No	Statements	Poor	Good	Very Good	Outstanding
1	Accuracy of service delivery	2	191	1	0
2	Accountability of officers	13	186	1	0
3	Accessibility	9	183	8	0
4	Confidentiality and security of data	2	192	6	0
5	Quality of service and satisfaction	10	184	6	0



DISCUSSION

As far as the accuracy of service delivery, it is found that 96% of the respondents agreed that the service provided by the Bhoomi project is good. On the whole, it is found that 93.5% of the respondent opined that accountability of officers have increased. Regarding speed and efficient service delivery, it is found that 95.5% respondent opined that Bhoomi Project is good compared to manual system. Regarding accessibility of services 191 respondents agreed that Bhoomi project provided better delivery of government services to citizens. All the information of the government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can see the information whenever they want. Majority of the respondents (198) opined that Bhoomi project is good in terms of confidentiality and security of data. With regard to quality of service and satisfaction 95% of the respondent agreed. It is found that respondents are satisfied with the promptness, easiness of service delivery. They agreed that there is an improvement in the reliability of provided services. It is found 190 respondents agreed that e-governance brings public services to citizens on their schedule and their venue. It led to the efficiency and accountability in the government. The improvement of public service delivery is the most important aspect of e-governance. Rapid growth of communication technology and its adoption in e-governance would help in bringing government machinery to the doorstep of the citizens.

CONCLUSION

The key mantra of e-governance is 'citizen first'. Through the e-governance, the government services are available to the citizens in a convenient, efficient, transparent manner and make government more accessible. Issues of land rights not only raise legal complexities but also socio-economic dimensions. The state needs to ensure the maintenance of an accurate and genuine land records system to further its policy objectives of land reforms and protection of legal rights over land. Karnataka is in the forefront of all states in the implementation of computerization of land records. Based on the success story of this project and its innovations, the union ministry of communication and information technology has announced that Bhoomi would be a national model for computerization of land records and replicated throughout the country.

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