

The Effective Role of E-governance in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Electronic governance is the famous phenomena of the 21st century which covers even all countries, but special and effective role has been given in the developing countries. In this paper which is only about Afghanistan struggled to explain the effective role of e-governance just in public administration and the researcher has gone through different ministries in Afghanistan like the ministry of home, finance and information and communication technology, and explain many projects. These projects have shown the importance of e-governance in Afghanistan like Automatic System for Custom Data (ASYCUDA) which control customs, Afghanistan's Financial Management Information System (AFMIS) that manage all data related to finance ministry, The State Budget Planning System (SBPS) which is very important budget planning and execution process, Electronic Passport, National electronic ID card of Afghanistan, biometric system and so on. Moreover how it brings accountability, transparency, legitimacy, efficiency and effectiveness and avoids corruption has been explained. Furthermore how e-governance brings facilities for the people and how to implement these kind of projects has been explained in this paper.

1. Introduction

The Afghan government uses information communication technology (ICT) to develop legitimacy, responsiveness, and transparency as well as improve measures to transfer good services to Afghan people and attract them to participate in the governance. Development of ICT in Afghanistan showed that Afghan government has the capacity to improve its services in coming years by using technology. "With the implementation e-tazkira programme the ministry of interior can quickly check and identify but before it was taking very long time," says E-Government Director.

Currently Afghan government is the witness of much and more development in ICT branch. Apart from the fast growth in Internet and mobile technology services provided by six active telecom companies, there is also a significant increase in the use of ICT in government activities. In addition, the E-Government Department is supported by the World Bank's ICT Sector Development Project which has developed mobile applications for the health, finance, and education sectors. Currently, there are 10 applications developed and more are in process to be launched soon. We can give the example of mobile application in agriculture sector that farmers easily can understand the price and other related issues for increasing their income.

2. Literature review

World Bank, (2015) in the report under the title Afghanistan shows the way in E-government explain the projects that are being held in Kabul and many other provinces, the report declared that in Kabul in around two years the ministry of communication and information technology has repair over one hundred websites and easy access to reliable information in public sector. The report also has brought the example of capacity building result (CBR) programme which was launched in 2012 and mentioned the

speech of those people whom are successfully joined this programme and now are in the high posts.

Najimi, Bashirullah, (2015) in a research titled Combating Corruption through E-Governance has clarified all those initiatives that are taken by finance ministry home ministry and the ministry of communication and information technology. Researcher have gone little deep and specifically mentioned the example of Afghanistan's Financial Management Information System (AFMIS). Automatic System for Custom Data (ASYCUDA) and Development Assistance Database (DAD). All these programs are implemented in finance ministry. By these programs the researcher said also avoid corruption.

USAID, (2012) in a report mobile money and combating corruption mentioned those programs which are also supported by the USAID for fighting corruption. One of these programme was named my pisa which can transfer money on the mobile phone. This programme was signed with Rooshan mobile company and Vodacom in 2008.

Anti-Corruption Internet Database. (2014) under the title Six Strategies to Fight Corruption has explain that how the government can avoid corruption. They said that the only way do decrease the cases of corruption is e-governance and change the old administrative system into the modern one. Making database and technologic systems to fight corruption and imply justice.

3. E-Governance in Afghanistan

E-Governance is a new concept in Afghanistan; actually it started with the establishment of a new government in 2001 by the direct intervention of international community. This encouraged a shift by the government to use Information and Communication Technology in order to improve efficiency as

well as to increase the capacity of delivering quality services to its citizens for effective governance. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MoCIT) has modernized over 100 websites in the public sector which has helped them to make information more accessible, consistent, and reliable resulting in transparency. The e-government section which is the main part of (MoICT) initiations are appreciable they brought new systems to governmental institutions and departments. It has led in creating a unique feature for all government institutions to make access to over 100 government-linked websites have been designed and hosted by MoCIT.

E-government department work under the control or vision of communication, information technology ministry, developing society into a informatics society and giving chance to technological experts with advanced information and skill people who play a specific part in providing advice and guidance to develop and deploy electronic governance in government agencies and departments.

The e-government department working under MoCIT in Afghanistan has its importance in trying to implement hassle free services online for its citizens resulting in transparency and accountability, reduction of customers' and organizations' time, effort and costs in order to improvement service delivery and bring in citizens' satisfaction. It will help improve the efficiency of government agencies in processing of government data, improves through better understanding of users' requirements, thus aiming for seamless online services. The online services share information and ideas between all government agencies and department to build one mega data base, improving transparency, accuracy and facilitating information transforming between government and customers. It also helps in avoiding corruption.

E-governance basically helps in building trust between governments and citizens, an essential factor in good governance by using internet-based strategies to involve citizens in the policy process, illustrating government transparency and accountability. The major obstacle for Afghan government is struggling with unawareness and electronic literacy among the citizens. Financial aid is also a major obstacle of every project in developing countries. This paper is trying to explain the importance, role and benefits of implementation of e-governance initiatives in ministry of finance and ministry of interior of Afghanistan resulting in transparency, efficiency, accountability and legitimacy.

2. Role of the Ministry of Finance

It is difficult to introduce the overall systems of finance ministry but it has a very significant role toward e-governance. The present finance ministry is the first ministry to have its own website which includes all the relevant branches and departments online. There are many e-governance projects continuously implemented and are still implementing by the support of UNDP and many other international organizations collaborated with finance ministry. The major ICT/e-governance projects introduced by Ministry of Finance include: Afghanistan Financial Management Information System (AFMIS), Automatic System for Custom Data (ASYCUDA),

State Budget Planning System (SBPS) and Development Assistance Database (DAD), their benefits are explained in detail below.

3.1 Afghanistan's Financial Management Information System (AFMIS)

The AFMIS system was installed by the government of Afghanistan to improve its public finance system in 2002. National Budget execution takes place through this system. AFMIS is based on Free Balance application system, and it costs 3.9 million USD which was financed by the World Bank. AFMIS was gradually introduced into the country in 2002 it was installed in the Ministry of Finance in Kabul; later on it rolled out to the 34 provinces. The main system of AFMIS is situated in the Treasury Department of Ministry of Finance in the capital Kabul and it is linked with the provincial departments of all line ministries.

AFMIS enables the government to have access to reliable financial information and helps government have strong control over its expenditure; it also improves government's financial services and links its organizations with each other, which improves decision making mechanisms and brings accountability and transparency in the financial operations.

3.2 Automatic System for Custom Data (ASYCUDA)

The Automatic System for Custom Data (ASYCUDA) is a computerized system, a database for customs tariffs management. This system was installed in Afghanistan with the financial assistance of the World Bank. First Phase of the project was initiated in 2004, while the other phase was completed in Jun 2015; currently around 90 percent of international trade is covered by this system. The (ASYCUDA) has a very important role in recording the transaction of taxes received from import which leads to bring transparency in financial recordings of Afghanistan. This system has enabled the custom department to improve accountability and transparency in the customs department and it has expedited custom clearing process for the traders. After the installation of this system custom, the collection of revenue has rapidly increased, automatically leading to reduction in the corruption and has improved the tariff management. This system is now operational in main trade and transit routes likes: Torkham (Pakistan border), Islam Qala (Iran border), Hairatan (Uzbekistan border), Towraghondi (Turkmenistan border), Sher Khan Bandar (Tajikistan border) and Zaranj/Nimroz (Iran border). Furthermore, this system is also operational in the main airports of the country.

However, still corruption in the custom is very high and also the poor recording of transactions of import and export of goods vary its actual cost. Furthermore tribal leaders are avoiding the use of this system because they fear that this system will bring out the illegal money which is achieved from customs.

3.3 The State Budget Planning System (SBPS)

The State Budget Planning System (SBPS) has a web-based user-friendly graphical interface combining the best practices of MS Excel type spreadsheets with online electronic

data entry forms. It also explain the usage of budget and execution of the budget process. The aim of this programme is to explain that how the state budget planning system is building and functioning and also give important instruction to work with the application. For all those whom deal with this application usage of this application is compulsory.

3.4 Development Assistance Database (DAD)

This is an Aid Management system that was created with the financial support of UNDP in June 2002. The Database is located in the Budget Department of the Ministry of Finance. This system tracks donors funded projected and is a useful database for effective and transparent management of aid. This system helps as an eye watch on project duplication and proper utilization of resources. With installation of this system coordination between the government and donors has improved regarding aid management and allocation. The system stores the financial aid data and different types of reports about it can be generated through it. These reports are easily, share with donors, governments and general public.

3. Ministry of Interior

4.1 Electronic Passport

A biometric passport also known as an e-Passport or a digital passport is a traditional passport that has an embedded electronic microprocessor chip which contains biometric information that can be used to recognize the person whom take passport. It a technology without contact, a small chief and antenna is the front, or back or center page of the passport. The important data is printed on the page as well inside the chip. To avoid forge the public key infrastructure is used to identify the data if the system is used correctly. Many countries are shifting towards the use of biometric passports. Since 2008, 60 countries have issued such passports which have increased to 120 till June 2017.

Through this system, to obtain a passport, only the originality of the citizenship certificate and the color of the photocopy are essential. The passport office will send the applicant's citizenship certificate to the head of the state registration of the population, which will testify and reply for the concern. The Government and militant officials are also benefited as they do not need to be certified by the Department of Civil Registration every time they need to cross borders officially. Through electronic passport they can directly present their identity cards and official travel documents from their respective departments to the other border security authorities.

4.2 Biometric authentication of Passports

The new standardized biometrics used for this type of identification system are body identification, fingerprint identification, and rainbow identification. These systems were developed after evaluation of different kinds of biometrics including retinal scan. To store biometric data on the contactless chip, it includes a minimum of 32 kilobytes of EEPROM (Electrically Erasable Programmable Read-Only Memory) storage memory, and runs on an interface in accordance with the ISO/IEC 14443 international standard, amongst others.

These standards intend cooperation among different systems of different countries and different manufacturers of passport books. Passport applicants follow the process of biometric from the respective post office. In case of missing passport, a knitted blanket of Afghan notices will be made available to the central office or its administrative units in the provinces. After the passport is credited, all newly issued passports will be issued with a full price it has benefits for both government and people. By this system government can avoid fake passports and can decrease crimes. For people it is also important because no one can use their passport because the bio system covers all the related information of the passport owner.

4.3 National ID card

After the world trade center tragedy 11 September, 2001 almost all countries rethink about their identity systems to separate terrorist from common population. The government of the U.K. has discussed going in the direction of a national identity card that will use one or more biometric techniques such as iris or fingerprint recognition to confirm the identity of a card holder. The controversial plan would include developing a national database of basic personal information.

A national identity card is a document that identify or shows the information of a person who is carrying it and recognize person that from where he or she is? .So by this card we can do business in all over the world. Identity is a legal, political and meaningful relationship between the state and person. If a person does not have identity he or she cannot participate in the election and cannot work in government.

The National electronic ID card of Afghanistan electronic Afghan identity card (e-Tazkira) is a national identity document issued to all citizens of Afghanistan. It is proof of identity, residency and citizenship. This program was officially implemented in Kabul on 3 may 2018 when President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and first lady Rula Ghani were received their e-tazkira. Distribution of e-ID cards or e-Tazkira has also begun for all the people of Afghanistan. The new Afghan identity card is based on international standards for identity documents.

4.4. 119 POLICE DIRECTORATE: 119 Information Center

For the first time 119 information system was established in Kabul city by interior ministry. Financially NATO was supporting it, 58 men and women employees. The stuff works all week and 24 hours for the people security. The aim of this center was to give the citizen chance to give information about terrorist activity, corruption, human rights violation, criminal activities and misbehavior of police. This center was extended to many other provinces like Kandahar, nangarhar, Helmand Herat and Balkh in the year 2013.

When it is established many people are calling to this center and is extending day by day. The government have avoid many terrorist attacks and arrested many of them. For example in the year 2014 by the help of this center defused 173 mines, 15 suicide vests were discovered and 20 suicide attackers were arrested.

4. Conclusion

E-Governance is a new concept in Afghanistan; actually it started with the establishment of a new government in late 2001 by the direct intervention of the international community. Prior to 2001, the Afghan government relied on using paper based old systems; computers, databases and internet were rarely available and only in few government offices. Currently, corruption is very high in the country, amongst causes of corruption the most important one is the old paper based system which makes access to reliable and valid information and tracking of expenditure difficult

Most of the international organizations assisting Afghanistan in the area of E-Governance believe that E-Governance could play a significant role in making the government and the Public Finance system more transparent and accountable which would reduce corruption. Corruption would especially be reduced in the salaries of security sector and education sector in Afghanistan with proper computerized registration of the employees and direct payment via banks or M-Paisa (salary transfer via Mobile or M-Pisa). The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan has also stated in one of his

recent report that through the use of M-Paisa in the security sector corruption in the salaries of the security sector could be reduced or eliminated. In addition to this, E-Governance helps reduce the gap between the citizens and the government and empowers the citizens to hold their government accountable.

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