Study of challenges and issues of e-governance in Afghanistan

Farhad Sultani, Mohammad Basir Arifi

[*] PhD Scholar in Political Science at Mangalore University and lecturer at Faculty of Public Policy and Administration, Afghanistan.
[**] Professor at Faculty of Public Policy Administration, Balkh University, Afghanistan

Abstract- In Today's world, public sector organizations increasingly concentrate on transformations of socio-economic & political and administrative structures through the application of e-governance to provide efficient, convenient and affordable services and information to the citizens, business-entities and for public organizations. Developing and developed nations around the world have attained significant improvement in application of e-governance and making e-services easily available and accessible and as well as to provide information and knowledge about entire government operations to their citizens. In recognition of importance of e-governance, the government of Afghanistan initiated the development and implementation of a comprehensive e-governance strategy to improve the working condition of public administration. Several Studies have shown that the implementation of good governance, economic growth, social-progress strongly rely on e-governance initiatives.

E-governance provides many opportunities to improve the higher quality service to the citizen. Citizens should be able to get service or information in seven days of the week. The paper relies on the primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary data was extracted from books, journals and websites and primary data was collected through distribution of structural questionnaires. The total sample size was 50 respondents. The overall object of this paper is to investigate challenges and opportunities in implementing e-governance and as well as to identify what means and practice will really help the present administration to promote e-governance in the context of Afghanistan? As a matter of fact, the current study concludes that there is no sufficient evidence of e-governance in comparison other countries in Afghanistan and that in actual practices, the bad governance is the order of the day. All in all, e-governance must be embraced in Afghanistan through political, administrative and economic reforms and by adopting the time-tested based on experiences of e- governance initiatives in other countries.

Index Terms- E-governance, efficiency, transparency, service-delivery, citizen satisfaction.

I. INTRODUCTION

E-governance provides many opportunities to improve the higher quality service to the citizen. people should be able to get service or information in seven days of the week. Citizens, businesses and state and as well as local governments should be able to figure out required reports without having to hire accountants and lawyers.

Government employees should be able to do their work as timely, efficiently and effectively as their counterparts in the global world. The challenge for governments is how to move on, from focusing on service delivery to provide people-centered tools and applications. This means placing priority not just on how they delivery services to citizens, but using e-governance to enrich the lives of its citizens. E- Governance should also be employed to improve the way public servants use public resources to support the society.[1]

E-governance has been implemented by developed as well as developing countries to be an enabler toward accelerating processes, delivering a higher level of service to citizens and businesses, increasing transparency and accountability while lowering costs. Additionally, in developing countries it has been recognized as an enabler towards catapulting governments in to the 21st century while leap frogging multiple generations of technology.

In the age of globalization, governments and public sector organizations around the globe are faced with increasing complexity to reform their public administration structures and deliver more efficient, faster and cost effective services, as well as better information and knowledge to their stakeholders. People have different perceptions regarding e-governance. Today governments increasingly concentrates on transformations of social, economic, political and administrative structures through use of information and communication technology (ICT) and to provide efficient, convenient and cost effective services and information to the citizens, business-entities and for public organizations.[2]

E-Governance is the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for delivering government's services, exchange of information, communication transactions, integration of various stand-alone systems and services between

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[1]Richard Kerby. (2005). E-government provides value to clients.

[2]Dobrica Savic. (2006). E-Governance: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implications. Montreal. p.1

Government-to-citizens (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B), and Government-to-Government (G2G) as well as back office processes and interactions within the entire government framework.

Through e-Governance, government services are made available to the citizens in a convenient, efficient and transparent manner. Three main target groups that can be distinguished in governance concepts are governments, citizens and businesses/interest groups.[3]

It is beneficial to the citizens as they can enjoy faster, effective and timely government services and also to the government as it can become more integrated into the community and can focus its resources where they are needed the most. E-governance that involves technology, policies, infrastructure, training and funds is becoming popular around the world including Afghanistan and India and rest of the globes. E-Governance is not just about government web sites and e-mails. Neither is it just about service delivery over the Internet or digital access to government information or electronic payments. E-governance aims at changing how citizens relate to governments as well as how citizens relate to each other.

World Bank[4] The Afghan population's access to basic services has greatly improved in nearly all areas since 2001. School enrolment has increased sharply, with over eight million children currently enrolled in school, of which 39 percent are girls. Current strategies for improving sub-national service delivery focus on delegating greater authority to provincial and district administrations.

Afghanistan Shows the Way in E-Government (2015)[5] The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MoCIT) has modernized over 100 websites in the public sector and made information more accessible, consistent, and reliable. The Electronic Government (E-Government) Department, a key section of MoCIT, has led the progress in introducing E-Government systems in government institutions and agencies. It has taken the lead in creating a unique feature for all government institutions to make access to information more convenient, consistent, and reliable as well as developed a comprehensive package of services for ministries including training, troubleshooting, and hosting their websites. Over 100 governments and government-linked websites have been designed and hosted by MoCIT.

This report aims to identify administrative constraints in three key sectors of public service delivery, education, health and agricultural extension services. The analysis follows the service delivery chain, from central to provincial, through district to community level, and is particularly concerned to examine service delivery in these three sectors through the window of sub-national governance and its relations to the service delivery mandates of line ministries.

After the collapse of the Taliban administration in 2001, every individual expects to see public sector organizations to deliver good governance and e-governance for the betterment of the nations. Unfortunately, Afghanistan's government faces multiple challenges in relation to e-governance application, sustainability issues, rapidly increasing of population, abuses of human rights, poverty, unemployment, food crisis, ozone depletion, dwindling resources, famine and disease and all these challenges are as a result of the inability of sound leadership to plan effectively for development using appropriate educational tools.

The major question that arises within this paper is that why realization of e-governance has remained a great dream in Afghanistan. Researcher strongly believes that developing nations faces many constraints than developed and therefore governments of developing nations would learn a lot by looing what works and what does not. Last but not least, applicability of e-governance can curtail administrative pathologies and build trusts between government and citizens. This research intends to investigate challenges and opportunities in implementing e-governance and to identify what means and practice will really help the present administration to promote e-governance in the context of Afghanistan?

1. 1.2 **Conceptual Meaning of E-governance**

E-governance or 'electronic governance' is basically the application of Information and communications Technology to the processes of Government functioning in order to bring about 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) governance.[6]

E-governance means the use of technology to enhance the access to and delivery of government services to benefit citizens, business partners and employees[7].

E-governance involves the automation or computerization of existing paper-based procedures that will prompt new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding strategies, new ways of transacting business, new ways of listening to citizens and communities, and new ways of organizing and delivering information.[8]

E-governance involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services. E-governance is generally considered as a wider concept than e-government, since it can bring about a change in the way citizens relate to governments and to each other. E-governance can bring forth new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of citizen needs and responsibilities. Its objective is to engage, enable and empower the citizen."[9]

E-governance means application of information and communication technology to enhance the effectiveness of a

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[3]C.S.R. Prabhu. (2009). E-Governance. New Delhi: PHI Learning Private Limited. p.1.

[4]World Bank. (2017). Improving Public Services in Afghanistan's Transformational Decade. Retrieved from worldbank.org/en/country/afghanistan/publication/improving-public-services-afghanistan-transformational-decade. Accessed on 27 March 2017

[5]Retrieved from www.worldbank.org,2015/09/24/afghanistan-shows-way-e-government. Accessed on 18 October 2016.

[6]Report of the Working Group on convergence and E-Governance for e-Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007). Planning commission. November, 2001.

[7]Deloitte, 2003.

[8]Okot-Uma, 2002.

[9]Retrieved from www.unesco.org. Accessed on 15 October 2016.

legislative, judiciary or administration either to improve efficiency or to change the relationship between citizen and government or both.[10]

1.3 E-Governance Program-Context and Principles in Afghanistan

The Ministry of Communication and IT of Afghanistan's National Unity government's vision to set up knowledge based society in upcoming years for Afghanistan through ICT and provide globalized and democratic nation that effectively uses the potential of ICT in trade, commerce, health, education and public governance while maintaining and preserving its tradition and culture.

In sum, this section presents aim and objectives of EGOV Programs in Afghanistan and explains the Afghan strategic context towards achieving EGOV vision and strategic goals. It highlights key principles for AeGP (Afghanistan Electronic Government Program)[11] implementation and management.[12]

2. 4 Aims and Objectives of E-Governance in Afghanistan

The aims of AeGP are the implement EGOV initiatives towards realization of strategic goals of Afghanistan EGOV Strategy and ultimately, achieving it vision.

In line with this aim, the key objectives of AeGP are:
1. To provide an efficient, professional and modern institutional, environment and management framework for AeGS implementation.
2. To organize, plan and manage EGOV related projects in Afghanistan implemented by various government agencies and stakeholders in coordinated, collaborative and effective way.
3. To deliver the outcomes associated with AeGS Strategic goals with expected professional capabilities through relevant organizational changes in public sector management.
4. To ensure the realization of benefits of technology enabled transformation in public administration and service delivery to citizens and stakeholders.
5. To raise the Afghan government capacity for EGtOV development, coordination and the implementation based on partnership and collaboration.[13]

1. 5 Goals of E- Governance in Afghanistan
The main goals of e-governance in Afghanistan are:
a. All the government ministries, departments and agencies both at the central and provincial levels would be optimally computerized and their operations re-engineered, digitized and networked in line with the e-governance and m-governance plan of the government.
b. All public services, other than the ones which cannot be delivered through electronic means, would be delivered as e- services or m- services as per the e-Government Plan of the Government.

c. Transparency in public sector recruitment, procurement and service delivery would be enhanced though optimized use of ICTs. 90 per cent of all public procurement and recruitment would be ICT based using appropriate E-recruitment and E-procurement systems.
d. Citizen participation in governance and democratic processes in the country would be strengthen and enhanced through optimal application of ICTs.
e. All citizens of the country would have convenient means to access the e-services of the government either on individual access devices or through e-service centers located within convenient distances (not to exceed 1-hour travel time) from the location of the service recipient.
f. The use of ICTs in the justice sector would be promoted to enhance rule of law and transparency in the legal processes. ICT based systems and applications would be developed and deployed across the country, as a part of the government's e-governance programs to bring in effectiveness, efficiency and transparency in all the legal institutions and organs of the state.

1.6 The following objectives are framed for the present study:
2. To study the conceptual framework of e-governance in Afghanistan.
3. To examine the implementation of e-governance initiatives in Afghanistan.
4. To examine the working of department of e-government in Afghanistan.
5. To analyze the Perceptions of citizens regarding e-governance initiatives, programs and delivery of services in government offices.
6. To access information and knowledge about e-government initiatives to the citizens.
7. To analyze the challenges and to suggest remedies measures.

This paper concludes from above discussion that e-governance implementation will build an informed society, increase government and citizen interaction, encourage citizen participation, bring transparency in the governing process, make the government accountable, reduce the cost of Governance, and reduce the reaction time of the government in Afghanistan.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Afghanistan. This paper compressively evaluates the existing research literature, documentation and strategies of the current government on the e-governance. The study is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected from different areas of Afghanistan through structured and semi structured interviews and distribution of questionnaires with key informant public administrators and citizens. Secondary data was collected from different books,

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[11]UNU-IIST Centre for Electronic Governance. (2011). Electronic Government Strategy Draft for Afghanistan. Policy Report. Macao: UNU-IIST.

[12]Mohamed Shareef, Zamira Dzhusupova, & Tomasz Janowski. (2011). Electronic Government Program Draft for Afghanistan.UNU-IIST. p.8.
[13]Ibid. p.1.

international and national journals, speeches websites, etc. this research is qualitative and quantities in nature. Descriptive and exploratory method of data analysis was used.

2.1 Result of research

	Questions	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	E- governances helps to implement good governance initiatives.	33	15	-	-	2
2	E-governance helps to increase efficiency in public services delivery.	26	18	3	3	-
3	E-governance helps public servants to interact with citizen timely.	15	21	12	2	-
4	Citizens show less nonchalant attitude in the use of e-service in Afghanistan.	4	20	15	9	2
5	Internet services are easily available in every part of Afghanistan.	5	7	4	27	7
6	Access to internet and computer is available nationwide.	5	12	6	19	8
7	The speed of internet and quality of service is good enough to access e- government services.	2	11	5	22	10
8	E- government provides the right to access on government services for people with the disability.	9	26	7	6	2
9	E- governance helps to rebuild public trust in the Afghan National Unity Government.	11	16	15	5	3
10	Afghan National Unity Government has a national strategy (including an action plan) related to e- governance issues.	11	14	19	6	-
11	E- governance helps to reduce corruption in public administration.	19	26	3	2	-
12	E- governance brings transparency in delivery of services.	18	19	8	3	2
13	ICT sector helps to implement e- governance in countryside.	7	23	19	1	-
14	Infrastructural development in government ICT sector facilitated the delivery of public services.	11	25	9	3	2
15	The role of ICT infrastructure for successful e- governance is to provide services to all citizens and increase interaction between citizens and government.	14	28	6	1	1
16	There are shortages of ICT human resources to implementation of e- governance projects.	5	23	15	5	2
17	ICT skills among government officials is very poor	10	17	15	8	-
18	Afghan Unity National Government has such institution to implement and coordinate e- governance projects.	5	14	17	13	1
19	There is lack of coordination among central, regional and local agencies.	11	24	10	4	6
20	Coordination between administration and citizens is poor due to lack of e- government services.	7	22	11	8	2
21	The government to government coordination is effective for providing e- governance services in Afghanistan.	15	20	11	3	1
22	There is less allocation of financial resources for e- governance.	19	14	7	7	3
23	The Right to Information to all citizens is practically secured by e- governance initiatives in Afghanistan	5	15	17	11	2

24	E- governance initiatives to entire administrative units of Afghan National Unity Government	8	10	19	12	1
25	E- governance services is fruitful in providing the government services to the citizens.	15	11	4	17	3
26	I am satisfied with E- government services of Afghan National Unity Government.	5	7	3	30	5
27	E- governance helps to provide services in time bound manner.	6	20	15	7	2
28	E- governance helps to fix accountability in the departments	11	23	9	7	-
29	Awareness campaigns for people were initiated by government regarding various e- portals.	4	12	24	7	3
30	local governments at village level is involved in creating awareness among people	7	18	9	10	6

2.2 The data collected shows that majority of the correspondents were view that there are some barriers prior to conduct e-service portal and implementation in the contest of Afghanistan.

III. DISCUSSION

It can be said that the application of e-governance will grow and bring development if it has achieved the requirements of citizens also, the services are provided through e-governance must be consistent with the needs of citizens. If the citizens achieve their needs, the level of satisfaction for e-governance will increase. Many studies have been conducted to explore challenges confronting e-governance implementation in public organizations of Afghanistan. The tremendous technical and financial cooperation of international agencies advance the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) strongly influenced the work process that brought change into the administrative setup of Afghan government after post-9/11.

3.2 The important critical factors which are key challenges for implantation of e-governance are summarized below:
- Budgetary Barriers
- Laws and Legislation
- ICT Infrastructure
- Low ICT Literacy
- Professional workforce
- Workforce and Resistance of Change
- Digital Divide
- E- Literacy,
- Lack of Competency
- Lack of Security
- Lack of privacy, protection the personal information that government collects about citizens.
- Lack of safety, ability of e- governance to operate without catastrophic failure.
- Lack of confidentiality, designers should normally respect the confidentiality of their employers or clients irrespective of whether or not a formal confidentiality agreement has been signed such as code of ethics.
- Cultural and Educational Barriers
- Collaboration and Coordination

Following are some suggestions for successful implementation of e-governance in Afghanistan's Public Administration in case of service delivery to the citizens:

- Enhancement of ICT
- Cultural Adaptation of E-governance
- Improving Technical Education
- Sound Public Administration
- Allocation of Financial Resource
- Generating Public awareness

IV. CONCLUSION

A government and public organization around the globe is facing multiple challenges with regard to bring reform in the public administration systems and deliver more efficient and cost effective services, as well as better information and knowledge to their stakeholders. In developing countries like Afghanistan, where insecurity, literacy level is very low and most are living below poverty line, people are not even aware about the benefits of e- Governance activities and people do not use Information and Communication technologies much, there exist a number of problems to implement e- Governance activities. E-Governance is considered as a high priority agenda in Afghanistan, as it is considered to be the only means of taking IT to provide opportunities to harness the power of ICT making the business of governance inexpensive, qualitatively responsive, and truly encompassing.

In sum, Afghanistan, besides, many problems, government did not optimum use of technical and financial of international community cooperation in efficient and effective manner. So, there is massive gap between Afghanistan and developed countries in case of e-governance and Afghanistan has the lowest position in world e-government rankings. This gap indicates that Afghanistan is the most back warded nation in the international level. This study helps to Afghan Nation Unity Government to success in improving accessibility, cutting down costs, reducing corruption, to implement good governance, extending help and increased access to un-served groups.

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AUTHORS

First Author – Farhad Sultani PhD Scholar in Political Science at Mangalore University and lecturer at Faculty of Public Policy and Administration, Afghanistan

Second Author – Mohammad Basir Arifi Professor at Faculty of Public Policy Administration, Balkh University, Afghanistan